

Menachem Yedid, who was born in Aleppo in 1919 and migrated to Jerusalem in 1935, says that he learned this pizmon in Aleppo (M. Yedid, 23 March 1993). However, Ya'qov Bozo, born about the same time (1920) in Aleppo, but who immigrated to Jerusalem a decade later (1946), insists that he learned "Attah El Kabbir" in Jerusalem. To quote Bozo, "In Halab (Aleppo), it was not said at all. It is possible that someone knew it, but I never heard it in Halab. If I heard it, it was in Damascus, not in Halab" (Y. Bozo, 14 March 1993). One can conclude, therefore, that "Attah El Kabbir" must have been on the decline in Aleppo by the 1920s and may have died out entirely by the late 1940s. Indeed, Shaul Shemi, a cantor who was born in Aleppo in 1950, and who immigrated to Tel Aviv in 1960, confirms that he, too, learned "Attah El Kabbir" only after arriving in Israel (S. Shemi, 21 March 1993).

The early introduction of "Attah El Kabbir" to Jerusalem is also rendered likely given evidence of its spread around 1912 to other Syrian communities outside the Middle East. "Attah El Kabbir" has evidently had uninterrupted transmission in Mexico City since that date: it was almost certainly introduced by Hayyim Tawil, a disciple of Raphael Taboush who immigrated to Mexico in 1912 from Aleppo (Ashkenazi 1982:303). Tawil's student, Isaac Cain, learned "Attah El Kabbir" from Tawil in the early 1950s (I. Cain, 7 September 1992). In addition, Shlomo Shemer, a Syrian cantor younger than Cain who was born in Mexico, also performs "Attah El Kabbir" today (S. Harari, 7 September 1992). This pizmon is said to be sung frequently in Mexico City, especially on the holiday Sukkot, within the sukkah (booth) constructed for the occasion.

"Attah El Kabbir" was also transmitted to New York City early on, certainly by Cantor Moses Ashear, who immigrated to New York in 1912. It is also possible that others sang the song in New York prior to Ashear's arrival; almost certainly it was simultaneously introduced by Taboush's student Eliyahu Menaged, who also immigrated to New York in 1912. "Attah El Kabbir"'s continued transmission in New York is confirmed at least until the early 1930s, when Joseph Saff remembers learning the song as a child in Brooklyn (J. Saff, 23 October 1984).

Sometime around mid-century, likely after the death of Moses Ashear in 1940, the trail of "Attah El Kabbir" in New York becomes somewhat fainter. Several longtime Brooklyn residents who immigrated in the teens and who have extensive repertoires of pizmonim insist that they did not know "Attah El Kabbir" until it was introduced (or reintroduced) in the 1960s by Israeli cantor Raphael Elnadav, who arrived in Brooklyn in 1959. Hyman Kaire implies that the song was known, but not sung, in New York during the middle part of the twentieth century:

See, this one we didn't know 'til the new generation came from Israel. I never used to sing this before. But it was known. Because I think it was [by] Raphael Taboush, if I'm not mistaken. So, we didn't know it. . . . The first time I heard it was from Cantor Raphael Elnadav, maybe twenty years ago. I know more or less, but this one I never knew before. It was known, but it wasn't popular. (H. Kaire, 17 February 1988)

