The Jewish attitude towards the playing of music in the Tripartite Mahzor

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Abstract: The Tripartite Mahzor (Lake Constance, Southern Germany, ca. 1322) is an illuminated manuscript of an Ashkenazi Hebrew prayer book used on special Sabbaths (Saturdays) and festivals. The Tripartite Mahzor gets its name from the fact that it is divided into three manuscripts housed in three distinct libraries. This mahzor includes numerous illustrations of the playing of musical instruments. It is suggested that the illustrations in the Tripartite Mahzor may express disapproval of the use of instrumental music in certain instances, akin to the numerous prohibitions of vocal music in some circumstances also found in the contemporary Hebrew book: Sefer Hasidim. Thus the musical illustrations may be regarded as visual additions to the textual halakhot (Jewish religious laws) made by the medieval German Jewish pietists, which forbade vocal music in certain contexts. These illustrations, which suggest that music was central to at least some medieval German Jews’ culture, were made at a time when instrumental music was being incorporated into the Catholic liturgy in the churches of the Gentile population amongst whom the Jews were living. They may therefore be read as a Jewish response to developments within Christianity, too.

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The Tripartite Mahzor is an illuminated Hebrew manuscript produced near Lake Constance, in Southern Germany around 1322 (Narkiss, 1965, pp. 129-133). Like other mahzorim (Jewish prayer books), it contains mainly sections of prayers for the Yomim Noraim (‘The Days of Awe’ i.e. Rosh HaShanah (the...
Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)) and the Shalosh Regalim, the three “Foot” or “Pilgrim” festivals in the annual cycle of the Jewish calendar: Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles). Besides these sections, it contains prayers used on special Sabbaths (Saturdays) and festivals. Today, the manuscripts are split between three different libraries: the Kaufmann Collection at the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest, Hungary, and the Bodleian and British Libraries in Oxford and London, England—hence its name, “Tripartite”. Such illuminated Ashkenazi mahzorims were produced only in Ashkenazi communities and were intended for use by the hazzan (cantor) on the bimah (platform for reading) during synagogue services (Shalev-Eyni, 2010, pp.10–11, 2015, pp. 189–204, 2016, pp. 355–357, 2018, pp. 291–294). The Tripartite Mahzor is profusely illustrated and many of the images depict the playing of musical instruments, suggesting instrumental music was a major issue on the minds of at least some Ashkenazi Jews. The folios of the Tripartite Mahzor are smaller (300 x 200 mm) than most of the known Ashkenazi mahzorim in a manuscript that suggests that they might have been used for private rather than public prayer.

Figure 1. Initial word panel of the Song of Songs, Tripartite Mahzor, ca. 1322, Budapest, Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Kaufmann Coll., MS A. 384, fol. 183 v. By courtesy of the Oriental Collection of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.
In the Tripartite Mahzor, the first depiction of the playing of musical instruments occurs in the initial word panel introducing Shir HaShirim (the Song of Songs), which is included in the portion of the Tripartite Mahzor that covers Passover (Figure 1). This portion is housed in the British Library in London. The Shir HaShirim panel is contained within a gilded, double-headed, segmental-arched surrounding: the illumination is divided into two halves. On the right-hand side, within a Gothic style architectural frame, appears the figure of a king perching on steps.

The king is probably King Solomon, who is believed to be the author of the Biblical Song of Songs in the Jewish tradition (Goldschmidt, 1993, pp. 333–337; Shalev-Eyni, 2010, p. 53). The King raises his sword in his right hand as if to protect the Torah (Hebrew—–Pentateuch), as represented by the scroll in the aedicule (a niche) in the Gothic-style pillar on King Solomon’s right (Cassel, 1885, p. 10; Grossfeld, 1991, pp. 111–112). His left hand may also be pointing towards the scroll. These gestures may be interpreted as Solomon upholding the Torah, while at the same time the Torah is protecting him from sin. Shalev-Eyni has discerned some Christian influence in the treatment of the artifacts displayed, especially in the candle shown on the right (Shalev-Eyni, 2010, pp. 53–58). The six steps are based on Chronicles II, 9:17–19:

Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold. There were six steps to the throne, with a footstool of gold, which were fastened to the throne, and arms on either side by the place of the seat, and two lions standing beside the arms. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps; there was not the like made in any kingdom.

However, the Tripartite Mahzor differs from the Biblical description, and some Christian depictions of the Throne of Solomon and of Mary as Sedes Sapientiae (throne of wisdom; Shalev-Eyni, 2001, p. 175), in that it shows not only lions on the steps but other animals besides. This difference may be explained by reference to the Targum Sheni to Megilat Esther ("Second Translation" to the Book of Esther), where various animals are mentioned as adorning the steps to the throne (Cassel, 1885, pp. 12–13; Grossfeld, 1991, 114). The King’s use of these decorative animals is considered a sin since they are secular sculptures, which Jews were not allowed to make.

The left-hand side of the initial word panel is divided horizontally into two parts. The upper part contains grotesques: above are two hybrid women, one with a bird’s head and the second with an animal head apparently wearing a crown. They are turning towards and watching a musician-acrobat, with a human face, standing upside down on his hands. Next to him are two-horned creatures, probably devils; one is doing acrobatics, while the other is playing a percussion instrument (a kind of drum beaten with a club-like stick) and a wind instrument (a kind of pipe played by only the left hand and therefore probably just a noise-making instrument not intended for the production of melodies). On the ground is some sort of vessel, perhaps containing wine.

Shalev-Eyni has interpreted this illustration by referring to Midrash in Targum Sheni to Megilat Esther, Chapter 2; Cassel, 1885, pp. 12–13, Grossfeld, 1991, 114). In this passage, King Solomon holds a feast for the Kings of the East and of the West in order to showcase his wisdom (Shalev-Eyni, 2001, p.196, 2008, pp.194–195, 2010, p. 60). An alternative interpretation has been put forward both by Gabrielle Sed-Rajna and Zsófia Buda: that the scene depicts the visit of the Queen of Sheba: the female figure with bird’s head and crown (Buda, 2005, pp. 141–142; Sed-Rajna, 1987, p. 126). The music and acrobatics are part of the entertainment laid on for the visit (Sed-Rajna, 1987, p. 126). However, Shalev-Eyni questions the presence of a crown on the head of one of the two women, preferring to see it as hair sticking up like that of a female devil (Sasson, 2007, pp. 37–53). She cites a connection between the Queen of Sheba and devils or demons found in Muslim sources (Shalev-Eyni, 2006, p. 153).

Another explanation for this scene may lie in a Midrash in the Babylonian Talmud (the central text of Rabbinic Judaism, compiled in about the year 500) that reads as follows:
Said Rabbi Judah said Samuel: At the time Solomon wedded the daughter of Pharaoh, she introduced him to a thousand types of music and told him: ‘This music is for that adultery and that music is for that adultery,’ and he didn’t protest to her … (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat, 66:2; V. Sasson, 1985, pp. 407-414).

According to BeMidbar Rabbah (textual interpretation on the Book of Numbers), King Solomon ordered adulterous music to be played for him on the night of his wedding to the daughter of Pharaoh. Moreover, further on in the same Midrash we find the following passage:

And the shouts (tzalah) of joy at the wedding of the daughter of Pharaoh were louder than the shouting at the Temple … and at that time arose the thought before God to destroy Jerusalem. (BeMidbar Rabbah, 10:4).

The Hebrew word tzalah used here to denote the shouts of joy appears in the Bible itself, in Megilat Esther, 8:15. In the Vulgate this word was translated as exultavit. Exultavit in Latin is also frequently translated as “leaping up”, as well as “rejoicing”, which well fits the scene in our illustration since the two devils are in the act of leaping (Shalev-Eyni, 2008, pp. 194–197).

If this is indeed a depiction of the wedding of Solomon to Pharaoh’s daughter as sinful and adulterous, then the playing of musical instruments at the wedding is also cast in a negative light. This would go against general Rabbinic opinion regarding music at Jewish weddings (not mixed marriages with non-Jews). It is a Mitzvah (commandment) in the Talmud, to gladden the bride and groom with music and dancing (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Zeraim (Order of Seeds), Berakhot (Blessings), 6:2) (Jacobson, 1998, pp. 33–53; Seroussi, 2017). Indeed, in medieval Ashkenaz even foreign music was allowed at Jewish weddings because Rabbi Eliezer ben Joel HaLevi (1140–1225) allowed a non-Jew to play a musical instrument at a wedding that took place on Shabbat (Saturday) (Falk, 1966, pp. 35–36; Sperber, 1999, p. 58). The negative attitude here (both musically and generally), to the Marriage of King Solomon and Pharaoh’s daughter, might be in accordance with perception of mixed marriages (i.e., marriage with non-Jews) in the Talmud and other sources as sinful, prohibited, and void: “Because they will turn away your son from following me [i.e., God]” (Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin (Santification), 68b.).

The bottom half of this section of the initial word panel contains the actual word Shir meaning “Song”, the song of the “Song of Songs”. Here are two women, turning to the right, with zoomorphic faces. A dragon fills the whole of the space under the word Shir (i.e., “Song”). This dragon has two heads, one where its tail should be, both facing upwards, jaws open; and wings and hands instead of claws.

Bezalel Narkiss and Sarit Shalev-Eyni agree that the two zoomorphic creatures represent the two women in The Judgement of Solomon (Narkiss, 1965, p. 133; Shalev-Eyni, 2010, p. 61), which appears in the same chapter of the Book of Kings (1 Kings 3) as the marriage of Solomon to Pharaoh’s daughter, which is (according to one of three possible interpretations of that scene), the theme of the top half of the picture. However, what is missing is the baby. Nor are the “women” shown pleading (Shalev-Eyni, 2001, p. 207). In other examples dating from around the same time and place such as in the North French Hebrew Miscellany (Figure 2) both the baby and the pleading women are depicted (Offenberg, 2013, pp. 29–30, 109). In another French Jewish example from the same period, the Poligny Pentateuch (ca. 1300, from Poligny, France), one woman appears pleading with Solomon while the other tries to wrest the baby from a soldier who is about to cut it in two with his sword (Poligny Pentateuch, fol. 283 r). (Figure 3). The appearance of human figures in this “mikdashiah” image is unique to Ashkenazi bibles of the type “mikdashiah” and is not found in Spanish “mikdashiah” bibles (Kogman-Appel, 2004, p. 190). In a Christian illustration of the Judgment of Solomon from Oxford, a baby is also depicted (Figure 4). The baby is held upside down rather cruelly by the women,
suggesting they both were to blame for the situation and the problem brought to Solomon. The baby is perhaps the main hero of that scene—the other elements revolve around him.

Shalev-Eyni identifies the dragon with the Devil who, in the Testament of Solomon, is referred to as the “heir of the dragons” (Duling, 1983, pp. 965–966; Shalev-Eyni, 2010, p. 61). Perhaps too the dragon represents one of the idols to whom Solomon erected altars following his marriages to many foreign women (1 Kings 11). In the Middle Ages, dragons were sometimes used to stand for idols (Epstein, 1996, p. 366). Indeed, Ilia Rodov identifies the dragon in Jewish art with evil (Rodov, 2005, pp. 63–84). The origin of the identification of the dragon with Satan by both Christians and Jews may be the Greek-language “Testament of Solomon (Duling, 1983, pp. 965–966).” This book is a pseudepigraphical book said to have been written by King Solomon and so is connected to the Old Testament. It was written early in the first millennium. It includes the story of how Solomon built the Temple by ordering demons using a magical ring that was given to him by the angel Michael. While this book was not accepted into the Jewish canon and was probably of Christian origin, it might represent traditions that Jews were also familiar with that either were oral or have not survived in Jewish writings to our time. According to a legend in this book, Ashmedai, King of

Figure 2. The Judgement of Solomon, North French Hebrew Miscellany, North France, 1277–1286, London, British Library, Add. 11,639, fol. 518 r. By permission of the British Library.
the Demons, changes his form to look like King Solomon and sleeps with the King's wives. Ashmedai has the appearance of a wolf-man; in our illustration the dragon appears to possess the face and ears of a wolf (Narkiss, 1965, p. 132), although the "tail" face has horns and might represent a goat.

David Shyovitz suggests that in the medieval mindset the werewolf was a man turned into a wolf and not half-man, half-wolf, as depicted here. The werewolf was discussed by hasidey Askenaz (Jewish mystical movement from twelfth to thirteenth century Germany), including Rabbi Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg, who also saw werewolves not as hybrids but as animals that retained only the eyes from their erstwhile human form (Shyovitz, 2017, pp. 213–243).

Thus our illustration seems to express the ambivalent attitudes towards King Solomon that are prevalent in both Jewish and Christian medieval sources. Solomon committed grave sins: playing foreign music, having many concubines and marrying foreign women, and worshipping foreign gods. The animal sculptures on the steps of his palace may be regarded as another of his sins.
Nowhere in the Biblical narrative does Solomon repent for his sins or does it indicate that he was forgiven for them. However, he did have some qualms. For example, after their marriage Solomon housed Pharaoh’s daughter in a separate palace because the palace he had inherited from his father King David was holy:

And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her; for he said: ‘No wife of mine shall dwell in the house of David, king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come.’ (II Chronicles, 8:11).

Indeed, Solomon was considered worthy to build the Temple of Jerusalem, unlike his father King David, and he authored three Biblical books, including the “Song of Songs”. There were religious authorities who tried to explain and excuse his sins (Sasson, 2004, pp. 206–261).

The playing of music may be regarded in a negative light, as the music of sin, in connection with King Solomon in this illustration in the Tripartite Mahzor (Shalev-Eyni, 2008, p. 197). However, it contrasts greatly with the role of music in the Temple built by Solomon as described elsewhere in the Book of Kings:

And the king made of the sandal-wood pillars for the house of the Lord, and for the king’s house, harps also and psalteries for the singers; there came no such sandal-wood, nor was seen, unto this day. (1 Kings 10:12).

The folios of the Tripartite Mahzor that are in Oxford include “Kol Nidre” (“All Vows”), the opening declaration recited in the synagogue at dusk at the beginning of the most solemn festival in the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement; Davidson, 1925, p. 7129; Goldschmidt, 1970, p. 1). The title word panel (Kol) is decorated above by a hybrid, half man, half dragon, each half of which possesses two heads (Figure 5). The clean-shaven human head (the other, in profile, is bearded) is blowing a clarion. Below the word, Kol appears a pair of winged dragons, one of which looks more like a bird, but has animal ears and human hands instead of claws. Sara Offenberg has suggested that in two other cases where similar illustrations occur in the context of Kol Nidre in Ashkenazi mahzorim, dragons and eagles symbolize evil. Perhaps such grotesque creatures arouse
feelings of awe and fear appropriate to worshippers during the Yomim Noraim [Days of Awe] as they approach Yom Kippur itself (Offenberg, 2011, p. 16).

However, there is something odd here, for there is no ritual blowing of the shofar during the Kol Nidre declaration in the Day of Atonement. The Kol Nidre opens the Day of Atonement service, while the blowing of the shofar marks its closing, the day after reciting the Kol Nidre. It is true that sometimes the opening illustration refers to the entire holiday it illustrates; however, it is clear that it is not the end of the holiday that is depicted here because the instrument is in the mouth of a three-headed hybrid monster that could not be said to symbolize the repenting Jews. So what is depicted here is actually the sin of those who want the Day of Atonement to pass quickly (symbolized by the blowing of the shofar by a three-headed hybrid monster in its beginning), before it even starts.

The initial word panel that decorates the word Afik in the piyyut (liturgical poem or hymn) Afik Renen veShirim (“I will Perform Music with Songs”), is most appropriate because it features grotesque creatures playing a variety of musical instruments (Figure 6). Afik Renen veShirim is
a yotzer piyyut (additional liturgical poem or hymn) that was recited at the morning service on the second day of Passover in some Jewish communities in the Ashkenazi Diaspora (Davidson, 1925, p. 7129; Goldschmidt, 1993, pp. 74–81). The central motif of the panel is a tree with curling branches. The branches have large leaves, oak-like acorns and several grey birds sitting on the branches. It could be that the birds here (which look like pigeons, not eagles) reflect the opening line of the piyyut, where it is said that Israel is carried on eagles, “nos’i ’al nesharim,” in the sky.

Below the birds in the sky, at the foot of the tree, and below the word afik, are six hybrid grotesques, half man, half dragon or bird, playing a variety of musical instruments, from right-to-left: some type of lute, clarion, drum, pipe, lute, lyre, and horn. The heads of three of the figures are covered with a medieval cowl, the top of which flops over into a soft point similar to a Phrygian...
cap. Another, playing the lyre, wears a crown (could be representing King David) and the other two are bare-headed. It is of interest perhaps that cowls like those here on the heads of two hybrids have been associated in Medieval art sometimes with Christian depictions of Jews (Lipton, 2014, pp. 13–54).

The pointed Phrygian-like cap might also point to the figure of Orpheus, who was shown with a Phrygian cap in ancient, late-antique, and medieval art. The power of Orpheus’s music was described as wondrous in Greek myths and writings, where it was said that he could calm and succumb beasts, birds, stones, and trees (Shaked, 2014, pp. 8–35). So it’s possible that the figure of the musician Orpheus in this illustration is being ridiculed, for the Greek God here is replaced by grotesque hybrids.

Also shown is a hybrid with the lower body of a duck or dragon. He wears a crown and plays a harp, mocking the image of King David playing the harp (Shalev-Eyni, 2010, p. 79). The dignity of David is ridiculed here by giving the king the body of a grotesque hybrid with a crown (Shalev-Eyni, 2010, p. 81). Looking for the visual image tradition that this panel refers to, the music performance might be intended to ridicule the visual theme of King David and his musicians in Medieval art (Shalev-Eyni, 2010, p. 80). Yet, since the King and players have been made to look like grotesque hybrids, it is not the simple ancient artistic themes or music in general that is ridiculed here, but rather the current Jewish or Christian music that might claim to be as beautiful and moving as the music of King David and Orpheus.

Another illustration in a Hebrew manuscript from fourteenth-century Ashkenaz in which the musicians are depicted as hybrids, is in the margins of the word Barukh (Blessed) in the contemporary Coburg Pentateuch (Figure 7) (Riter, 2018, pp. 40–41). This image, which is said to represent fools, in the feast of fools, was investigated by Moran Riter (Riter, 2018, pp. 43–44). It has been theorized that this feast continues the Ancient Roman tradition of the Kalends of January (First day of the month in the Roman calendar which was parrarel to the lunar cf Rosh Chodesh in the Hebrew calendar.) (Harris, 2011, pp. 11–40; Riter, 2018, pp. 24–27). In this depiction, there are just two players, unlike in the Tripartite Mahzor, where there are six. The two-hybrid players have the lower bodies of animals, just as in the “afik renen veshirim” illustration. In the Coburg illustration, like in the Tripartite Mahzor illustration, there is a figure wearing a crown and another figure (or figures) that wears the medieval cowl which looks similar to the Phrygian hat.

These two hybrids can’t be identified with certainty as Jews. Of the only figures in the Coburg Barukh panel hunting scene that may be identified for certain as Jews—because they are wearing the conical and pointed “Jew’s Hat”—one is a human walking with a dog and a staff and the second is a grotesque figure with a dog-like body and an extra human head.

Figure 7. Detail of initial word panel of “Barukh” (Blessed) prayer, Coburg Pentateuch, 1390–1396, London, British Library, Add. 19,776, fol. 170 r. By permission of the British Library.
There also seem to be similarities between the image from the Tripartite Mahzor and the image from the Roman de Fauvel from France of the early fourteenth century (Figure 8) of a Charivari, which is a folk mock parade accompanied by much noise from beating on pots and pans and anything for making noise that was at hand (Thompson, 1993, pp. 467–469). The story depicted in the Roman de Fauvel is of a horse that gains prominence and standing in the French royal court.

The similarity between the two illustrations is evident in the great number of players of musical instruments, but there is also a major difference between the two images: in the Tripartite Mahzor, some type of lute, clarion, drum, pipe, lute, lyre, and horn instruments are shown (Falvy, 1996, p. 235), which are usually played by trained musicians, while in the Charivari image, there are mainly noise-making instruments like drums, a bell, etc.

The “Adon Imnani” (“The Lord Created Me [says the Torah]”) piyyut is recited on Shavuot (Figure 9) (Davidson, 1925, p. 484; Frankel, 1993, p. 97). The scene illustrates the Biblical narrative in Shemot (Exodus ch.19) that describes the Giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai which is associated with the festival of Shavuot (Feast of Weeks). Moses is shown in the Mount receiving the Ten Commandments in the form of the Luhot (Tablets of Stone). Above, two shofarot (horns) and three hatzotzrot (clarions) are sounding from the clouds, representing Heaven. A tree and other vegetation wind their tendrils up the middle of the composition. Aaron, afterwards the Cohen Gadol (High Priest) stands at the bottom of the
Mount while the Children of Israel stand back, in two separate groups, men at the front and women behind. The women alone have animal heads, a characteristic of images throughout the Tripartite Mahzor. The use of animal heads for the women in all these illuminations may be explained as a way of preserving the modesty of the women. The idea is that the “hair of a woman is nakedness” (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot 24a) could be honored if the women do not have human faces and hence human hair. All of the figures here are dressed in contemporary costume of the fourteenth century. The male Jews, including Moses, wear conical-shaped Jews’ Hats; Aaron is dressed in the robes of a bishop with a miter. All of the people have their hands together in prayer as in the Christian manner.

The wind instruments and smoke in this image express the verse:

And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a horn exceeding loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. Now mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the horn waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice. (Exodus 19:16–19).

Shalev-Eyni suggests that the horns and trumpets parallel the angels appearing from the sky in the Christian Gradual of St. Katharinenthal (ca. 1312, Lake Constance), a manuscript said to have influenced the Tripartite Mahzor by Shalev-Eyni (Gradual of St. Katharinenthal; Shalev-Eyni, 2010, pp. 117–129). There, the scene shows the Nativity and Adoration of the Shepherds, of the initial: F (uer natus est). In both of these Jewish and Christian images, the angels and horns and trumpets serve to flatten the image as they come closer to the viewer (Shalev-Eyni, 2010, pp. 118–119).

The illustrator depicted four trumpets, and two rams’ horns (shofarot). That there are six instruments here in all, most likely does not have any special meaning, but rather is the result of the space available. The effect of this heavenly music, together with the lightning and thunder.
and heavy fog on the mount, on the people who saw and heard all this, was not positive: they trembled (Exodus 19:16).

Another panel where music is depicted is the “Crossing of the Sea” panel in a section related to Passover (Figure 10). This illustrates the first word of the yotzer piyyut “Viyoshah shoshaney perach”, meaning that “he will redeem the shoshan (a lily flower said here to symbolize the Jews)”. An aspect of the illustration that Shalev-Eyni notes is that the group of men is separate and stands before the group of women (shown with animals’ faces), like in the Giving of the Torah illustration.

The source for the panel depiction of the Crossing of the Sea is the text in Exodus: “The Song of the Sea”, read in the synagogue on the Seventh Day of Pesach.

Figure 10. Parting of the Red Sea, Tripartite Mahzor, ca. 1322, Budapest, Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Kaufmann Coll., MS A. 384, fol. 197 r. By courtesy of the Oriental Collection of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.
This is an additional hymn recited at the morning service on the Seventh day of Passover in some Ashkenazi communities (only in the Diaspora?).

“The Crossing of the Red Sea” initial word panel in the Tripartite Mahzor also shows the Children of Israel divided into men at the front and women behind, as noted above regarding the “Giving of the Law” panel (Buda, 2005, pp. 142–143, 162). Here, Miriam and the women are playing musical instruments and may also be dancing. They are not visible to the men who are walking ahead of them in a separate group. The men are not looking backwards and therefore do not see them. It is possible that the men don’t even hear the women because of the distance between the two groups. In the panel this distance appears small, but this is probably because of the limitations of the space on the panel.

While some women playing and singing in front of also men is mentioned in the Bible without any negative reference to it, later Jewish religious laws forbid it. For example, there is a well-known Talmudic prohibition that “voice of a woman is nakedness” (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot (Blessings) 24a). This later prohibition has to be explained in light of the earlier context here of the Bible, for it is said in the Bible that not only did they play musical instruments here, but they sang, too (Exodus 15:20–21). The text, in fact, opens with women playing music and dancing: “And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.” The Hebrew word for timbrel: “tof” denotes also in exegesis a “drum”, which is most appropriate here since Miriam is shown beating a drum with one hand and blowing a whistle (pipe-like instrument) held in her other hand. However, the women here are also said to have sung: “And Miriam sang unto them: Sing ye to the LORD, for He is highly exalted: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.” This translation is accurate since the word “va-ta’anan” suggests antiphonal singing. Shalev-Eyni posits that the division of men and women comes from a Midrash quoted in the commentary to the piyyutim here, suggesting that just as Moses sang to the men, Miriam sang to the women (Shalev-Eyni, 2010, p. 42). The song by Miriam and Moses might have been depicted in the scene of Crossing the Red Sea, despite appearing after it in the Bible might be because the Midrash suggests the singing and dancing actually occurred during the Crossing of the Red Sea (Shalev-Eyni, 2010, p. 42).

The separation of the men and women at the parting of the Red Sea and in the song of Miriam has visual precedents in Christian Byzantine art (Indicopleustes, 1186, fol. 73; Barberini Psalter, fol. 249; Shalev-Eyni, 2010, p. 42). In Christian exegesis, this division is expressed in the title of Origen’s (ca.185–ca.254) “hymnly no. six” in the “De cantico quod cantauit Moyses cum populo et Maria cum mulieribus,” suggesting Moses sang with the people (populo) while Miriam sang with the women (Origène, 1985, p. 170). Origen’s interpretation of the separation between women and men was accepted and followed by some medieval Christian theologians (Shalev-Eyni, 2010, p. 42; Von Deutz, 1971–1972).

Sitting above the initial word panel to the piyyut “Iti milvanon Kalah” (“Come with me, my bride, from Lebanon”), for Shabbat HaGadol (the ‘Great Saturday’) before Passover (Davidson, 1925, p. 8891), is a man, naked except for a red cowl on his head, who is baring his backside towards the viewer (Figure 1) (Shalev-Eyni, 2010, p. 146). This figure is flanked at either end by a pair of squirrels eating nuts. In the panel, which is decorated with a Gothic architectural frame itself two knights on horseback are locked in battle, swords drawn.

Shalev-Eyni observes that this panel differs from the usual illustrations of this piyyut in Jewish medieval art (Shalev-Eyni, 1999, 6–18, 2005, pp. 27–57). Usually, bridal couples are depicted rather than violent battle scenes, such as the battle of Mühldorf, which is possibly the subject here (Shalev-Eyni, 2005, pp. 27–57). The Battle of Mühldorf took place near Mühldorf am Inn, on the 28th of September, 1322 between the Duchy of (Upper) Bavaria, headed by king Louis of Wittelsbach, and Austria, headed by Frederick of Habsburg. Shalev-Eyni connects the violence shown here to the line in the piyyut: “To speak to the heart of a bride decent things and to light the heart of a groom in the envy of [her] defenders.”
The figure with the bare bottom is interpreted by Shalev-Eyni as ridiculing Ludwig the Bavarian who was the winner of the Battle of Mühldorf against Friedrich the Handsome of Habsburg. This battle took place in 1322. The bare-bottomed figure is directing his bottom towards Ludwig, who, after his victory, burdened the Jews with more taxes (Shalev-Eyni, 2010, pp. 146–147). The man appears to be touching his behind with his right hand in a manner suggesting that he is spreading open his buttocks to produce a sort of yellowish cloud.

Its yellowish color is probably because a colorless, smelly, gas could not be rendered in paint at this period (Shalev-Eyni, 1999, pp. 17–18). The color of the excretion is rather bright, not the brown of feces which would probably have been represented as a number of “clouds”.

Parallels to such an amusing, if rather crude, image may be found in contemporary Christian art such as an illustration (Camille, 1992, pp. 159–160) in the prayer book of the Bishop of Metz (Metz, 1302–1303) (Figure 12) (Breviary of Renaud de Bar, fol. 102 v). In this example, there is a figure on the right that appears to be whistling, for its mouth is shaped as such, and his face and body are directed at the bare-bottomed figure on the left.

The vulgar action indulged in by the figure above the Battle of Mühldorf may be interpreted as a parody of blowing a trumpet (Allen, 2007, pp. 28–29), and a trumpet is expected to have been
Eating nuts is an ancient Jewish Passover custom mentioned in the Talmud and in Shir HaShirim Rabbah (The Great Song of Songs), the Midrash on the Song of Songs. In the Midrash to the Song of Songs, the Children of Israel are compared to nuts, which are the amusement and playthings of the nations of the world, yet in the Time to Come, Israel will be of comparable status to the kings of the nations. (Shir HaShirim Rabbah 6:11) Thus, eating nuts on Pesach is said to be appropriate for both children and kings (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Pesachim, 109:1; Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Eruvin, 104:1; Shir Hashirim Rabbah 6:11). In addition, Sefer Hasidim (Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg, 1924, p. 193), a book believed to have been written by Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg, representing the teachings of the Chassidei Ashkenaz (“Pious Ones of Germany”) from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, mentions that children learning the Torah were given nuts all the year round.

Two squirrels sit at either end of the top frame of the panel in the Tripartite Mahzor, flanking the crude figure. Now the meaning of the squirrels may be explained because they are eating nuts (Wischinzer, 1935, pp. 57–59). In addition, this may explain the connection between them and the crude figure in the middle: eating nuts was said to cause gas (Wischinzer, 1935, pp. 57–59). Unlike its status today, passing wind, at times, was considered royal entertainment, or at least not offensive to royalty (Allen, 2007, pp. 165–167), and therefore its depiction was acceptable in medieval illuminations, to Jews as well as Christians.

1. Conclusion
All of the illustrations presented in this article, display negative attitudes towards music playing. Regarding instrumental music in the medieval period, most scholars agree that musical instruments were almost never used in Christian prayer services in the thirteenth century. This opinion is based on, among other sources, the illustrations of Psalm 98 in Christian Psalters (Bowles, 1957, passim; McKinnon, 1968, pp. 10, 12, 15–18). From the fourteenth century, it seems that musical instruments began to be employed in church services (McKinnon, 1968, pp. 18–19).

Some scholars, claim that music was sometimes played in church as early as the thirteenth century (Pestell, 1987, p. 66). However, since these scholars based their opinion on the texts written against music from the period, their claims are problematic. This is because written sources against certain music may not have been a response to actual practices of the time. Also, the written texts that suggest minstrels played in churches do not imply performance in the main liturgical services, but rather could refer to liturgical dramas played by Jongleurs...
(jesters) in the church’s nave (even before the thirteenth century), as McKinnon posits (McKinnon, 1968, pp. 19–20; Rastall, 1970, p. 83). Therefore it may be argued that the depictions in the Tripartite Mahzor of instrumental music negatively were a response to developments in Christian liturgy and practice at the time: the playing of music in church.

Of course, the illustrations of the Tripartite Mahzor, as well as in the general Christian context, should be viewed in the context of Ashkenazi Jewish culture of the fourteenth century and more specifically the writings of Sefer Hasidim. It contains the day to day religious life of the Jews of Medieval Germany, including their religious laws, customs, beliefs, and tradition. This book is believed to be the work of Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg, and it represents the teachings of the Chassidei Ashkenaz (“Pious Ones of Germany”) from the 12th and 13th centuries. In Sefer Hasidim, we find many prohibitions of vocal music in certain circumstances. One such example is the prohibition of borrowing a Christian melody for use in Jewish religious music (Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg, 1924, p. 332; Borchers, 2003, p. 6; Shalev-Eyni, 2015, p. 195). Others include the prohibitions against women singing (Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg, 1924, p. 47) or singing in the language of the Gentiles (Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg, p. 85), or listening to singing on the day of the death of a Tsaddik (sage) (Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg, 1924, p. 92). Still other prohibitions against vocal music in Sefer Hasidim include: singing at the time of mourning a dead man (Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg, 1924, p. 105–106), singing by the hazzan (cantor) in certain cases (Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg, 1924, p. 123), singing with errors in pronouncing the correct letters (Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg, 1924, p. 125), or singing fast on cold days (Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg, 1924, p. 126). There are many more examples of prohibitions against of vocal music under other circumstances in Sefer Hasidim. However, also many fewer cases where vocal music is allowed or references to instrumental music appear in Sefer Hasidim. Yet these are sporadic and are not as numerous as the prohibitions of vocal music and serve as exceptions to the rule. Cases where instrumental music is negative are the subject of all of the musical illustrations in the Tripartite Mahzor. Perhaps the illustrations of the Tripartite Mahzor, which depict negative instances of instrumental music, therefore complement the text of Sefer Hasidim, which includes many negative reference to vocal music. These two books containing systematic references to music, both vocal and instrumental, suggest a central position of the subject of music on the minds of at least some Medieval Ashkenazi Jews.

To reiterate: the Tripartite Mahzor’s illustrations may be interpreted as depicting instrumental music negatively. They were executed in art against a background in which music was becoming acceptable as part of the ritual of the Church. Perhaps the playing of instruments in the synagogue was discouraged as a reaction against the surrounding Christian culture or as complementing the prohibitions of certain vocal music of Sefer Hasidim.

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