

## SONGS OF THE BOBOVER CHASSIDIM, VOL. 1

Collected and Sung by **RABBI LAIZER HALBERSTAM**

The Chassidic Chorus - Velvel Pasternak, Director

accompanied by

### The RUDY TEPEL ORCHESTRA

Music Consultant: Richard J. Neumann

Produced by B.-H. Stambler

MEMBERS OF THE CHORUS: Tsvi Altman, Moshe Levinson,  
David Mann, Binyamin Plotkin, David Schwarzmer, Avraham Shapiro

Bobov, a tiny village in West Galicia, was the home of a remarkable Chassidic dynasty of *rebbe*s, known not only for their personal magnetism, erudition and dedication to the education of youth but also for their great tradition of music. Before the Nazi holocaust there was hardly a town in West Galicia without a Bobover *shtibl*. One could tell a Bobover Chassid by his immaculate dress, high-crowned velvet hat, carefully-curved earlocks, and, most uniquely, by his knowing a song for every occasion.

Bobover *neginah* began one day, tradition has it, when the first *rebbe*, Rabbi Shelomo Halberstam, called his only son, six-year-old BenZion, to him and told him to begin the study of *Mishle* (Proverbs). As the lad came to the fifteenth verse — “*B’ni ... My son, walk thou not in the way with them*” — he started to hum a tune to himself. Thus was born the first Bobover *nigun*, to be followed by hundreds of others; thus emerged the composer in the future Bobover *Rebbe*.

*B’ni* is a most appropriate text for the beginning of this first recording of Bobover melodies, for it was the underlying theme of the life and work of Rabbi BenZion Halberstam — safeguarding Jewish youth against straying from the ways of their forefathers.

A notable achievement of the Bobover *Rebbes* was the establishment of a system of Chassidic education. Chassidic *yeshivoth* (rabbinical colleges) were unknown in Galicia until the time when the first Bobover *Rebbe*, Rabbi Shelomo Halberstam, opened one in Vishnitse, Galicia, where he himself taught the senior group. Before this a young Chassid had no choice but to study by himself in the *shtibl* of his isolated home-town. A revolution in Chassidic life took place when the *Rebbe*'s son, Rabbi BenZion Halberstam, opened the gates of learning to the young throughout Galicia by expanding the one big *yeshivah* established by his father into forty-six branches of the *Yeshivah Ets Hayyim*, with the center at Bobov.

Boys and young men came to Bobov from everywhere, from cities and hamlets, from the Polish mountainside of Torki, where their fathers tilled the hillside lands. No one knew how the name of Bobov reached them but they came, making their way hundreds of miles on foot. Too poor to afford the train fare, they walked, with their shoes tied together over their shoulders to save wear and tear. Hypnotized by the name of Bobov, they came from high schools and universities, from all parts of Europe and overseas, from pious homes and homes long assimilated to Western ways. They came and they stayed, becoming ardent Chassidim, devout Jews, outstanding Talmud scholars and great rabbis.

Wherein lay the magnetism of Bobov that drew these masses? Surely it was the personality of the *Rebbe*, his unequalled influence as a leader, his charm, wit and learning, his organizing ability, and the overflowing love he had for his followers. Still another powerful factor was the rich treasure of *neginah* in Bobov. It is the dynamic force of this music which the present recording attempts to reproduce.

#### The Bobov Dynasty

All Chassidic dynasties reckon their spiritual genealogy in generations of discipleship beginning with the Baal Shem Tov (1700-1760) and his successor, Rabbi Dov Ber, the Magid of Mezeritz (1710-1772). In the third generation leadership divided more or less geographically among Rabbi Dov Ber's disciples. The recognized head of the Chassidim of Poland, Galicia and Hungary became Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717-1787). After him one of his disciples, Rabbi Yaakov Yitshak, the *Hozeh* (Seer) of Lublin (1745-1815), led the Chassidim of Poland and another, Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Rymanov (d. 1815), led in Galicia. When Rabbi Menahem Mendel passed on the Chassidim of Galicia were headed by Rabbi Naftali of Ropchitz (d. 1827), who had been a disciple of both the *Hozeh* and the Rymanover.

Then for half a century Rabbi Hayyim Halberstam of Sandz (1793-1876), the famous Sandzer *Tsaddik*, was the overall leader of the Chassidim of Poland, Galicia and

Hungary, becoming known as the *Rebbe of Rebbes*. Although a disciple of the *Hozeh*, whom he called *My Teacher*, he considered himself principally a follower of the Ropchitzer *Rebbe*, whom he named *The Holy Rebbe*. To the Sandzer came as Chassidim (followers) *rebbe*s of great renown in their own right, bringing with them their own Chassidim.

The first Bobover *Rebbe*, Rabbi Shelomo Halberstam, was a grandson of the Sandzer *Tsaddik*. His father, Rabbi Meir Natan, passed away at an early age, leaving his only son, born in 1847, an orphan at the age of eight. Thus the child was reared by his grandfather, the Sandzer *Rebbe*.

Under the guidance of this world-renowned *gaon* (scholar) and *tsaddik*, Shelomo grew in Torah and wisdom. So high was the Sandzer *Rebbe*'s regard for him that the grandfather used to urge his own Chassidim to go to his grandson, Rabbi Shelomo, where “*m’ken shepen Yiras Shomayim mit lefel*” — “one could steep himself in awe and reverence of the Divine.” In one of the Sandzer *Rebbe*'s *responsa* he even asked his grandson to pray for him.

At first Rabbi Shelomo served as a *rav* (rabbi) in Bukovsk, Galicia, then in Oshpetzin (where years later the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp was to be located). He became recognized as a great *gaon*. It was in Vishnitse that he founded his *yeshivah* and began his leadership as a *rebbe*. From Vishnitse he moved to Bobov, where he became world-renowned as the Bobover *Rebbe*. In 1905, when he passed away, his son Rabbi BenZion, only thirty-one, was proclaimed the new Bobover *Rebbe*. To pledge their allegiance to him came all of his father's Chassidim, many of them distinguished rabbis who had known the Sandzer *Tsaddik* himself.

Rabbi BenZion, in addition to his emphasis on the education of youth, vitalized the tradition of song in Chassidic life. He composed many new *nigunim* himself, revived those of the Ropchitzer and the Sandzer *Rebbes*, and encouraged the composition of *nigunim* by his followers.

The same pattern was followed by the Bobover *Rebbe*, Rabbi Shelomo, who succeeded to the leadership after the murder of his father by the Nazis in 1941. Thus today in a cluster of buildings around a spacious central courtyard in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, New York, one can find the Bobover *Beth Hamidrash*, the *Yeshivah B’nei Zion* (named after the late *Rebbe*) with its many classes, the *Mesivta Ets Hayyim*, dormitories, and other related institutions. In Israel the *Rebbe* erected a new settlement, *Kiryat Bobov*, to perpetuate the name of the European Bobov of old. In the principal cities of Israel, Bobover *shtiblech* once again add their bright color to the Jewish rainbow as they did in the past.

In Brooklyn on a *Simchas Torah* eve, when the Bobover *Rebbe* dances untiringly in his *Beth Hamidrash* for hours with the *Sefer Torah* in his arms, the synagogue and the courtyard are jammed with dancing Jewish masses. The golden chain of Bobov is unbroken. The song of Bobov lives on.

Notes by B.-H. Stambler



RABBI LAIZER HALBERSTAM

#### Laizer—Sing!

An Autobiographical Sketch  
by Rabbi Laizer Halberstam

I am an alumnus of the *Yeshivah Ets Hayyim* of Sandz, a city made famous by my great-grandfather, the saintly Sandzer *Tsaddik*, Rabbi Hayyim Halberstam. On both sides of my family I am a

direct descendent of the Sandzer *Tsaddik*: my paternal grandmother Nehumele and my maternal great-grandmother Yitta were his daughters.

It was my paternal grandfather, Rabbi Yitshak Tovye, of blessed memory, who placed the *talith* (prayer shawl) over the shoulders of Rabbi BenZion on the first Sabbath eve after the passing away of his father, Rabbi Shelomo, in 1905. In Chassidic circles this act constitutes the investiture of a new *rebbe*.

My other grandfather, Rabbi Mandel Baron of Yaslo, the son of Rabbi Laizer Krakover, after whom I am named, was a close friend of Rabbi BenZion in Vishnitse. They had in common a deep love of music, since Rabbi Mandel was a great *menagen* and *baal tefillah*. It was a delight for the “*oylom*” (worshippers) when Rabbi Mandel prayed at the *amud* (reader's stand) on special Sabbaths or holidays in Vishnitse or Bobov.

My father “traveled to Bobov,” in the Chassidic phrase, as did I. In fact my father, Rabbi Moshele Rubin-Halberstam, of blessed memory, was dubbed the “foreign minister” of Bobov, since he represented Bobov in governmental affairs and matters of general Jewish interest.

I can still remember *Simchas Torah* night in Bobov, when, wet to the skin with perspiration, we would dance for hours, standing in one place, keeping exact time with the varying rhythms of each new song. So great was the influx of Chassidim for this *Yom Tov* that there was no room to turn around in the wooden *shalash* constructed especially to hold the crowd. Nevertheless, everyone was dancing, and so was the building — it moved up and down so much that one would think it had been erected on a foundation of springs!

And I recall the *Rebbe*, of blessed memory, the *talith* covering his head and face, singing the *Hakafoth Zemiroth Nusah Sandz*. Again and again he repeats the words, "Holy are Thy children amongst nations; they have given up their lives like burnt offerings and peace offerings." One cannot see the *Rebbe's* face, only his tears, big as pearls rolling down his beard in a steady stream. I remembered that scene and that verse again when I heard of how the Nazis had murdered the *Rebbe* and his youngest son, Moshe Arele.

According to Chassidic thinking, it is a great *segulah* (safeguard) to have the image of the *Rebbe* before one's eyes in moments of danger. The Bobover *Rebbe* was my only *rebbe* and his image was before me in all the grave situations that I encountered during the years of Nazi persecution. Thus, I could clearly see him as I was hiding in an attic in Yaslo, while my grandfather, Rabbi Mandel, my uncle, Rabbi Yonah, and a friend of the family, Reb Selig Kozenik, were shot by the Nazis on the floor below. In concentration camps, in ghettos, stealing across frontiers at the peril of my life, in innumerable other dangerous situations of those dreadful days, his image was constantly with me.

When I was finally rescued from Europe and reached the shores of free America, I spent my first *Shabbat* in an East New York synagogue, delegated by the Bobover *Rebbe* to speak in behalf of the Bobover Yeshivah in America, which was then in its infancy.

At this moment I see the late *Rebbe's* image before me in a different connection. It is in a Polish resort town (Krynica) where the *Rebbe* spends the hot summer months. I have come for *Shabbat*. It is Friday evening. The *Rebbe* sings *Shalom Aleychem* and recites *Ribon Kol Haolamim* with his usual fervor. I am privileged to stand near him, and, as he finishes, he turns to me and says, "Laizer, sing!" He means me to continue by chanting *Eshet Hayil*. The "oylom" is astonished and I am stunned, for this poem is usually sung by one of his sons or sons-in-law, never by an outsider, even one so closely related as I.

Although known as a courageous youngster, I feel almost paralyzed and I cannot open my lips. If I sing the *nigun* that is used by the *Rebbe's* children, will it mean that I am ranking myself with them? What other *nigun* shall I sing? Perhaps it is more appropriate politely to refuse to sing at all? But the *Rebbe* has said, "Laizer, Sing!" and one does not refuse the *Rebbe*. When one feels hundreds of expectant eyes fixed on him, there is no time to meditate. I finally begin with a *rebbe'she nigun*, hardly the best choice, for one does not sing this before a *rebbe*. But the *Rebbe* has said, "Laizer, sing!"

Today I think of this long-past Sabbath eve as I undertake the preparation of this recording. Am I fit to assume the responsibility for presenting Bobover melody to the world? Which *nigunim* are the best choices?

It is not a time to let oneself be overcome with questions. The *Rebbe* has said, "Laizer, sing. . ."

*Velvel Pasternak*, choral conductor, is a graduate of Yeshiva University.

*Rudy Tepel*, clarinetist, is the leader of the most popular wedding band in New York City.

*Richard J. Neumann*, graduate of the Prague and Vienna Conservatories, is a composer of liturgical music.

*B.-H. Stambler*, producers, are a husband and wife team who was active in Jewish recording for many years.

## SONGS OF THE BOBOVER CHASSIDIM, Vol. 1

### 1. B'ni • My Son

WORDS: Proverbs 1:15 • MUSIC: Rabbi BenZion Halberstam, 1880

My son,  
Walk thou not in the way with them;  
Refrain thy foot from their path.

### 2. Rikud • Dance

MUSIC: Reb Yosef Asher Brinner

### 3. Heyn Babbiko • Whether in the Valley

WORDS AND MUSIC: Chassidic Folk Song

Whether in the valley or on the hill,  
Whether in the city or in the hamlet,  
Whether in the field or in the forest,  
Thou wilt rescue us from all grief  
And lead us out of bitter exile.  
Oh, why shouldst Thou conceal Thy face,  
Forget our poverty and our oppression  
Oh, woe is me; help!  
I will cry for help in all the streets.  
Master of the Universe,  
Thou see'st for Thyself  
How our spirits are trodden in the dust,  
Our bodies to the earth.  
We ask Thee, —  
Arise, arise,  
Arise, and help us.  
Arise, arise and help us  
And redeem us for the sake of Thy loving-kindness!

### 4. Badekns • Veiling of the Bride

MUSIC: Azriel Mandelbaum, 1939, (A great influence on the youth of Bobov during Rabbi BenZion's early years.)

### 5. L'Chuppah • Wedding Processional

MUSIC: Chassidic Folk Song

### 6. B'Shaas Hakiddushin • During the Ceremony

*Mikdash Melech • Shrine of the King*

WORDS: Third stanza of *Lecha Dodi*, hymn of welcome to the Sabbath • MUSIC: Rabbi BenZion Halberstam

Shrine of the King, royal city,  
Rise from thy ruins and despair!  
Too long hast thou dwelt in the vale of tears;  
G-d's abounding mercy shall crown thy prayer.

### 7. Kol Rinno • The Voice of Rejoicing

WORDS: Psalm 118:15-16 • MUSIC: Hayim David Blum of Sandz, later cantor in Chrzanov. (He sent the song as a gift for the wedding of one of Rabbi BenZion's daughters. (A scene from the festivities is pictured on the cover of this disc.)

The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous;  
"The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.  
The right hand of the Lord is exalted:  
The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly."

Long life to the *Rebbe* — *Mazl Tov!*  
To all Chassidim, *Mazl Tov!*  
And again, *Mazl Tov!*  
To the groom's company, *Mazl Tov!*  
To the bride's company, *Mazl Tov!*  
To all relatives, *Mazl Tov!*  
And again, *Mazl Tov!*

### 8. El Ginnas Egoz • The Garden of Nuts

WORDS AND MUSIC: Chassidic folk song based on Song of Songs 6:11. (It is attributed both to Rabbi Yitshak Isaac of Kaleb and Rabbi Ber of Radoshitz, great-great-grandfather of Rabbi Laizer Halberstam. The Polish words would indicate Rabbi Ber as composer, since Rabbi Yitshak Isaac lived in Hungary.)

I went down into the garden of nuts  
To see the fruits of the valley,  
To see whether the vine flourished,  
And the pomegranates budded.  
(Song of Songs 6:11)

Mother told us, told us  
To gather nuts, to gather nuts,  
O, how high are the branches;  
How small are the children!  
We cannot reach them.

### 9. B'vokacho • When Thou Didst Part

WORDS: Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Hymn of Unity for the Sabbath • MUSIC: Rabbi BenZion Halberstam

When Thou didst part the sea, Thy people saw  
Thy mighty hand, and they were filled with awe.

### 10. Keyl Odon • Almighty Master

WORDS: Hymn from the Liturgy of Sabbath Morning attributed to the *Yor'dey Merkavah* (Descenders to the Throne), eighth century mystics • MUSIC: Rabbi BenZion Halberstam

Almighty Master of all creatures,  
Blessed and praised by each breathing mouth;  
Grace and greatness fill His world,  
Deepest wisdom encircles His seat.

He is enthroned above the heavenly forces,  
Worshipped in reverence upon the chariot,  
Zeal for the right stands at His throne;  
Highest mercy pervades His presence;

True and good are His luminous spheres;  
In wisdom, reason, knowledge He shaped them,  
Kingly might He placed in them,  
Letting them rule o'er the living world.

Massive with light, pouring forth radiance,  
Nowhere and never their brightness endeth,  
Setting with joy, they rise with gladness,  
Obedient e'er to their Owner's will.

Praise and honor they yield to His name;  
Cheers and songs to the fame of His Empire,  
Quick to His call the sun shone forth;  
Round like it, He built the disk of the moon.

Shouts of praise rise from all the host on high;  
Thronging seraphs and angels sing glory and greatness.

### 11. V'appeyk • Set Free

WORDS: From the *Zemirah Koh Ribbon* • MUSIC: Rabbi Alter Sokolover, grandson of Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, who "traveled" to Rabbi Shelomo after the death of the *Sandzer Tsaddik*.

Free Thy people from their exile,  
Thy people chosen from all nations,  
Free! Free!  
Whom? Whom?  
Thy people.  
From what, from what?  
From exile.  
Thy people chosen from all nations.

### 12. Atto Echod • Thou Art One

WORDS: Liturgy of Sabbath Afternoon (Sometimes the words *Atto V'charonnu*, from the Festival liturgy, are used with this melody) • MUSIC: Rabbi BenZion Halberstam

Thou art one, Thy name one,  
And who is like Thy people Israel—  
A nation unique on earth?

### 13. (a) Omar Hashem L'Yaakov • Said the Lord

WORDS AND MUSIC: Chassidic Folk Song

Yes, Father, yes—  
Yes, dear Father, yes—  
Thou hast promised us—  
Fear not, Jacob  
No, Father, no;  
No, dear Father, no.  
We fear no one  
Only thee alone.

### (b) Y'hi Hashovua • May the Week

WORDS: Reb Yehezkel Rottenberg, *gabay* of Rabbi BenZion • MUSIC: Chassidic Folk Song

May the new week  
Be a redemption,  
The week that comes,  
Good portents  
And good fortune  
For us and all Israel! Amen.

### (c) Hamavdil • He Who Separates

WORDS: Reb Shelomo Teller of Krakov • MUSIC: Chassidic Folk Melody

He Who separates the sacred from the profane—  
A good week and a good month—  
May He pardon our sins—  
May things be good and happy for us,  
May He multiply our seed as the sand.

Notes by B.-H. Stambler



RUDY TEPEL has been a musician since he began to play the trumpet at the age of five and the clarinet at six. Born on New York's East Side and brought up in Harlem in the heyday of Yossele Rosenblatt, he has been steeped in a traditional Jewish atmosphere all his life. He joined his school band at the age of nine and played in various professional groups when he was only twelve years old; it soon became apparent that he would be devoting himself to music. By the time he was fifteen he had founded the first Rudy Tepel Orchestra. After a period of serious study with Bellison on the clarinet and Henri Barere on the flute, he began to specialize in Hebrew and Yiddish wedding music and has for over fifty years achieved the reputation of leading the finest band for this kind of music in the United States. He estimates that he has played at over six thousand weddings. (Since he takes no engagements on Friday nights or Saturdays this is quite a record). Rudy is proficient at clarinet, saxophone, and flute and has a repertory of over six hundred Chassidic melodies of various dynasties, probably the largest collection of such music written down for orchestra. His genial personality, lively antics, zestful playing and memorable tone have made him known far and wide.

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