

Thus, despite its early introduction to New York, "Attah El Kabbir" was apparently neglected by the middle of the century and not widely performed until its revival by an Israeli cantor in the 1960s.

Perhaps most interesting of all, "Attah El Kabbir" is confirmed to have been reintroduced to Syria through cassette tapes from Israel around 1980. According to a recent immigrant from Damascus who arrived in Brooklyn in late 1992, he and his family learned "Attah El Kabbir" in Damascus from an Israeli cassette and he subsequently taught it to his synagogue choir (Anon., 4 February 1993). Thus, the path of transmission can on occasion be reversed, with nearly a century of active performance in the diaspora resulting in the reintroduction of the song to its country of origin.

Today, "Attah El Kabbir" is very much alive in Israel, where "it is used in every synagogue in Jerusalem" (M. Yedid, 23 March 1993). This is also the case in Mexico City, where Cantor Isaac Cain continues the tradition of his teacher, Hayyim Tawil, in borrowing the melody of "Attah El Kabbir" to set the Kaddish prayer in maqam nahawand for the Sabbath morning synagogue service (I. Cain, 7 September 1992).

Among members of the New York Syrian community, "Attah El Kabbir" is not considered to be "a heavy classic piece of music," but rather a "light" piece appropriate for many occasions (M. Tawil, 6 November 1984). As a result, "Attah El Kabbir" can be heard in a variety of settings, traditional and new. At a gathering of Syrian families at a Catskill Mountains resort, "Attah El Kabbir" was sung within and after several services (Shelemay fieldnotes, 1-4 April 1988). Similarly, in Brooklyn the "Attah El Kabbir" melody was borrowed to set a prayer within the Sabbath morning service, and the entire pizmon was sung at a celebration in honor of a bride and groom later that same day (Shelemay fieldnotes, 20 February 1988). The performance of "Attah El Kabbir" at the Staten Island Festival can therefore be considered a most congenial venue for a pizmon that has traveled worldwide with Syrian Jews over the course of the last century.



Attah El Kabbir

You, God, are mighty, your name is merciful,
 Have pity on a chosen people,
 For your compassion is abundant,
 Without end and without limit.
 For your compassion is abundant,
 Without end and without limit.

My soul shall thank you, every moment and at all times
 Accept my faithful praise!
 With pity act upon me graciously.
 Accept my faithful praise!
 With pity act upon me graciously.

I shall not hold my peace, not in day or at night
 My tongue shall utter your righteousness
 Desire my prayer as if it were a sacrifice
 In place of sacred sacrifice or burnt offering.
 Desire my prayer as if it were a sacrifice
 In place of sacred sacrifice or burnt offering.

See, my rock, how long is the length of my exile
 Strangers continue to lord it over me
 Hurry now, please, the coming redemption.
 Strangers continue to lord it over me
 Hurry now, please, the coming redemption.

Give beauty and honor and strength
 To the son of David, your anointed one
 Who, every morning, gives forth hymns
 With a voice of song and praise.
 Who, every morning, gives forth hymns
 With a voice of song and praise.

My God, bless and strengthen this righteous people
 Bear them on eagles' wings
 Yet even higher.
 Bear them on eagles' wings
 Yet even higher.

