

Reading Response 6

Student's Name

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The reading of “Observations on Practices on Nusach in America” provides an insight into the practice of Nusach stemming from Mark Slobin’s book *Chosen Voices: The Story of the American Cantorate*. In the book, the author describes the practice of Nusach. However, the reading challenges the work of Slobin in line with the practice of Nusach (Tarsi, 2002). The reading’s assertion that Slobin’s work is an ethnomusicological study as well as a descriptive overview is agreeable because of the role the work plays in advancing the understanding of music. The objectivity of the reading is seen in its provision that Slobin’s examination of the Nusach is more theoretical. The reading’s perspective that the Nusach is multidimensional is true because the various definitions that exist in different context are applied.

I agree with the reading’s perspective that the Nusach is a continuation of the cantorate. This assertion is entirely based on the notion of Nusach that can be termed as a tradition because it played a crucial role in the past, specifically in the preservation of musical artifacts for the future. In tandem with the reading, the Nusach is defined as folk music in regard to synagogues while emphasizing the view that individuals indulge in prayers with jovial moods with the inclusion of appropriate melodies aimed at infusing the element of joy on the part of both the singer and the listener (Tarsi, 2002). The melodies are now being adhered to by individuals. Following the discussion on the origin of Nusach, I can draw a conclusion that it comes in the form of texts that are extracted particularly from prayer books, and their affiliation is based on the different rites including Nusach Ashkenaz and Nusach Sefard. From the above argument, the Nusach is viewed as the foundation in the light of prayer services and a subsequent continuation of the cantorate.

The reading also offers a discussion of the Nusach from a different perspective. In particular, I agree with its correction of Slobin's description and examination of the Nusach that an extensive examination is needed in the complete and systematic lay-out of the aspects of this discipline. Agreeably, Slobin tends to focus on the theoretical nature of the Nusach while overlooking the practical view that would be instrumental in understanding how music could be advanced to the next level of being a pragmatic discipline. The article further asserts that presently, an extensive research has not yet been done (Tarsi, 2002). The emphasis on practical continuation of the Nusach into a discipline that could be enjoyed by individuals makes much sense giving that interest in music among people is anchored on the nature of their practice application rather than mere theoretical understandings.

I support the author's view that the term Nusach can be explained from various perspectives and not just from a musical viewpoint because the term can be used in various instances. For example, in real life experience, the vocabularies associated with the Jewish prayer such as the term Nusach on most occasions are not used with reference to music but rather to the text. It is thus used to provide an indication of the distinct versions of texts and customs in addition to prayer settings. It means that, in the case of Nusach S'farad, this phrase is not adopted while applying to the notion of the Sepharadi music but rather the various versions of sepharadi texts, rituals, customs, and books are used in prayer sessions and special poetry. Therefore, the reading effectively defines the Nusach as anything that is associated with the correct way or rather manner in which the liturgical texts are conducted while singing, and the manner in which prayers perform musically in regard to a particular tradition (Tarsi, 2002). Hence, it is proper to state that the key to an open perception of the term Nusach on a scholarly point of view commences with putting into account an additional consideration fundamental in the description

and examination of the Nusach. As an endeavor that is systematic, a definition of Nusach that is complete crucially depends on both the practical application and the arrangement of musical components in the appropriate context regarding the distinct extra musical factors. These extra musical aspects include the time of the day, the month, the occasion and the ritual.

The reading also focuses on the teaching as well as the learning of the Nusach in North Africa. In this respect, the author claims that most cantors that are professional in the northern part of Africa acquire their knowledge and skills in the Nusach at the schools offering professional programs in the training of cantors (Tarsi, 2002). In light of the reading, I agree with the idea that the professional cantors and the cantorial school graduates are not the sole transmitters of the Nusach as rabbis and lay men; cantors that are privately trained also play the role of prayers' leaders. From experience, it is natural that everyone interested in the Nusach would seize any opportunity to learn it and transfer the skills to others without necessarily having to step in a professional class.

In conclusion, the reading particularly emphasizes the examination and the description of the Nusach based on the explanation provided by Mark Slobin in the book *Chosen Voices: The Story of the American Cantorate*. The reading perfectly deepens the definition provided by Mark Slobin on the notion of the Nusach while challenging his description and examination of the term. It is vital to agree with the reading's enhancement of the comprehension of this term through its provision of a different approach in its description and explanation as well as the outline of diverse aspects such as a text that could be used in its understanding.