

CANTOR'S NOTES MI ANACHNU?

Who are we? It's a funny question that we ask as individuals, but when it comes to Judaism it's always in the plural. Judaism has nearly always been presented as a "we" thing. Whether as a tribe, a people or a congregation, Jewish life is nearly always experienced collectively. It reminds me of the old joke: two Jews, three opinions!

It turns out, though, not to be a joke at all. Our Jewish experience does vary by the individual—and sometimes even within the person! How much more variety, then, must our sense of *anachnu* encompass? Diversity, be it of ethnicity, viewpoint or practice, is the spice of life. And we Jews are, contrary to popular belief, quite diverse.

Like the Jewish people, my own eclectic musical taste brings together many styles and traditions. The Torah relates that we came out of Egypt an *Erev Rav*, a mixed multitude, and we have always contained significant diversity—far beyond the Sephardic/Ashkenazi dichotomy and denominational silos we experience in Great Neck. Ugandan Jews (Abuyudaya) speak Lugundani; Indian Jews (Bene Israel) in Mumbai speak Mayalam; Ethiopian Jews (Beta Yisrael) speak Amharic; and the list goes on. "We" turn out to be richly varied. And peeling back cultural and lingual differences, "we" gets even more interesting as we consider the word from philosophical standpoints.

So rather than answer the question directly, I'm going to lean into multiple answers by offering this diversity in a musical playlist. The thread running through them all? *Anachnu*.

To access the playlist, scan the QR code or visit <http://bit.ly/anachnu>.



"MODIM ANACHNU LACH"

"We are grateful to You." Our daily liturgy emphasizes an attitude of gratitude as we say these words. In truth, the very name of our people, Yehudim, is derived from the same Hebrew word as *todah* and *hodu* or thank. Our matriarch Leah expressed gratitude for the birth of her son by naming him Yehuda. To achieve this mindset, our sages teach we should offer thanks 100 times daily. This text has many beautiful settings, including a contemporary Broadway-style version by Jonathan Comisar. In addition to the amazing melody, which may remind you of the music from *Wicked* or *Frozen*, the English lyrics really capture the spirit of our sense of thankfulness.

"ANACHNU M'VORACHIM"

We are blessed in so very many ways. Contemporary Jewish songwriter and song leader Rick Recht composed this melody 20 years ago, but the words are timeless, reflecting on everyday things we might easily overlook. It's not a prayer, or even from the Torah; it is simply a reminder: "We are blessed to have hands to hold each other, eyes to see the good in the world, time to understand, the choice to live where we want, voices to sing this song."

"MI ANACHNU"

(ANI ATA VEHU VAHI)

This 1956 marching song by famed singer Hanna Aharoni asks, "Who Are We?" The answer—you and me, him and her: We are Everybody. The Haganah, as the Israeli Defense Force was previously known, was among the first national armies to include women, and while the notion of the citizen soldier isn't



BY CANTOR
ADAM DAVIS

exclusive to Israel, it has been critical in creating a sense of shared responsibility. Though Israel hasn't always lived up to its egalitarian ideals, Aharoni's song reaffirms its importance as a hallmark of Israeli national service and a central value of the Jewish State.

"ANACHNU B'NEI MA'AMINIM"

This modern melody, written by Orthodox pop singer Mordechai Ben David and covered many times takes an uplifting and buoyant approach to faith: "We are believers, children of believers. And we have none else to rely on but on our Father, our Father in Heaven."

The composer might never have imagined it being covered by an Israeli female singer like Lee Fishman in "Anachnu Maaminim," but it shows just how a great melody with great words can transcend the barriers that divide us.

I can't think of a better answer to the question of *Mi Anachnu*: When singing together, that's when we're most truly "we." 🕊