

“Lenny Was Family ... at Mishkan Tefila”: The Importance of Leonard Bernstein’s Synagogue

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The eclectic American composer Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990) wrote music in a variety of genres, including musical theater, film, and concert music. He was also comfortable creating music infused with a Jewish flavor, either by direct quotation or stylized reference. Numerous scholars have investigated Bernstein’s Jewish background and his compositions, but one area that has not received appropriate attention is the importance of Congregation Mishkan Tefila, his childhood synagogue in Boston. Its rabbi, Herman Rubenovitz (1883–1966), its cantor, Iszo Glickstein (1891–1947), and especially its music director, Solomon Braslavsky (1887–1975), made a lifelong impression on Bernstein. Mishkan Tefila served as the venue for some of Bernstein’s earliest piano performances, and it was here that he heard an organ—unusual in itself for a Conservative synagogue—for the first time. As scholar Jonathan D. Sarna notes:



Figure 1: Signed photo of Bernstein, 1945.
(Courtesy Archive of
Congregation Mishkan Tefila)

It was there that Bernstein first discovered the power of grand music, there that he learned to appreciate Jewish music, there that he was tutored in public speaking, there that he was imbued with pride in his Jewish heritage, and there that he saw how Judaism and American culture could be harmonized.¹

The groundwork set in his childhood by this institution and its clergy and staff was crucial to his later Jewish and musical life.



Figure 2: Picture Postcard of Mishkan Tefila, 1940.
(Courtesy Dorchester Historical Society, Massachusetts)

The Bernsteins and Mishkan Tefila

Mishkan Tefila played an important role in the life of the Bernstein family. Even the physical building made quite an impression on the Bernstein children, including sister Shirley (1923–1998) and brother Burton (b. 1932). Burton noted that they used to refer to it as “The Parthenon,” because of its size and Greco-Roman columns on the facade.² It is easy to see how a young child would be in awe of this magnificent structure.³

Sarna notes that Leonard “began attending [services at Mishkan Tefila] at the age of eight,” which would have been 1926.⁴ A document containing the minutes of a synagogue board meeting from September of 1926 includes a list of new members, including an “S. Bernstein.” Bernstein is a relatively common Jewish surname, and without a complete first name, we cannot determine with certainty if this new member is truly Leonard’s father, Sam. However, based on the date and the name, it seems quite clear that Sarna is correct.

The decision to join Conservative Mishkan Tefila is not one that Sam would have made lightly. He was raised Orthodox and descended from a long line of rabbis; he had even considered becoming a rabbi himself but left Ukraine before he could do so.⁵ He became a successful business owner instead, running a thriving beauty supply business, and felt that Mishkan Tefila, where many of Boston’s prominent Jews belonged, was the right place for him and his family.⁶ Soon, he became very active, serving in various capacities on the synagogue board, including that

of vice president. Burton Bernstein recalls his father's immersion into Mishkan Tefila:

His new status seemed to draw him away from the tiny, rude, sexually segregated Orthodox *shuls* of his past. Now he could take his family with pride to a place of worship the equal of any cathedral, with a choir, an organ, a reserved pew, a rabbi named H.H. Rubenovitz, who gave sermons not only in English but in Oxford-accented English, a cantor who could have been an opera singer, and a first-rate Hebrew school to further his children's sense of heritage.⁷

Indeed, the Hebrew school was renowned for its quality of education. Bernstein studied Hebrew at Mishkan Tefila from age eight until celebrating becoming a bar mitzvah at age thirteen. Hebrew school was held Monday through Thursday from 4:00 until 6:30 and on Sundays from 10:00 to 12:30.⁸ Humphrey Burton states that Bernstein "graduated as an honor student after five years of study in 1931."⁹ In preparation for his becoming a bar mitzvah, Bernstein studied with Solomon Zuckrow, headmaster of the school.¹⁰ Bernstein's love of Hebrew stemmed from Zuckrow and from Bernstein's father, Sam.¹¹ In those days, it was traditional to present one of several ready-made speeches for one's bar mitzvah service. Instead, Bernstein offered an articulate and personally crafted speech, which Zuckrow helped him translate into Hebrew.¹²

Rabbi Rubenovitz and Cantor Glickstein

It is quite possible that Bernstein modeled his bar mitzvah speech after the sermons of Rabbi Rubenovitz. Rubenovitz was very articulate, both in written and verbal communication.¹³ Bernstein consciously tried to emulate this trait as an adult, particularly in his television appearances.¹⁴ Of Rubenovitz, Bernstein stated, "He gave me my first notion of public speaking, of declamatory passion and timing, a sense of balance and moderation in reasoning; a liberal view of argument, an enormous sense of dignity, and the basic divine element in man."¹⁵ He adored Rubenovitz, and the feeling seemed to be mutual. However, Rubenovitz unwittingly served as the butt of some good-natured jokes by the Bernstein children. Burton Bernstein recalls, "Judaism was an enormous part of my brother's humor, and a huge part of his life.... The Rabbi at Mishkan Tefila was named H.H. Rubenovitz. We used to call him Ha Ha."¹⁶

When Bernstein applied to Harvard, Rubenovitz wrote a letter of recommendation on his behalf. This letter, dated 7 May 1935, states in part: “From my observation of Leonard Bernstein, I believe him to be reliable, industrious and persevering. He is physically healthy and possesses a fine sense of honor. If admitted to Harvard University, he will, in my opinion, be a worthy addition to the student body.”¹⁷ Bernstein’s top grades no doubt must have driven Harvard to accept him, but perhaps the rabbi’s letter aided the process.

Even more than the guidance and example of the rabbi, “probably the greatest influence was the music heard each week at Temple Mishkan Tefila, which, in addition to the tenor cantor singing traditional melodies, boasted an organ and a choir,” notes Paul Myers.¹⁸ Bernstein speaks of the “wonderful” music at Mishkan Tefila, stating that he “learned to love music there, sitting there with my father.”¹⁹ Other than the synagogue, Leonard did not have early exposure to music, except for the radio and singing at the William Lloyd Garrison Elementary School.²⁰

Indeed, early in Bernstein’s life, he made a connection between music and religion. When he touched the piano for the first time, at the age of ten, he “knew he had touched God.”²¹ In addition, biographer Évelyne Resnick observes that for Bernstein, the “true music” came from the synagogue and therefore, music is uniquely tied to the notion of God.²²

Bernstein remarked that Glickstein was his favorite cantorial voice,²³ and he enthusiastically recalled Glickstein’s abilities and the quality of the music program at Mishkan Tefila:

We were of the Conservative persuasion which allowed for an organ and a choir in a hidden choir loft, and when they let rip I used to go mad! We had a fabulous cantor who was a great musician and a beautiful man, very tall, very majestic. He would begin to sing the ancient tunes—they are not exactly melodies, because they are not really written down; they’re traditional, handed down orally—and he had a tenor voice of such sweetness and such richness—with a dark baritonal quality, I now realize; I didn’t know a tenor from a baritone in those days—and then the organ would start and then the choir would begin with its colors, and I just began to get crazed with the sound of choral music.²⁴

In fact, Glickstein served as more than a musical inspiration; he was Burton Bernstein's godfather. Burton reflects, "He was a wonderful, saintly man. He had a beautiful voice, untrained, but it often cracked on the high notes.... [But] it had a great affect on Lenny. Up to his dying day, we used to joke about it."²⁵ According to Glickstein's great-niece, Janet Stein, Bernstein gave piano lessons to her cousin, Glickstein's niece, although this assertion could not be independently corroborated.²⁶

According to congregant Mitchell Cooper, Bernstein's childhood friend and neighbor, Bernstein acted as cantor for youth services at Mishkan Tefila—likely because of Glickstein's influence.²⁷ Cooper recalled that Bernstein had a good voice as a boy.²⁸ However, even though Bernstein adored Glickstein and Rubenovitz, it was music director Braslavsky who had the biggest impact on him at Mishkan Tefila.



Figure 3: Solomon Braslavsky, ca. 1930. (Courtesy Boston Public Library Print Department)

Bernstein and Braslavsky

The multitalented Braslavsky proved to be a guiding force for Bernstein. Choral conductor Judith Clurman stated, "Braslavsky was vital to his [Bernstein's] musical development. [Bernstein] was able to feel safe in this environment. He wouldn't be who he was without this man and Mishkan Tefila. It was in his blood."²⁹

Cantor Aryeh Finkelstein observed that Bernstein had the "greatest love and affection and professional respect for Braslavsky."³⁰ Sarna noted, "Braslavsky served as a kind of role model. After all, Braslavsky is at once a performer, a composer, a conductor, and an educator."³¹ Additionally, Sarna commented on how unusual it is for a composer to be so vocally indebted to the musical director of his childhood place of worship, yet at the same time "Braslavsky's name is scarcely known today, even by close students of Bernstein's work, and the impact that he and his synagogue made on the young Leonard has received minimal attention."³²

Although Braslavsky might not be a household name today, he was a towering figure in the New England region at midcentury. Born

in Ukraine and given his first music education by his cantor-father, Braslavsky immigrated to Vienna in 1908 to escape pogroms and pursue music.³³ He studied at the Kaiserlich-Königliche Akademie für Musik und Darstellende Kunst (also known as the Royal Imperial Academy of Music) and the University of Vienna. After graduation, he held numerous teaching and conducting positions, including at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Vienna. He even served as conductor of the World Zionist Congress in 1925, where he may have first met Rubenovitz. Mishkan Tefila hired Braslavsky as music director in 1928, where he remained for his entire career.³⁴

Braslavsky brought musical renown to Mishkan Tefila, in part from the manner in which he used the organ during services. Organs, or indeed musical instruments in general, are not usually found in Conservative synagogues, although there have been several notable exceptions.³⁵ The organ at Mishkan Tefila accompanied congregational, choral, and even cantorial singing and was often used during interludes. Rubenovitz decided to include the organ in regular worship during a 1913 visit to Europe as a delegate to the World Zionist Congress.³⁶ In chronicling this trip, he wrote:

For the first time in my life I realized the inherent beauty and majesty of our traditional synagogue service when clothed in the dignity, the decorum, and the glorious musical setting, which I found in the leading temples of Paris, Berlin and Vienna. Then and there I resolved to transplant some of that beauty and spirituality into my own Mishkan Tefila.... [I]t came about that at a stormy meeting of the congregation my views prevailed by a vote of 67 in favor and 54 against. And thus it was decided that henceforth we were to have organ music and a mixed choir at our services on Sabbaths and holidays.³⁷

Mishkan Tefila's organ was truly magnificent, second only in size and quality to that of Symphony Hall in Boston.³⁸ The instrument, designed and constructed by the Frazee Organ Company, was "a four-manual-pedal instrument of seventy-five stops, seven divisions, and more than four thousand pipes."³⁹

Several accounts state that Bernstein particularly enjoyed the sound of the organ. With his limited exposure to music, and certainly lacking

familiarity with church music, Bernstein probably would not have heard an organ before attending this synagogue. One source noted that “the music of the organ and the choir made the boy burst into tears.”⁴⁰ In retrospect, Bernstein observed that when he heard the organ there for the first time, “It was the Mighty Wurlitzer itself to me.”⁴¹ Author Enrico Castiglione referred to the instrument as “that organ that seemed to sound as if it came from God.”⁴² This statement might seem like hyperbole, but because the organ pipes were hidden high from view, to the young boy, the music probably did seem to emanate from God.

Braslavsky’s impact extended beyond his organ performances. In an interview, Burton Bernstein noted, “Braslavsky was Leonard Bernstein’s first *very* great influence.... Braslavsky affected Lenny personally and professionally. He was a terrific musician. He really whipped the choir into shape.... On trips we would go through his [Braslavsky’s] arrangements.”⁴³ Burton went on to explain that the Bernstein children were so moved by Braslavsky’s music that they were able to sing much of it by heart.⁴⁴ Of this music, he noted, “It was terrific. And Lenny was so taken with it, and I would say it was an immense influence in so much of what he did: *Jeremiah Symphony*, *Kaddish*, the *Mass*, all sorts of things. Enormous.”⁴⁵ Shirley Bernstein concurs, noting:

Lenny’s first real experience with some of the great composers of the past [in the Western tradition] was in the Temple.... The music heard in the Temple helped to make the time spent there a moving experience for Lenny. His composing career reflects the influence of that experience.⁴⁶

She further notes:

Using the talents of the sweet-voiced cantor and his disciplined choir to the fullest, Professor Brasslovsky [*sic*] would make impressive arrangements of the litanies and hymns, arrangements highly influenced by many of the great composers of the past. Lenny and I can still sing much of what we heard there in those early years. Now we recognize the sounds of Giuseppe Verdi, Ernest Bloch, Modest Mussorgsky, Felix Mendelssohn, and Franz Schubert. When we first heard them, we thought it was all Professor Braslavsky.⁴⁷

Bernstein himself states that Braslavsky's pieces were "very much influenced by Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, and even Mahler. And I used to weep just listening to the choir, cantor and organ thundering out—it was a big influence on me."⁴⁸

Indeed, Bernstein maintained a lifelong affinity for the Jewish-born Mahler. Clurman believes that Bernstein's passion for Mahler was also inspired by Braslavsky. She states, "I think he [Braslavsky] probably taught Bernstein who Gustav Mahler was, who all of these great composers were."⁴⁹ Carol Oja and Kay Kaufman Shelemay suggest, "It is intriguing to speculate about whether the young Bernstein might have heard Braslavsky share memories of Vienna."⁵⁰ It is merely speculation, though, because no conclusive information exists. Nevertheless, it is clear that the German-Viennese style of composition favored by Braslavsky made an impression on Bernstein.

Performances at Mishkan Tefila

Once Bernstein "discovered" music, he practiced incessantly and performed anywhere there was a piano, including in various programs at Mishkan Tefila. Meryle Secrest states that Bernstein made his first professional appearance there at age thirteen, playing works by Chopin and Liszt.⁵¹ In 1932, Mishkan Tefila invited Bernstein to present a recital for a meeting of the Brotherhood, of which Sam was an active member.⁵² Humphrey Burton states, "As an expression of his gratitude, Leonard included in his program a set of variations, improvised in the style of Bach, Chopin, and Gershwin, based on a Hasidic meditation he had heard his father sing while taking a shower."⁵³

The following year, Mishkan Tefila presented "The Miracle of the Ages," a play written and produced by Mrs. Mignon Rubenovitz. The program from this performance shows that all three of the Bernstein children participated (Figure 4). At this point, Leonard would have been fifteen years old. It is unknown what his role was, but very likely it was musical in some way.

Mrs. Rubenovitz staged another large-scale production a few years later in 1936. This program, titled "The Golden Slippers," involved numerous people from Mishkan Tefila and the larger Boston Jewish community. Bernstein, now at Harvard, opened the program with several piano pieces, including an original composition called *Two*

Little Blessings

May the spirit of the Maccabees live within the hearts of these children. May they grow and thrive, bring joy to their parents, and honor to the House of Israel.

RABBI H. H. RUBENOVITZ

A

Abramson, Arline Elaine
Alberston, Paul Richard
Alberts, Elise Carol
Alpert, Leonard
Alpert, Richard
Alpert, William

B

Balter, Alan Lewis
Bergman, Charles Cabe
Bergman, Marylin Francis
Berman, Jordan Arnold
Bernstein, Burton
Bernstein, Leonard
Bernstein, Shirley
Bloom, Hebert W.
Boiarsky, Selma Lee
Bornstein, Marjorie Irene
Brilliant, Richard
Bunson, Lois

C

Clayman, Phyllis Rosalind
Cohen, Donald J.
Cohen, Edith Leah
Cohen, Joan Arline
Cohen, Sandra Harriet
Crane, Jean

D

Davidow, Ernest
Davidow, Newton
Dennis, Stanley M.

E

Edison, Charles
Edison, Dorothy
Edison, Muriel
Edison, Robert
Eisenberg, Frederick Aaron

F

Finkovitch, Elliot M.
Finn, Sylvia Ruth
Flaschner, Franklin N.
Flaschner, Jerrold
Flax, Susan Mayra
Frank, Peter

Friedman, Murray Lee
Friedman, Rosalind Dorothy
Friedman, Tobe

G

Galbenewetz, Fay Ann
Gerson, Ruth
Gerson, Thelma
Glickstein, Helaine B.
Glickstein, Judith
Glickstein, Mishel
Goldberg, Shepard Joseph
Goldblatt, Cecile
Golden, Allan Marvin
Goldman, Bernice
Goldman, Carol Lee
Goldman, Elaine
Goldman, Ethel
Goldman, Paul Morris
Goldstein, Celia
Goldstein, Edward Martin
Goldstein, Stanley David
Goodman, Jane
Goodman, Joy Elaine
Goose, J. Keeva
Goose, Sandra Gladys
Gurvitz, Joan Rose
Gurvitz, Nancy New

H

Herzberg, Jerrold Robert
Hoffman, Doris
Hoffman, Gladys
Hoffman, Herbert
Hoffman, Jeanne
Hoffman, Libby

I

Izenstadt, Frances

K

Kaplan, Dorothy Ann
Kaplan, Dorothy Anne
Kaplan, Ruth Lora
Karas, Marilyn
Kaufman, Alice B.
Kaufman, Earl B.
Kay, Millard M.
Klarfeld, Harriet Ruth

Figure 4: List of children performing in "Miracle of the Ages," taken from Mrs. H. H. Rubenovitz, Grand Ball and Presentation, "Miracle of the Ages: A Morality Play in Ten Scenes." (Boston: Temple Mishkan Tefila, 1993), 35.

PROGRAM

INVOCATION	RABBI SAMUEL J. ABRAMS
GRACE AFTER MEAL	RABBI JOSEPH MARGOLIES
OPENING ADDRESS	B. LEONARD KOLOVSON <i>General Chairman</i>
TOASTMASTER	HON. ELIHU D. STONE
PIANO SOLO	LEONARD BERNSTEIN
GREETINGS: MISHKAN TEFILA FAMILY	ABRAHAM A. BLOOM
SISTERHOOD	BROTHERHOOD
JUNIOR COUNCIL	JUNIOR SISTERHOOD
JUNIOR BROTHERHOOD	
GREETINGS: UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF AMERICA	RABBI LOUIS M. EPSTEIN
VOCAL SOLO:	CANTOR ISZO G. GLICKSTEIN
ACCOMPANIED BY PROF. S. BRASLAVSKY	
GREETINGS: NEW ENGLAND ZIONISTS	DR. HYMAN MORRISON
GREETINGS: HADASSAH	MRS. JULIAN ANSELL
PRESENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS	JOSEPH SONNABEND
ADDRESS	DR. LOUIS FINKELSTEIN
VOCAL SOLO	MRS. CHARLES KLARFELD
PRESENTATION OF GIFTS	MYER H. SLOBODKIN
PAINTINGS OF RABBI AND MRS. HERMAN H. RUBENOVITZ	
By JOSEPH TEPPER	
UNVEILING OF PORTRAITS	{ BARBARA RUTH SLOBODKIN JASON EDWIN STARR
RESPONSE	MRS. HERMAN H. RUBENOVITZ
ADDRESS	RABBI HERMAN H. RUBENOVITZ
HATIKVAH	

Figure 5: Program from the Silver Jubilee Celebration in honor of Rabbi Rubenovitz, "Temple Mishkan Tefila/Silver Jubilee/Dinner-Reception/Programs (1936), folder I-462, (Courtsey American Jewish Historical Society, Boston)

Nocturnes (based on Hebraic Spring Melodies).⁵⁴ The movements are labeled “Rite” and “Hora.”⁵⁵ Bernstein scholar Jack Gottlieb notes that this manuscript is lost⁵⁶ and it is unclear on which “Hebraic spring melodies” they are based. The program also states that Bernstein served as piano accompanist for violinist Samuel J. Leibovici and tenor Eugene Connolly.⁵⁷ The works offered are rather challenging. Certainly Leibovici, a member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, would have known many pianists, but he chose Bernstein. As a young musician, Bernstein was gaining valuable musical experience, in large part thanks to Mishkan Tefila.

Bernstein appeared in yet another production the same year, this time in honor of Rubenovitz’s twenty-fifth anniversary as spiritual leader of the synagogue. Although the program does not state which pieces Bernstein performed, it is clear that he played a piano solo (Figure 5). In the audience were numerous dignitaries from Mishkan Tefila and the greater Boston community, many of whom were there to offer presentations to Rubenovitz.

Even during his college years at Harvard, Bernstein continued to attend services at Mishkan Tefila whenever he could.⁵⁸ His family maintained its membership and active participation as well: Sam served on the board for many years, and Bernstein’s mother, Jennie, attended regularly on Shabbat.⁵⁹ According to Burton Bernstein, sister Shirley “was also very much a part of” the synagogue whenever she was in Boston.⁶⁰ In essence, the synagogue became a second home to the Bernsteins. Indeed, congregant Anita Kurland observed succinctly, “Lenny was family ... at Mishkan Tefila.”⁶¹

Actually, he was more than family. Burton Bernstein observes, “The Boston Jewish community, in particular, adopted Lenny as a collective son—he was Boston’s own, and a Jewish boy, after all—and people of my parents’ generation absorbed vicarious *nakhas* by merely being in the same room as Jennie and Sam.”⁶² To show his appreciation for the synagogue’s support, Bernstein sent an autographed publicity photo of himself, inscribed, “For Mishkan Tefila, Sincerely, Leonard Bernstein, NYC 1945.”

Lenny and Felicia’s Wedding and Alexander’s Bar Mitzvah

Since Bernstein had such a long-standing relationship with Mishkan Tefila, it made sense that he would get married there. When he and Felicia Montealegre became engaged, Bernard Short, then-president of Mishkan Tefila, sent them a congratulatory letter, stating in part:

I do hope that your marriage will be solemnized at our Temple on the same pulpit on which your Bar Mitzvah was celebrated and on which you chanted many a *Maftir*. I am most pleased to offer you the facilities of our Temple for this great *simcha*. . . . Mishkan Tefila is proud indeed of its illustrious son. I have been following, with justifiable pride, your rise to the distinguished position you have achieved in the realm of music, and am eagerly looking forward to the glorious future that is in store for you.⁶³

Bernstein did, indeed, wed Felicia at Mishkan Tefila on 8 September 1951. According to John Briggs, the wedding was Orthodox; however, that could not have been the case, since the synagogue was Conservative.⁶⁴ Although Felicia had a Jewish father, she was not brought up Jewish, having been taught by nuns.⁶⁵ She converted to Judaism the morning of the wedding, although she claims her Catholic mother never knew.⁶⁶ In fact, her mother made the sign of the cross before she entered the synagogue and crossed her fingers during the service.⁶⁷ Author David Ewen notes that the wedding was a simple religious ceremony, attended by thirty-three guests.⁶⁸ This number represented a compromise: Bernstein wanted thirteen (“the first two rows of the temple”), while Felicia wanted “thousands.”⁶⁹ Rubenovitz’s successor, Rabbi Israel Kazis, and Cantor Gregor Shelkan performed the ceremony.⁷⁰ The reception that followed at Bernstein’s parents’ house included many more additional guests.⁷¹

Leonard and Felicia had three children: Jamie (1952), Alexander (1955), and Nina (1962). Together, the Bernstein family observed traditions of both Judaism and Christianity, especially with regard to holidays. In an interview, Alexander Bernstein noted that he did not belong to a synagogue growing up in New York. Instead, he recalled his experience attending services on the High Holidays:

From when I was about five or six, my father would bring me along to do . . . *shul* hopping and it was different every year. . . . It became this sort of treat. I enjoyed it because we didn’t stay in one place all day long. It was an hour or so. I was happy to see my father just stopping. And I got the day off from school. Most of the time, he had a driver and a car. So a couple of the synagogues were Orthodox, so he’d have the driver drop us off

at the end of the block and we'd walk. I think he loved the Fifth Avenue Synagogue. He really liked the cantor and the feeling and the very serious business of the place. They were happy to see him.... It was hard to get tickets to Temple Emanuel and the Metropolitan Synagogue.⁷²

Biographer Meryle Secrest notes that in 1968, when Alexander was thirteen, Bernstein spoke with Rabbi Kazis “about preparing [Alexander] for his Bar Mitzvah ... and went to some pains to ensure that the boy received exemplary instruction.”⁷³ When asked why Alexander chose to celebrate becoming a bar mitzvah at Mishkan Tefila, he replied:

My grandfather had a heart attack in, I guess, '66 or '67. He was frail. I really don't remember my feelings or how the subject came up whether I would be Bar Mitzvah or if I was encouraged to do it. We spent that summer before in Italy, with my father teaching me Hebrew, what Bar Mitzvah meant and so on, which was terrific. That fall, I started going to Saturday School. I went for about two weeks. I was so miserable. We negotiated a tutor who came weekly.... So we worked on Torah reading. I think there was just no other. If I was doing it, it was going to be Mishkan Tefila. It was never even a discussion. In my mind, I was doing it mostly for my grandfather. That's where he was.⁷⁴

Alexander's comments reveal that his parents chose Mishkan Tefila to please his grandfather. However, a letter from Sam to Leonard and Felicia suggests that, while this choice would make the older man happy, it might not be the most appropriate one. Sam writes:

I spoke to the Rabbi about the plan we discussed about having Alexander's Bar Mitzvah at the [*sic*] Temple Mishkan Tefila. While he was enthused, there seems to be a by-law that no Bar Mitzvah can be allowed at our temple unless the child attends our school for three years. However, at their next [board] meeting, he will recommend an exception in our case, and he will let me know the results. Anyway, as I told you, I think it might be better to have the Bar Mitzvah in New York. I think Alexander would be happier to be with his friends.⁷⁵

Ultimately, the Bernsteins decided to celebrate the bar mitzvah at Mishkan Tefila, ostensibly to be closer to Sam. The board did make an exception for the family. While Alexander may not have enjoyed his experience at Saturday School, he was thrilled to be able to study with his father. He remarked, "I loved the attention. It meant that I got to have time with him that my sisters didn't. . . . It was a family obligation."⁷⁶

In addition to Leonard's tutelage, Alexander also studied with the ritual director at Mishkan Tefila, Michael Domba, who worked with him on his *haftarah*. Leonard decided that he wanted to read Torah at the service. Domba gave him a tape recording of the chanted section with which to practice. At the service, Bernstein came up to the Torah, took out the written notation of the chant and placed it directly on the Torah, an unaccepted practice, as one is required to read from the Torah itself. Cantor Finkelstein noted, "It was against the *halachah*, but it was Leonard Bernstein, so what can you do?"⁷⁷ He further noted that Domba remarked that it was the most perfect reading he had ever heard in his life.⁷⁸ Burton Bernstein, when questioned about this incident, could not recall it but replied, "It's probably true."⁷⁹ Alexander added, "I don't remember that at all, but it's an absolutely perfect story."⁸⁰

According to congregant Anita Kurland, the service was fairly typical; Kazis officiated and Sam took part as well.⁸¹ Many public figures attended the reception afterwards, including Adolph Green, a Bernstein friend and collaborator.⁸² According to Alexander, the reception was held at his grandparents' home.⁸³

Because Bernstein was an international celebrity, several newspapers reported the story. Not surprisingly, these articles often focused on Leonard rather than Alexander. For example, the *Sunday Herald Traveler* remarked that the service took place at Mishkan Tefila rather than a New York synagogue because of Bernstein's ties there. The article mentioned Leonard's obvious pride in his son, but in a characteristic Bernstein critique, Leonard noted that "except for two or three minor mistakes in the Hebrew reading, everything was perfect."⁸⁴

Other Visits to Mishkan Tefila

Meryle Secrest discusses the adult Bernstein's relationship with the synagogue:

In due course, Bernstein assumed his father's position as a prominent member of Mishkan Tefila, which by that time

had moved from its Roxbury premises to a new sanctuary in Newton. Rabbi Kazis said that Bernstein came to the synagogue whenever he was in Boston and sat beside him on the pulpit. Bernstein would always be awarded an honor of some kind, such as opening the Ark during the Yom Kippur service, a privilege usually reserved for the president of the temple.⁸⁵

Finkelstein recounts the story told by Shelkan that when Bernstein attended services, he would often go “up to the choir loft where he apparently proceeded to both play the organ and conduct the choir.”⁸⁶ Gertrude Saunders, a former choir member, also noted that Bernstein would sit in the choir loft and watch when he came to Mishkan Tefila. However, she did not remember his playing the organ.⁸⁷

Bernstein served as a guest speaker on several occasions at Mishkan Tefila. Bluma “Billie” Stein, Glickstein’s niece, recalled that Bernstein spoke at her Hebrew school graduation.⁸⁸ In 1947, Kazis asked Bernstein to talk to the congregation; Bernstein’s topic for the 6 February event was, “Our First Illiterates.”⁸⁹ A few years later, Bernstein gave another presentation, titled, “A Report from Israel.”⁹⁰ Bernstein was frequently called upon to speak, especially within the Jewish community, and often in Boston. In a 1951 letter to his secretary, Helen Coates, he wrote, “I want a little rest from being a professional Jew. I would love to be, for a while at least, just a human being.”⁹¹

Bernstein performed at Mishkan Tefila at a benefit for the Brotherhood in January of 1962. Shirley Bernstein recounts, “He took a well-known theme sung by the choir during services, and played it in the manner of Chopin, Liszt, and Gershwin. Father enjoyed this moment and congratulations from his friends.”⁹² Shirley is almost correct in her statement: The choir did not sing this piece. It was one her brother wrote called “Mediations on a Song My Father Sang in the Shower,” based upon music from an early recital, discussed above. This time, the occasion was Sam’s seventieth birthday celebration. Figure 6 shows Bernstein performing this work as his family watches intently.

Bernstein, Rubenovitz, and Braslavsky

Bernstein continued to correspond with Rubenovitz and Braslavsky as an adult. In 1944, three months after Bernstein’s New York Philharmonic debut, Rubenovitz wrote to Bernstein:

Your rise in the musical field has been truly phenomenal [*sic*]. To be sure, we of the Mishkan Tefila family always knew that you had a great future before you in the realm of music, but we little dreamt that your progress would be as rapid and that at twenty-five you would be acclaimed as a master.⁹³



Figure 6: Photo of Bernstein playing piano for family members. It appeared in the *Boston Herald* on 9 January 1962. (Courtesy Boston Public Library Print Department. Photo by Richard Bielinski.)

Bernstein's feelings towards Rubenovitz were so strong that he returned to Mishkan Tefila to honor him on the occasion of the rabbi's seventieth birthday in 1953.

However, even more than Rubenovitz, it was the friendship with Braslavsky that continued to grow and flourish. According to Braslavsky's granddaughter, Rebecca Silverman, Bernstein turned pages for Braslavsky on *Kol Nidre* whenever he happened to be in town.⁹⁴ In a letter dated 10 October 1946, Bernstein wrote to Braslavsky, "I have come to realize what a debt I really owe to you—personally—for the marvelous music at the Mishkan Tefila services."⁹⁵ Additionally, Sarna observes, "One suspects that Bernstein appreciated—sooner, perhaps, than others did—the breadth and depth of Braslavsky's knowledge, and the significance of

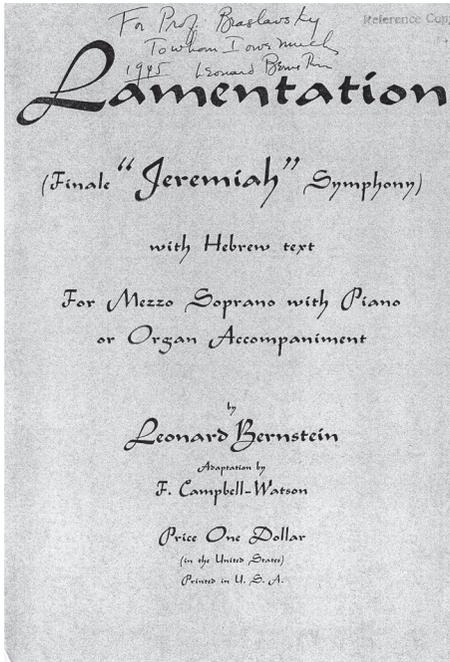


Figure 7: Signed title page of “Lamentation,”
finale *Jeremiah Symphony* 1945.
(Courtesy Archive of
Congregation Mishkan Tefila)

his lifelong interest into the question of what made music distinctively Jewish.”⁹⁶ As a token of his appreciation, Bernstein sent Braslavsky an autographed copy of his “Lamentations,” the third movement of *Jeremiah Symphony*. It is inscribed “For Prof. Braslavsky, to whom I owe much, 1945, Leonard Bernstein.” (Figure 7). This score is indeed rare, as the piece is no longer published as a separate movement. Originally, this music existed as a part of “Hebrew Song” for mezzo soprano and orchestra, composed in 1939.⁹⁷

Bernstein participated in “Mishkan Tefila Night at the Boston Pops” on 24 May 1954, in which Braslavsky conducted part of the program and various ensembles performed

Braslavsky’s music. Leon Steinberg, then-president of the synagogue, asked Bernstein to be “honorary General Chairman” of the event. Bernstein replied that he would be happy to serve, noting that “The Temple has always been for me a symbol of whatever is best in human impulse and behavior, and I value its influence on me now more than ever.”⁹⁸ After the event, Steinberg wrote, “I express the deep and sincere appreciation of the Congregation for lending us the prestige of your name and the brilliance and charm of your personality which contributed so largely to the fantastic success of Temple Mishkan Tefila POPS NITE [*sic*] last Monday Nite [*sic*].”⁹⁹

Three years later, Braslavsky wrote a letter to Bernstein, stating in part, “Your [New York] Philharmonic appointment makes me feel extremely happy. Congrats and more power to you. I am too excited for more words.”¹⁰⁰ That same year, Bernstein received a letter from Jack Wilson, the program coordinator of the Brotherhood. Wilson states that the Brotherhood was:

about to be dissolved because of Temple's move to Newton.... We would very much like to make this occasion one of outstanding importance—something to be remembered. Further, we are agreed that we also would like to honor an old friend of yours at this affair. We owe much to the cooperation of Professor Braslavsky, and recognize that he has never received the acclaim which he so deserves.¹⁰¹

Helen Coates replied that, unfortunately, Bernstein was not able to attend since he conducted the New York Philharmonic every Sunday in January.¹⁰²

Braslavsky later invited Bernstein to the bat mitzvah service of his granddaughter, Rebecca, at Mishkan Tefila. Braslavsky wrote, "I promise, if I am alive and you should invite me to the Bas-Mitzvah of Jamie, please God, I shall try my best to attend."¹⁰³ Coates typed on the note that Bernstein was not available. In November 1966, David Stein, then-president of Mishkan Tefila, wrote to Bernstein asking him to come to the upcoming testimonial concert for Braslavsky. Stein wrote, "Every time I see him [Braslavsky] in Temple, he asks me whether I have heard from you."¹⁰⁴ Coates wrote on the letter that Bernstein was again too busy to go but that he would send "a taped message to be played at the concert."¹⁰⁵

As evidenced by Coates's notes, Bernstein did not visit Mishkan Tefila as often as he once did because of his overcrowded schedule. However, his absences did not mean that his feelings had diminished. On the contrary, Bernstein's letters to Braslavsky show a closeness, even a *chutzpah*, that no one else shared with him. For example, Bernstein addressed a 1952 letter to "Dear Brasy."¹⁰⁶ No one other than Leonard Bernstein could use such a level of familiarity with Braslavsky. However, Braslavsky was so proud of his protégé that he did not seem to mind. When Bernstein became codirector of the New York Philharmonic, Braslavsky wrote him a warm congratulatory note, praising him for both his conducting and compositional abilities. He states, "[Y]ou reached your goal by your OWN merits (no string [*sic*], no politics) and with your OWN NAME. It is neither BERNini, nor STEINkovsky. It's what you always were, what you are and what you always will be [emphasis his]."¹⁰⁷ The reference is to the attempt by Serge Koussevitzky, Boston Symphony's music director, to have Bernstein change his name to something less Jewish; Koussevitzky had suggested "Leonard S. Burns."¹⁰⁸

On 24 January 1973, congregant Esther Chorover wrote to Bernstein informing him that Braslavsky was at the Star of David nursing home. She noted that Braslavsky had hardening of the arteries and his memory was slipping. However, she further observed:

But when I convinced him to come to the piano he was “with it!” He scolded and harangued at my interpretations just as he did when I first worked with him in 1934. It was actually exciting because when it came to “*nusach*,” he was still Professor Braslavsky.... Somehow ... when I think of his references to Leonard Bernstein, I conclude that his efforts at Mishkan Tefila did make an impression on you.¹⁰⁹

Indeed they did. The following week, Bernstein wrote to Braslavsky in the nursing home:

Dearest Prof. Braslavsky:

I have just heard of your whereabouts and hasten to send my warmest wishes for a good and healthy 1973. I think of you very often, and never forget the tremendous influence you and your music made on me when I was a youngster. I am always grateful and remember you tenderly....

Loving wishes and greetings,

Leonard Bernstein

31 Jan. '73¹¹⁰

As evidenced in part by this letter, Congregation Mishkan Tefila served several important functions in the life of Leonard Bernstein. At the synagogue, he learned to appreciate the tradition and culture of Judaism, aided by Herman Rubenovitz and, later, Israel Kazis. Rubenovitz also demonstrated eloquence of speech, modeling a style that Bernstein would later incorporate into his preconcert lectures at the New York Philharmonic and his television shows *Omnibus* and his *Young People's Concerts*. The synagogue also served as the venue for several of Bernstein's early performances. In addition, the high-caliber musical production that was so integral to every service influenced Bernstein tremendously. Iszo Glickstein and, especially, Solomon Braslavsky demonstrated the rich multifaceted tapestry that is Jewish music, as well as works of the Western classical music tradition. Bernstein incorporated much of this Jewish

musical style into his later pieces. Even as an adult, he continued to be influenced by the mentors he met there. In a letter to Samuel Rosenbaum, the executive vice president of the Cantors Assembly of America, he wrote:

Before I ever heard a concert, recital, or opera, before I had ever touched a piano, or knew that an organized musical life existed—before all these, I heard the music that Professor Braslavsky caused to be made at Temple Mishkan Tefila. I shall never forget that music, nor cease to be grateful for the power, conviction and atmosphere with which it was conveyed. I may have heard greater masterpieces performed since then, and under more impressive circumstances; but I have never been more deeply moved. Braslavsky's music and music-making will always be with me, as a cherished memory and influence.¹¹¹

Braslavsky helped to shape Bernstein's life in a way that no one else did. Conversely, Bernstein profoundly affected the lives of the clergy, music director, and congregants of Mishkan Tefila and the Jewish community of Boston at large. Despite his world travels and home in New York City, Leonard Bernstein's Jewish heart would remain forever in Boston.

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Notes

¹Jonathan Sarna, "Leonard Bernstein and the Boston Jewish Community of His Youth: The Influence of Solomon Braslavsky, Herman Rubenovitz, and Congregation Mishkan Tefila," *Journal for the Society of American Music* 3, no. 1 (February 2009): 43–44. Sarna's article helped provide an essential foundation upon which my doctoral dissertation was built. See "The Relationship between Solomon Braslavsky, Congregation Mishkan Tefila, and Leonard Bernstein," University of Kentucky, 2013.

²Burton Bernstein, *Leonard Bernstein: Boston to Broadway. Concerts and Symposia at Harvard University*, Carol J. Oja and Judith Clurman, co-artistic directors, compact disc, 2006. Although the synagogue as an institution dates to 1858, this structure was built in 1925 in

the predominantly Jewish suburb of Roxbury. The spacious sanctuary allowed for seating for two thousand worshippers. Hillel Levine and Lawrence Harrison, *The Death of an American-Jewish Community: A Tragedy of Good Intentions* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 130. Rabbi Israel Kazis, Rubenovitz's successor, observes, "From 1946 through 1953, the attendance at Friday Evening Services did not fall below 1,000." *Temple Mishkan Tefila: A History 1858–1958* (Newton, MA: Temple Mishkan Tefila, 1958), 32. After the congregation moved to Chestnut Hill in 1958, the Roxbury structure became the United House of Prayer.³ For more information on Mishkan Tefila, see *Temple Mishkan Tefila or Congregation Mishkan Tefila 1858–1983* (Stoughton, MA: Alpine Press, 1984). Despite the fact that it is a Conservative synagogue, it was often called Temple Mishkan Tefila in the early part of the twentieth century.

⁴Sarna, "Leonard Bernstein," 40. Carol J. Oja and Kay Kaufman Shelemay assert that the family joined in 1920, although this author could find no evidence to support their claim. Carol J. Oja and Kay Kaufman Shelemay, "Leonard Bernstein's Jewish Boston: Cross-Disciplinary Research in the Classroom," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 3, no. 1 (February 2009): 5. Elsewhere, Sarna states that the date is 1923, which would have made Leonard five years old: "In 1923, around the time that the Bernstein family joined Mishkan Tefila, the congregation engaged a distinguished Russian cantor named Izso G. Glickstein." Sarna, "Leonard Bernstein," 39.

⁵Sam immigrated to avoid the pogroms and conscription into the Russian army. He was born in the Rovno province (*guberniya* in Russian) in Ukraine. Bernstein later integrated this background into "Old Lady's Tango" from *Candide*, which states, "I was not born in Buenos Aires / My father came from Rovno Gubernya / ... I am easily assimilated." Robert Rice, "The Pervasive Musician II," *The New Yorker* 38, no. 48 (18 January 1958): 38. Elizabeth Wells also notes that the music of this song, although seemingly Spanish, shares similarities with Jewish chants and uses orchestrational techniques that sound similar to klezmer music. Elizabeth A. Wells, *West Side Story: Cultural Perspectives on an American Musical* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011), 119.

⁶Paul Myers states that the Bernsteins joined Mishkan Tefila simply because it was closer to home than the Orthodox synagogue. Paul Myers, *Leonard Bernstein* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 15.

⁷Burton Bernstein, *Family Matters: Sam, Jennie, and the Kids* (New York: Summit Books, 1982), 68. The synagogue's use of the organ will be discussed in a later section of this article. Occasionally, Sam felt the need to attend the Crawford Street Synagogue or Beth Pinchas, both Orthodox synagogues. Bernstein, *Family Matters*, 83; Meryle Secrest, *Leonard Bernstein: A Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 12. Burton Bernstein notes, "These visits both purged him and, in the end, repelled him." Bernstein, *Family Matters*, 83. In the summers, the Bernstein family stayed in the nearby town of Sharon, which was host to a small Jewish community. There, Sam joined Congregation Adath Sharon, where he served as treasurer. Humphrey Burton, *Leonard Bernstein* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 21. The town and its inhabitants served as the focus of Burton Bernstein's loosely fictionalized book, *The Grove* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961).

⁸*Annual Register of Congregation Mishkan Tefila* (Boston: n.p., 1935), 6. Shirley Bernstein's recollection is somewhat different. She notes that Hebrew school ran for one and one-half hours, during which time Leonard learned Bible and Jewish history as well as Hebrew. She further observes that her brother was "full of mischief" there. Shirley Bernstein, *Making Music: Leonard Bernstein* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Press, 1963), 19.

⁹Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 14. By comparison, Burton Bernstein stated that he never went to Hebrew school and disliked preparing to become a bar mitzvah. Telephone interview with Burton Bernstein by the author, 22 April 2010.

¹⁰Leonard Bernstein, "My Musical Childhood," interview with Humphrey Burton, 15 September 1986, personal papers of Humphrey Burton, Leonard Bernstein Collection, roll 3, 9, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Letters and quotes by Leonard Bernstein used by permission of The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc.

¹¹Although Sam lacked a thorough secular education, his knowledge of Judaism was extensive, especially in Talmud. When Leonard attended the Boston Latin School, he wrote an essay titled "Father's Books," which dealt with the importance of the Talmud in all aspects of his father's life. This essay appears in Bernstein's book *Findings* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 13–14. Shirley Bernstein recalls, "I think I can say that our father, Sam, read that [*sic*] Talmud every night of his life. And when you consider the thousands of onion-skin pages with that tiny print, you begin to fathom the measure of his devotion. When he died, he left the whole set to Lenny, who cherished it as an emblem of his father's love of study and pride in his Jewish heritage." Shirley Bernstein, as quoted in *Property from the Estate of Leonard Bernstein* (New York: Sotheby's, 1997), 88. Ritual practice was often less important and frequently inconsistent. For example, the Bernsteins kept strictly kosher at home but ate whatever they wanted when they dined out. Bernstein, *Family Matters*, 84; Michael Freedland, *Leonard Bernstein* (London: Harrap, 1987), 12. Throughout his adult life, Leonard also was inconsistent in his Judaic observance, selecting only those aspects that appealed to him. Indeed, Joan Peyser, the most controversial of Bernstein's biographers, lambasted him for his apparent lapses in Judaic practice. Joan Peyser, *Bernstein: A Biography*, revised edition (New York: Billboard Books, 1998), 175–176 and 436–437.

¹²"Leonard Bernstein on Matters Jewish," 1981 unpublished recording, Leonard Bernstein audio materials, RGA 4105, Library of Congress. Letters and quotes by Leonard Bernstein used by permission of The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc. Sam was so proud of Leonard that he bought him a grand piano and took him on a cruise to the Panama Canal. Myers, *Leonard Bernstein*, 19.

¹³Rubenovitz was an early leader in the Conservative movement, having studied under Solomon Schechter at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. Along with Jacob Kohn and Mordecai Kaplan, he helped found United Synagogue, the governing body of Conservative Judaism. David Kaufman, *Shul with a Pool: The "Synagogue-Center" in American Jewish History* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 1999), 213. See also Michael R. Cohen, *The Birth of Conservative Judaism: Solomon Schechter's Disciples and the Creation of an American Religious Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). Rubenovitz's wife, Mignon, helped found Hadassah and served as vice president of the Women's League of the United Synagogue. Herman Rubenovitz and Mignon Rubenovitz, *The Waking Heart* (Cambridge, MA: Nathaniel Dame & Company, 1967), 57. Additionally, she authored several books and organized a museum of Jewish artifacts

at the synagogue, which still exists. Mignon Rubenovitz, *Altars of My Fathers* (Boston: Jewish Museum, Temple Mishkan Tefila, 1954).

¹⁴Edmond H. Weiss, “Lenny the Klezmer,” *Moment* 18, no. 1 (January 1993): 42, 45. Peyser, *Bernstein: A Biography*, 24. Bernstein was the host of two television programs in the 1950s: *Omnibus* and *Young People’s Concerts*, the latter of which featured the New York Philharmonic, with Bernstein as conductor. Rabbi Harvey Tattelbaum, a previous congregant, suggests that Rubenovitz also influenced Bernstein through the former’s ardent Zionism. Bernstein was a passionate supporter of Israel throughout his adult life. Interview with Rabbi Harvey Tattelbaum and Judith Clurman, “Before *West Side Story*: Leonard Bernstein’s Boston,” class interviews online, 28 February 2006, <http://my.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=bernstein> (accessed 16 July 2015).

¹⁵Letter from Leonard Bernstein to David Stern, then-president of Mishkan Tefila, 27 April 1964, Leonard Bernstein Collection, correspondence, box 48, folder 44, Library of Congress. Letters and quotes by Leonard Bernstein used by permission of The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc.

¹⁶Telephone interview with Burton Bernstein by the author, 22 April 2010. Apparently, the Bernstein brothers thought it was funny to call the rabbi “Ha Ha,” since Rubenovitz’s initials were “H.H.” Burton made a similar reference in a group interview at Harvard in the fall of 2006. See Burton Bernstein, *Leonard Bernstein: Boston to Broadway*.

¹⁷Letter from Rabbi Herman Rubenovitz to Harvard University, 7 May 1935, Herman Rubenovitz Papers, box 12, folder 1, Jewish Theological Seminary Archives, New York.

¹⁸Myers, *Leonard Bernstein*, 16. Humphrey Burton states essentially the same thing: “He [Bernstein] later cited religious music as the biggest influence on him in childhood.” Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 8. In an unpublished interview with Burton, Bernstein recalled, “A very big musical influence in my life ... was the synagogue, the temple that we attended on Friday evenings.” Leonard Bernstein, “My Musical Childhood,” unpublished interview with Humphrey Burton, 15 September 1986, Leonard Bernstein Collection, roll 2, 5–6, Library of Congress.

¹⁹“Leonard Bernstein on Matters Jewish.” Letters and quotes by Leonard Bernstein used by permission of The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc.

²⁰Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 7–8.

²¹*Leonard Bernstein—Reaching for the Note: The Definitive Look at the Man and His Music*, written and directed by Susan Lacy, American Masters Television Series, WinStar Home Entertainment, 1998, 117 minutes, videotape. Conductor Michael Barrett is quoted as recalling Bernstein’s linking music and religion. “He said when he was a little child, his father, Sam, used to take him to visit what Lenny calls his Hasidic friends. And he remembers watching these guys in their *payes* and their hats and their big black coats and their *tallis* and everything, dancing and praying, and everything was in music. And it had this certain deep, ancient rhythm to it. And he said it was intoxicating. And he traces his passion for music, which was so extraordinary, to that setting.” Author Alessandro Zignani suggests that the hand clapping and emotional climate of Bernstein’s composition *Mass* stems from this early exposure to Hasidism. Alessandro Zignani, *Leonard Bernstein: Un anima divisa in due* (Varese, Italy: Zecchini, 2009), 3.

²²“Mais la revelation de la véritable musique lui vient de la synagogue.... Cela tient au fait que, dans son esprit, la musique est indissociable de l'idée de Dieu.” Évelyne Resnick, *Leonard Bernstein: un chef inspiré* (Paris: Josette Lyon, 1996), 40–41. However, Resnick continues, “Il est remarquable que, dès son enfance, Bernstein trouvé au temple un réconfort dans la musique et non dans la religion.” Resnick, *Leonard Bernstein*, 41. This statement is not entirely true. While Bernstein did, indeed, take comfort in the music of the synagogue, he also sometimes found comfort in religion, although it was often a difficult relationship. Resnick probably means he had trouble with organized religion. Throughout his life, Bernstein wrestled with his views of God and faith, most famously reflected in the music of his third symphony, *Kaddish* (1963). Bernstein himself testified regarding his symphonies: “They’re all about the crisis in faith. I wouldn’t say that it’s God up there watching over me, as much as me down here looking up to find Him.” “Leonard Bernstein: An Exclusive Interview,” *ASCAP Journal* 6, no. 1 (1972): 7. However, Bernstein succinctly observed, “I pray every day,” although usually not in a synagogue. “Leonard Bernstein on Matters Jewish.” Sam once even noted that his son possessed “*ruach Elohim*, the spirit of God.” Michael Freedland, *Leonard Bernstein*, 92–93.

²³Telephone interview with Janet Stein by the author, 13 July 2009.

²⁴Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 8–9. Obviously, most Conservative synagogues do not use organs. For more on the use of the organ in Jewish worship, see Tina Frühauf, *The Organ and Its Music in German-Jewish Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), especially pp. 22–88 and Allan Tarshish, “The Charleston Organ Case,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (1965): 1–49. Also, contrary to Bernstein’s claim, sometimes the traditional melodies have been notated.

²⁵Telephone interview with Burton Bernstein by the author, 22 April 2010. It is unclear specifically which aspect the Bernstein brothers found to be funny, but presumably, they laughed when Glickstein’s voice cracked.

²⁶Telephone interview with Janet Stein by the author, 13 July 2009.

²⁷Geoffrey B. Fine, “The Vocal Music of Leonard Bernstein: Jewish Interpretations and Applications,” master of sacred music thesis, Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, Brookdale Center, New York, 1998, 2.

²⁸Secrest, *Leonard Bernstein*, 14; Aaron Copland, *The Selected Correspondence of Aaron Copland*, ed. Elizabeth B. Crist (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 155.

²⁹Interview with Judith Clurman by the author, 16 June 2010.

³⁰Interview with Aryeh Finkelstein by the author, 19 June 2009.

³¹Burton Bernstein, *Leonard Bernstein: Boston to Broadway*. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss Braslavsky’s music here. Interested readers are directed to the author’s article “A Forgotten *Un’saneh Tokef*” in an upcoming issue of *Journal of Synagogue Music* for an examination of one of his pieces.

³²Sarna, “Leonard Bernstein,” 35. Thanks in large part to Sarna, Oja, and Shelemay, Braslavsky is beginning to receive a little more attention. In 2006, Oja and Shelemay spearheaded a team research initiative at Harvard titled “Before *West Side Story*: Leonard Bernstein’s Boston,” which centered on Bernstein’s youth. Their efforts culminated in “Leonard Bernstein: Boston to Broadway,” a conference and festival in October of 2006.

Finally, the February 2009 issue of the *Journal of the Society for American Music* devoted itself entirely to Bernstein and somewhat to Braslavsky, focusing on research by Drs. Oja and Shelemay and their students from the Harvard seminar and festival, as well as Sarna's previously mentioned article.

³³The reader is directed to Chapter 3 of the author's dissertation to learn more about Braslavsky's life.

³⁴Braslavsky also engaged in other musical pursuits, such as teaching, giving lectures on various musical and Jewish topics, directing choral groups, and researching Jewish music all over the world.

³⁵The organ first appeared in a synagogue in Westphalia, Germany in 1810 after a rabbinic court allowed it. Geoffrey Goldberg, "Jewish Liturgical Music in the Wake of Nineteenth-Century Reform" in *Sacred Sound and Social Change: Liturgical Music in Jewish and Christian Experience*, ed. Lawrence H. Hoffman and Janet R. Walton (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 60–61; Frühauf, *The Organ and Its Music in German-Jewish Culture*, 28–29. As a result of its popularity, the organ quickly appeared in synagogues all over Europe, often creating controversy. The organ became a more common fixture in twentieth-century American synagogues, first in Reform temples but later moving to some Conservative synagogues. Abraham Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1929; reprint, with a new introduction by Arbie Orenstein, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1992), 335; Emanuel Rubin and John H. Baron, *Music in Jewish History and Culture* (Sterling Heights, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2006), 240–251.

³⁶Mishkan Tefila had owned an organ since 1907, but it was "only used during the Sunday night lectures and any entertainment which may be held in the synagogue." Danielle Clarissa Goburty, "Two Poles of Conservative Judaism: Mishkan Tefila and Kehillath Israel of Boston," senior honor's thesis, Brandeis University, 2008, 45; *The Jewish Advocate*, 28 May 1909, as quoted in *The Jews of Boston*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna, Ellen Smith, and Scott-Martin Kosofsky (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 188–189.

³⁷Herman Rubenovitz, "My Rabbinate" in *Temple Mishkan Tefila: A History*, 21–22.

³⁸"The Music of Mishkan Tefila, Draft II," 8, Archives of Congregation Mishkan Tefila, Braslavsky box; Burton Bernstein, *Leonard Bernstein: Boston to Broadway*.

³⁹*Congregation Mishkan Tefila*, 80. Congregational records show a payment of \$7,210.00 to the Frazee Organ Company in October of 1928. "Monthly Report—October 1928," *Congregation Mishkan Tefila Board Minutes, 1924–1966*, microfilm, reel 2, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁴⁰David Ewen, *Leonard Bernstein: The Fabulous Success Story of a Lonely Boy Who Conquered the World of Music* (New York: Bantam Books, 1960), 9. Secrest and Peyser also state that the choir music made Bernstein burst into tears. Secrest, *Leonard Bernstein*, 14; Peyser, *Bernstein: A Biography*, 24.

⁴¹"Wunderkind," *Time* 69, no. 5 (4 February 1957): 69.

⁴²Enrico Castiglione, *Una vita per la musica* (Rome: Logos, 1991), 42. Letters and quotes by Leonard Bernstein used by permission of The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc.

⁴³Telephone interview with Burton Bernstein, 22 April 2010.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Burton Bernstein, Interview with Burton Bernstein and the Bernstein children, "Before *West Side Story*: Leonard Bernstein's Boston," Class interviews online, 7 March 2006, <http://my.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=bernstein> (accessed 21 July 2015). In this quotation, Burton refers to the composition as "the *Mass*," but the work is actually called *Mass* and subtitled "A Theater Piece." Of all of Bernstein's compositions, his *Jeremiah* Symphony most clearly and intentionally incorporates Jewish musical motifs, including Haftorah chant and Lamentations.

⁴⁶Shirley Bernstein, *Making Music*, 19–20.

⁴⁷Ibid., 20. Judith Clurman concurs, noting that synagogue programs include Mendelssohn: "This is probably where Lenny first heard his secular music." Interview with Harvey Tattelbaum and Judith Clurman, "Before *West Side Story*," 28 February 2006 (accessed 3 June 2015). Former choir member Marilyn Becker also noted Braslavsky's interest in using German and Viennese classical music in the liturgy. Telephone interview with Marilyn Becker by the author, 30 June 2009. Billie Stein, Glickstein's great-niece, mentioned that Glickstein and Braslavsky worked together to adapt European classical music to suit synagogue services. Telephone interview with Janet Stein, 13 July 2009. Braslavsky was frequently referred to as "Professor" because of his position at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Vienna.

⁴⁸Jonathan Cott, "The Rolling Stone Interview: Leonard Bernstein," *Rolling Stone*, 592 (29 November 1990): 79.

⁴⁹Interview with Judith Clurman, 16 June 2010. Enrico Castiglione reports that Bernstein stated, "Often, listening to that music, I would cry without knowing why. Only after many years I then discovered that during those services I was listening, in reality, to Mahler because in the compositions of that man, he uncovered the spirit of Mahler and his music. Braslavsky, in fact, knew Mahler very well and he was a fervent admirer." Castiglione, *Una vita per la musica*, 42. The text literally states, "Braslavsky ... knew Mahler," but Dr. Rich Goldwin, who kindly translated this passage, noted that the text is unclear whether Braslavsky was familiar with Mahler's music or actually knew him personally. Since Braslavsky did not arrive in Vienna until 1908, it is highly unlikely that he knew Mahler personally, since the latter had already moved to New York to conduct the New York Philharmonic. In addition, Burton Bernstein described Braslavsky as a "Viennese disciple of Mahler," but again, it is questionable whether Burton meant that Braslavsky actually knew Mahler or knew his music. Interview with Burton Bernstein and the Bernstein children, "Before *West Side Story*."

⁵⁰Oja and Shelemay, "Leonard Bernstein's Jewish Boston," 18.

⁵¹Secrest, *Leonard Bernstein*, 43. By "professional," Secrest probably meant that this performance was Bernstein's first that was not a student recital. It is unlikely that he received any pay.

⁵²Although Sam was proud of his son, he expressed concern that Leonard would become a klezmer, one who "is little better than a beggar, a guy ... going from town to town to play for a few *kopecs*." Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 17. Sam's concerns stemmed from his childhood in Russia. Author Mark Slobin states, "*Klezmorim* were considered somewhat outside of the pale of regular community life. Distrusted and even feared for his unorthodox ways, the *klezmer*

was often contemptuously called ‘gypsy.’” Mark Slobin, *Tenement Songs: The Popular Music of the Jewish Immigrants* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 16. Marsha Bryan Edelman notes that klezmerim were prone to “drunkenness and irresponsibility.” Marsha Bryan Edelman, *Discovering Jewish Music* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 285, n. 25. However, some klezmerim did very well, occasionally achieving fame and fortune, playing for gentile musicians and even the Pope! Idelsohn, *Jewish Music*, 455. Nevertheless, these instances were the exceptions rather than the rule. Sam certainly did not want his oldest son to be a professional musician, preferring instead that Leonard take over the Bernstein Hair Company, or become a rabbi, as his ancestors had.

⁵³Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 20. No score exists for this incarnation of the piece, as it was probably improvised. Bernstein performed a slightly different version of this work for Sam’s seventieth birthday celebration, discussed in a later section of this article.

⁵⁴The program also indicates that Bernstein performed works by Chopin and Liszt, possibly the same pieces that he played on his first Mishkan Tefila concert, discussed earlier.

⁵⁵Bernstein composed a hora that forms the middle movement of “Three Wedding Dances,” taken from his *Bridal Suite* (1960); it was written for the wedding of his friends, Adolph Green and Phyllis Newman. Jack Gottlieb, liner notes to *Leonard Bernstein: A Jewish Legacy*, conducted by Samuel Adler, The Milken Archive of American Jewish Music on the Naxos American Classics label, compact disc, 2003. Since Bernstein was a compulsive recycler of music, it is quite possible that all or part of the hora from *Two Nocturnes* may form the basis of the hora from “Three Wedding Dances.” Furthermore, an undated “Hora Staccato” appears in Bernstein’s collection of Harvard music coursework, although it is unknown if this work relates in any way to the earlier mentioned hora. Leonard Bernstein Collection, manuscripts, box 18, folder 5, Library of Congress.

⁵⁶Jack Gottlieb, “The Music of Leonard Bernstein: A Study in Melodic Manipulations,” doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, 1964, 261.

⁵⁷Connolly sang a selection by “Coates.” It is possible the composer is Helen Coates, one of Bernstein’s piano teachers, and later his secretary and dear friend.

⁵⁸Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 134.

⁵⁹Interview with congregant Anita Kurland at Mishkan Tefila, 19 June 2009; interview with Cantor Aryeh Finkelstein, 19 June 2009.

⁶⁰Telephone interview with Burton Bernstein, 22 April 2010. Shirley later moved to New York, where she served as a producer for a number of television game shows.

⁶¹Telephone interview with Anita Kurland, 18 March 2009.

⁶²Bernstein, *Family Matters*, 149.

⁶³Letter from Bernard Short to Leonard Bernstein, 10 January 1947, The Leonard Bernstein Collection, personal business correspondence, box 1018, folder 12, Library of Congress. There were actually *two* engagements: one in 1947 and one in 1951. Humphrey Burton suggests that the couple canceled the first engagement because “neither Leonard nor Felicia was ready at that point for the sacrifices involved in marriage.” Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 167.

⁶⁴John Briggs, *Leonard Bernstein: The Man, His Work, and His World* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1961), 142.

⁶⁵Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 146. However, her great-grandfather was a rabbi who founded Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco. Briggs, *Leonard Bernstein*, 135. Felicia told Leonard that “she had been drawn to him because he reminded her of her own father.” Peyser, *Bernstein*, 180–181.

⁶⁶John Gruen, *The Private World of Leonard Bernstein* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 55. Felicia later converted to Catholicism in the final year of her life. For more on Bernstein’s relationship with Felicia see Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, especially 146–147, 156–159, 166–167, 197–201, and 208–213.

⁶⁷Freedland, *Leonard Bernstein*, 116.

⁶⁸Ewen, *Leonard Bernstein*, 94.

⁶⁹Gruen, *Private World*, 55.

⁷⁰Freedland, *Leonard Bernstein*, 116. A few sources, including Bernstein himself, note that Rubenovitz performed the wedding. Letter from Leonard Bernstein to David Stern, then-president of Mishkan Tefila, 27 April 1964, Leonard Bernstein Collection, correspondence, box 48, folder 44, Library of Congress. However, by 1951, Rubenovitz had already retired; it is quite possible that he helped officiate.

⁷¹Gruen, *Private World*, 55.

⁷²Interview with Alexander Bernstein, 18 June 2010. This author suspects that had Bernstein stayed in Boston, he would have remained a member of Mishkan Tefila. While he attended several synagogues in New York, he did not actually belong to any of them. When asked in an interview if he was a member of a synagogue, he replied, “No, I’m not a joiner. I’m not a congregant. I don’t belong to any congregation.... I pray much more often than once a week.” “Leonard Bernstein: An Exclusive Interview,” *ASCAP Journal* 6, no. 1 (1972): 7.

⁷³Secrest, *Leonard Bernstein*, 325.

⁷⁴Interview with Alexander Bernstein by the author, 18 June 2010. Burton Bernstein confirmed that the bar mitzvah service took place at Mishkan Tefila rather than a New York synagogue to please Sam. Telephone interview with Burton Bernstein, 22 April 2010.

⁷⁵Letter from Sam Bernstein to Leonard and Felicia Bernstein, 5 May 1967, Leonard Bernstein Collection, correspondence, box 7, folder 1, Library of Congress. Letters and quotes by Leonard Bernstein used by permission of The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc.

⁷⁶Interview with Alexander Bernstein, 18 June 2010.

⁷⁷Interview with Aryeh Finkelstein, 19 June 2009.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Telephone interview with Burton Bernstein, 22 April 2010.

⁸⁰Interview with Alexander Bernstein, 18 June 2010.

⁸¹Although Bernstein did not have the same relationship with Kazis as he did with Rubenovitz, he was still close to the younger rabbi. Kazis gave the invocation at the American Jewish Congress dinner in 1955 in honor of Bernstein. *Temple Mishkan Tefila: A History*, 44. Conversely, Bernstein attended Mishkan Tefila’s tribute to Kazis in 1975, which took the form of the musical *The King and I*. “Temple Mishkan Tefila, Boston, MA, folder I-462: Brotherhood plays and productions (1975 and 1983),” American Jewish Historical Society, Boston.

⁸²Interview with Anita Kurland at Mishkan Tefila, 18 June 2009. Along with partner Betty Comden, Green co-wrote several shows with Bernstein, including *On the Town* (1944) and *Wonderful Town* (1953).

⁸³Interview with Alexander Bernstein, 18 June 2010.

⁸⁴“Bernstein ‘Very Proud’ of Son at *Bar Mitzvah*,” *Sunday Herald Traveler* (20 June 1968), Archive of Mishkan Tefila, Bernstein box.

⁸⁵Secrest, *Leonard Bernstein*, 325. Secrest implies that Bernstein formally joined Mishkan Tefila as an adult, which he did not, but he was always greeted warmly and made to feel welcome whenever he came. Bernice Kazis echoed the notion that Bernstein sat on the *bimah* when he attended services there. Interview with Bernice “Sis” Kazis at Mishkan Tefila, 18 June 2009.

⁸⁶E-mail correspondence with Aryeh Finkelstein, 28 February 2009.

⁸⁷Interview with Gertrude Saunders at Mishkan Tefila by the author, 20 June 2009.

⁸⁸Telephone interview with Billie Stein, 13 July 2009. She also remarked that Bernstein gave jazz piano lessons to her older cousin, the cantor’s daughter.

⁸⁹Invitation to services and Bernstein’s presentation, 6 February 1948, Archive of Mishkan Tefila, Bernstein box. No more information is available about this program or its mysterious title.

⁹⁰Letter from Kazis to Leonard Bernstein, 28 January 1949, Leonard Bernstein Collection, personal correspondence papers, box 1018, folder 12, Library of Congress. According to a letter from the then-president, Bernard Short, the congregation was invited to a reception immediately following the presentation. Letter from Bernard Short to the congregation, 15 March 1949, Archive of Mishkan Tefila, Bernstein box.

⁹¹Jack Gottlieb, *Working with Bernstein: A Memoir* (Milwaukee, WI: Amadeus Press, 2010), 9.

⁹²Shirley Bernstein, *Leonard Bernstein*, 33; Burton Bernstein, *Family Matters*, 117.

⁹³Letter from Herman Rubenovitz to Leonard Bernstein, 9 February 1944, papers of Rabbi Herman H. Rubenovitz, ARC 99, box 1, folder 12, Jewish Theological Seminary Archives, New York.

⁹⁴Interview with Rebecca Silverman, 21 June 2009.

⁹⁵Letter from Leonard Bernstein to Solomon Braslavsky, 10 October 1946, as quoted in Sarna, “Leonard Bernstein,” 41. Letters and quotes by Leonard Bernstein used by permission of The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc.

⁹⁶Sarna, “Leonard Bernstein,” 42.

⁹⁷Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 61.

⁹⁸Letter from Leonard Bernstein to Leon Steinberg, *Bulletin of Temple Mishkan Tefila*, 17 April 1954, 2, Archive of Mishkan Tefila, Bernstein box. Letters and quotes by Leonard Bernstein used by permission of The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc.

⁹⁹Letter from Leon Steinberg to Leonard Bernstein, 26 May 1954, Archive of Mishkan Tefila, Bernstein box.

¹⁰⁰Letter from Solomon Braslavsky to Leonard Bernstein, 20 November 1957, Leonard Bernstein Collection, correspondence, box 9, folder 42, Library of Congress.

¹⁰¹Letter from Jack Wilson to Leonard Bernstein, 5 December 1957, Leonard Bernstein Collection, personal business papers, box 1019, folder 12, Library of Congress.

¹⁰²Handwritten note on a letter from Jack Wilson to Leonard Bernstein, 5 December 1957, Leonard Bernstein Collection, Library of Congress. Letters and quotes by Leonard Bernstein used by permission of The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc.

¹⁰³Letter from Solomon Braslavsky to Leonard Bernstein, 23 January 1961, Leonard Bernstein Collection, correspondence, box 9, folder 42, Library of Congress. Neither Jamie nor Nina had a bat mitzvah celebration.

¹⁰⁴Letter from David Stein to Leonard Bernstein, 3 November 1966, Leonard Bernstein Collection, personal business papers, box 1018, folder 12, Library of Congress.

¹⁰⁵Handwritten note on letter from David Stein to Leonard Bernstein, 3 November 1966, Leonard Bernstein Collection, Library of Congress. Bernstein also was unable to attend a performance of Braslavsky's *Un'saneh Tokef* with Gregor Shelkan as soloist in 1964. Handwritten note by Leonard Bernstein on a letter from Shelkan to Leonard Bernstein, 2 January 1964, Leonard Bernstein Collection, correspondence, box 51, folder 8, Library of Congress. Letters and quotes by Leonard Bernstein used by permission of The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc.

¹⁰⁶Letter from Leonard Bernstein to Solomon Braslavsky, 19 September 1952, Archive of Mishkan Tefila, Braslavsky box; Sarna, "Leonard Bernstein," 42. Letters and quotes by Leonard Bernstein used by permission of The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc.

¹⁰⁷Letter from Solomon Braslavsky to Leonard Bernstein, 18 October 1956, Leonard Bernstein Collection, correspondence, box 9, folder 42, Library of Congress.

¹⁰⁸The "S" stood for "Samuelovitch," the patronymic of Samuel in Russian. Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 85. Earlier, Burton claimed it was Roy Harris who suggested the name change. *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁰⁹Letter from Esther Chorover to Leonard Bernstein, 24 January 1973, Leonard Bernstein Collection, correspondence, box 9, folder 42, Library of Congress.

¹¹⁰Letter from Leonard Bernstein to Solomon Braslavsky, 31 January 1973, Archive of Mishkan Tefila, Braslavsky box. Letters and quotes by Leonard Bernstein used by permission of The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc.

¹¹¹Letter from Leonard Bernstein to Samuel Rosenbaum, 20 March 1964, Archive of Mishkan Tefila, Braslavsky box; Sarna, "Leonard Bernstein," 41. Letters and quotes by Leonard Bernstein used by permission of The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc.