

LYRE OF THE LEVITES – JEWISH MUSIC FOR BIBLICAL KINNOR



"*Lyre of the Levites – Jewish Music for Biblical Kinnor*" is the sequel to my 2008 album, "[King David's Lyre; Echoes of Ancient Israel](#)". Both of these albums are dedicated to recreating again, for the first time in almost 2000 years, the mystical, ancient sounds of the "[kinnor](#)"; the ancient Jewish Temple lyre, *once played by my very own, very ancient Levite ancestors in the Courtyard of the Temple of Jerusalem, to accompany [the singing of the Levitical Choir](#) (II Chronicles 5:12)*. For myself then, putting together these fascinating musical projects have been quite literally, the ultimate experiment in recreating my own extreme "roots music"!



THE CHOICE OF REPERTOIRE FOR THE ALBUM

"*Lyre of the Levites*" features my own arrangements of traditional melodies [from both the Jewish klezmer \(instrumental\) and traditional Jewish folk song repertoire](#) arranged for my modern evocation of the 10-string biblical kinnor of the Levites.

An important note - the musical performances on this album, are intended to be musically imaginative *evocations*, not *reconstructions*, of the sounds & playing techniques that were possible on the ten-stringed kinnor of the Bible; there are sadly too few unambiguously notated melodies from antiquity to make an album of "note for note" reconstructions of ancient instrumental solo lyre music a feasible reality.

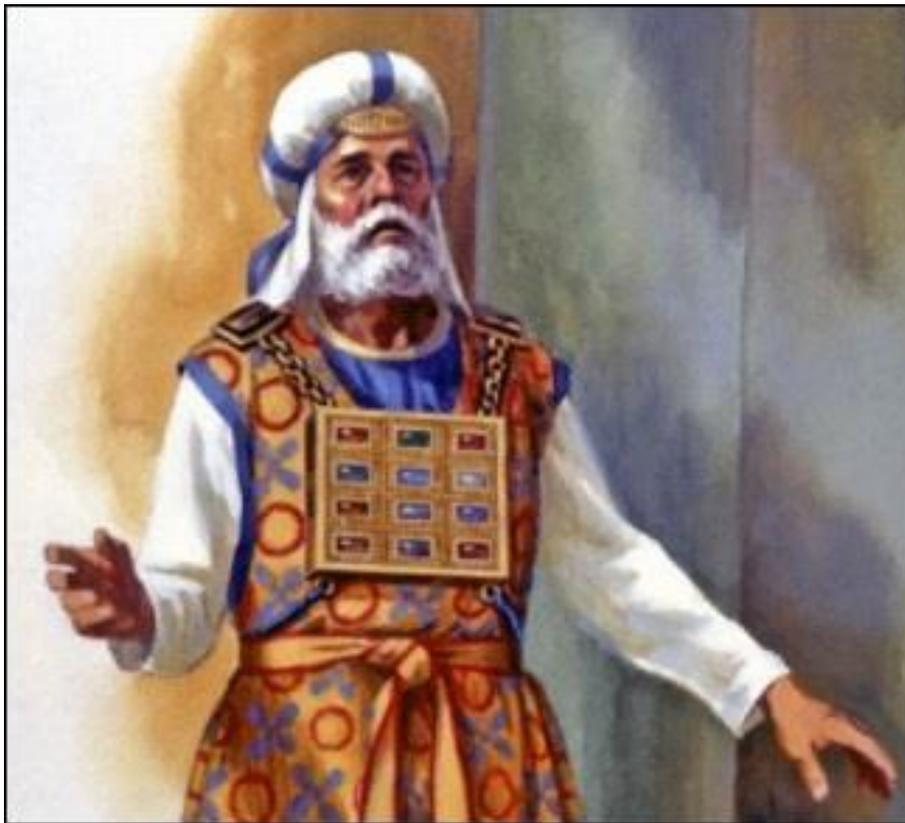
However, the traditional Jewish scales/modes in which these pieces are actually written *may well have roots which stretch deeply back to these distant, mystically remote Biblical times, [according to the fascinating research of the late Suzanne Haik Vantoura, in attempting to reconstruct the original 3000 year old music of the Hebrew Bible.](#)*

Indeed, in putting together both this album and "*King David's Lyre; Echoes of Ancient Israel*", I found that [the traditional ancient musical modes still found throughout traditional Jewish klezmer music today](#), fit the 10 strings of my modern evocation of the biblical kinnor so perfectly, *that I am now almost*

convinced that these ancient modes may well have had their ultimate origin on the 10-strings of the original kinnor lyre of my very own, very ancient Levite ancestors!

THE TWELVE TRACKS

There are 12 tracks to the album [- corresponding to the 12 Gems which once adorned the Breastplate of the Levitical Priests of the Temple of Jerusalem.](#)



These 12 Gems represented the 12 Tribes of Israel. Rather fittingly, then, the 12 tracks I eventually decided to arrange for my 10-string kinnor therefore comprised of my own arrangements for solo Levitical Lyre, of many "Musical Gems" from the traditional Jewish folk song and instrumental (klezmer) repertoire!

Indeed, in this album, I have also attempted to link the connection klezmer music once had in the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony in the tragically lost Shtetls of old Eastern Europe and the ancient Biblical association of

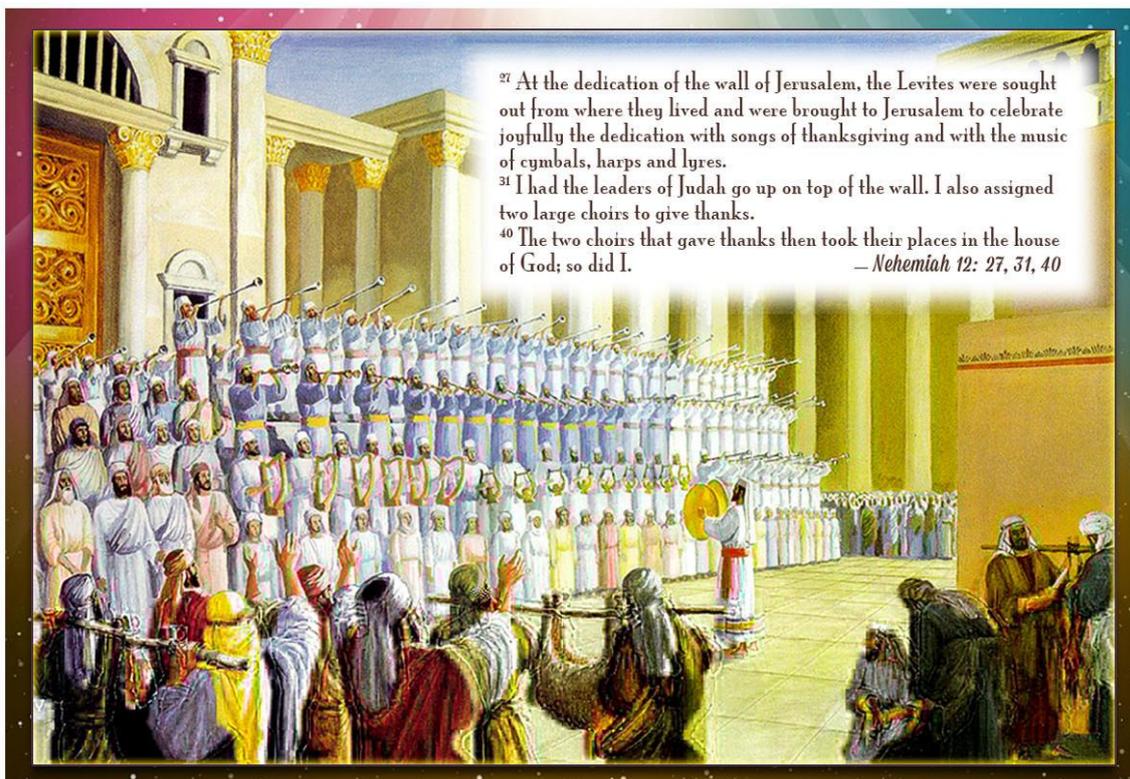
celebrating the arrival of the Sabbath as the Bride of the Jewish people - an association preserved to the present day in every Sabbath Service:

“On Friday nights in the synagogue, we sing from the siddur, “Lecha dodi likras kallah...” “Come my Beloved to greet the bride...” Our Beloved is G-d and the kallah/bride is the Sabbath, the bride of the Jewish People. This idea is based on a Midrash that points out that all the days of the week were given “mates” (Sunday has Monday, Tuesday has Wednesday, Thursday has Friday), but the 7th day seemed like the odd one out. Therefore, it complained to God, who responded that the Jewish People would be its “groom”. (Based on Midrash Bereishis Rabbah 11:8; see also Talmud, Tractate Bava Kama 32a-b.)”
[\(<http://www.jewishanswers.org/ask-the-rabbi-date/2011/03/?p=2913>\)](http://www.jewishanswers.org/ask-the-rabbi-date/2011/03/?p=2913)

For example, I have arranged for solo lyre, in the track 3, entitled *"The Sabbath Bride"*, the famous timeless Jewish Wedding song *"Chusen Kalah Mazeltov"* (Congratulations, Bride & Groom), track 4, *"Firn Di Mekhutonim Aheym"* (Escorting the Parents of the Bride & Bridegroom), track 5, *"Sherele"* (Wedding Dance), track 7, *"Dobriden"* (Greeting the Wedding Guests).

In fitting with the theme of the Levite's role in the ancient services once held in the Temple of Jerusalem, I have also arranged for biblical kinnor, a selection of sacred Jewish melodies which are specifically associated with Jerusalem - for example track 6, *"Artza Alinu"* ("We Ascended to the Land") & track 12, [Naomi Shemer's](#) timeless song *"Yerushalayim Shel Zahav"* (Jerusalem of Gold).

I also attempt to musically evoke both the lost mystery of the ancient Temple services in which the Levites once played their lyres and the lost splendour of Solomon's original Temple of Jerusalem itself, with my arrangement for biblical kinnor, of two truly majestic, mystical sounding melodies from the traditional klezmer repertoire which form tracks 1 and 2...



1. Lyres of the Levites – in attempting to evoke the lost mystery of the ancient Temple services in which the Levites once played their lyres, this is my arrangement for solo kinnor, of the dramatic klezmer melody, traditionally known in Yiddish as *“Unzer Toyrele”*

2. Solomon’s Temple – in attempting to evoke the lost wonder of Solomon’s original Temple in Jerusalem this is my arrangement of an evocative klezmer melody, usually known by the name *“Noch Havdallah”*.

3. The Sabbath Bride – my arrangement for Biblical Kinnor, of the timeless Jewish wedding song, *“Chusen Kalah Mazeltov”* (*Congratulations, Bride & Groom*).

4. Escorting the Parents of the Bride & Bridegroom – this classic of the klezmer repertoire, (whose original title in Yiddish is *“Firn Di Mekhutanim Aheym”*) was made famous by the vintage recordings featuring the vibrant klezmer clarinet of [Naftule Brandwein](#)

5. Wedding Dance – this is my arrangement of a well-known *“sherele”* from the traditional klezmer repertoire.

[As explained in Wikipedia](#), *“The sherele or sher is a set dance in 4/4 march-like tempo. The set is made up of four couples in a square formation, similar to a quadrille or square dance formation. There are many figures used, such as couples advancing, retiring, changing places, couples visiting, circling, threading the needle, etc. The “sher” figure involves two opposite men advancing towards each other and then crossing past each other turning as they pass. “Sher” means “scissors” (and “sherele” is “small scissors”) in Yiddish, and the name of the dance may come from the sher figure that is thought to imitate the cutting action of scissors”*

6. Tradition – my arrangement for solo lyre of a very early Klezmer recording of this melody, whose original title in Yiddish was *“Yikhes”*) which I first heard on the album [“Early Klezmer Recordings 1911-1939”](#) from the collection of [Prof. Martin Schwartz](#).

7. Greeting the Wedding Guests – a beautiful klezmer classic, whose original title in Yiddish is sometimes known as *“Dobriden”*) in the timeless [“Ahava Raba” Mode](#)

8. At the Rabbi's Feast – another klezmer classic in the *“Ahava Raba”* mode, magically transformed by the sound of the Biblical Kinnor. The original title in Yiddish of this tune, is *“Baym Rebin’s Sude”*.

9. Ale Brier (We Are Brothers) – the words of this traditional Jewish folk song, arranged here for solo biblical kinnor, are:

“We are all brothers

And sing happy songs

We stick together

Like nobody else does!

We are all united

Whether we are many or few

And we love each other

Like bride and groom!

*We're happy and cheerful
Singing songs, tapping our feet
And we are all sisters
Like Rachel, Ruth, and Esther"*

10. Artza Alinu (We Shall Ascend to the Land) - This song [was a favourite of the Israeli pioneers who returned to live in the land of Israel](#). As they planted crops and brought the land back to cultivation, they sang and danced in the hope that the land of Israel would be rebuilt.

11. The Jew in Jerusalem – my arrangement for solo biblical kinnor, of the klezmer classic, whose original title in Yiddish is *"Der yid in Yerusholaim"*

12. Jerusalem of Gold – this is my arrangement for solo biblical kinnor, of , [Naomi Shemer's](#) timeless song, *"Yerushalayim Shel Zahav"*. This song was made forever immortal, by the legendary singing of it by the late, great [Ofra Haza](#). This song has since become known as ["Israel's Second National Anthem"](#).

Prepare to embark with me, on an actual "Musical Adventure in Time Travel"! On this incredible journey, I will take you back over 3500 years ago, to the mystically remote, Biblical times of the ancient Hebrews & to hear once more, *the Lyre of the Levites...*
