

SONGS OF THE BOBOVER CHASSIDIM, VOL. 2

Collected and Sung by **RABBI LAIZER HALBERSTAM**

The Chassidic Chorus - Velvel Pasternak, Director

accompanied by

The RUDY TEPEL ORCHESTRA

Vocal Settings by Velvel Pasternak • Orchestrations by Richard J. Neumann

Produced by B.-H. Stambler

MEMBERS OF THE CHORUS: *Tsvi Altman, Reuven Botton, Pesah Carus, Barukh Greisdorf, Shelomo Mendelson, Mordecai Savitt, 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*.

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 Kozienik, 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's 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. 2

1. Ki V'simcha • For with Joy

WORDS: ISALAH 55:12. The text, also found in the Sabbath Conclusion Service, is a favorite at weddings. • MUSIC: Yehezkel Rottenberg, *gabay* of Rabbi BenZion Halberstam. Composed for the wedding of one of the *Rebbe's* daughters.

For shall ye go out with joy
And be led forth in peace.
The mountains and the hills
Shall burst into song before you.
And all the trees of the field
Shall clap their hands.

Bride and groom, *Mazl Tov!*
And a *Mazl Tov!*
"And all the trees of the field
Shall clap their hands."
To the *Rebbe* — long may he live — *Mazl Tov!*
To all the relatives — *Mazl Tov!*
And a *Mazl Tov!* . . .

2. V'hu Choson • And the Sun Is As a Bridegroom

WORDS: Psalm 19:6 • MUSIC: Rabbi Laizer Halberstam. A melody for this text was originally created by Rabbi BenZion Halberstam, but was lost over the years. In an effort to restore singing and dancing to the text, a new melody was composed by Rabbi Laizer Halberstam.

And (the Sun) is a bridegroom
Coming forth from his canopy.
Rejoicing as a strong man
To run his course.

3. Yom Layobshoh • The Day the Deep Became Dry Land

WORDS: Yehudah Halevi. Chanted at a *B'rit Milah* and on the Seventh Day of Passover. • MUSIC: Rabbi BenZion Halberstam

On the day the deep
Became dry land,

Refrain:
With a new song
The liberated praised Thee.

Sunken in deceit
Were the Egyptian daughter's feet,
But the Shulamite
Went forth in sandals bright.
All that on Jeshurun gaze
Shall see him shrined in praise,
For Jeshurun's G-d arose,
Acclaimed by His foes.

Thy banners Thou wilt set
O'er those remaining yet,
And gather those forlorn
As one gathers ears of corn.
Those that have come to Thee
Under Thy seal to be,
They from birth are Thine,
Bound by a holy sign.

4. Big'lal Ovos • For the Sake of the Fathers

WORDS: Yehudah Halevi • MUSIC: Abish Eichenstein of Sandz

For the sake of the fathers
Save Thou their children,
And bring redemption
To their children's children.

5. Tovim M'oros (Keyl Odon) • True and Good Are His Luminaries

WORDS: Hymn, in alphabetical acrostic, attributed to the *Yor'dey Merkavah* (Descenders to the Throne), eighth century mystics, chanted in the Sabbath Morning Service and sung and danced to after *Kiddush L'vanah* (Blessing the New Moon). • MUSIC: Rabbi BenZion Halberstam

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.

6. D'veykus • Meditation

Song without words • MUSIC: Azriel Mandelbaum

7. Brider, Brider • Brother, Brother

WORDS AND MUSIC: Sung with great reverence by the Chassidim, the song is regarded as a minor *Shir Hashirim* (Song of Songs) — in Yiddish — to the Torah. The authorship, known to the Chassidim, is considered sacred and never revealed outside their circles.

Brother, brother, my heart's beloved,
Without you I walk not a step.
Let's suppose that I am tipsy;
You are fine and you are good.

Refrain (after each stanza):
I cannot forget you;
You are better than good wine.
I have no other desires:
You art mine and I am yours.

When I have you with me,
I live better than a king.
I need no wine, I need no drink.
My heart is ever full of joy.

You give power, you give strength;
That I have always known in you.
To the fool you grant knowledge;
Everything is in your hands.

You soothe all cares,
This the vulgar crowd cannot conceive;
But all wise Jews love you,
For they know what is good.

Before the repast and after the fish,
I need no other delicacies,
For you make all savory
At all festivals and all seasons.

Early in the morning, at the break of day,
As soon as I open my eyes,
You are in my thoughts,
Gladly would I fly to you.

A hundred blessings every day
I gladly pronounce over you
So that I may know what I possess,
All the day and all the night.

8. Shabbos B'reyshis • Sabbath of Creation

WORDS AND MUSIC: Rabbi Israel of Koznitz. The song is based on a legend stemming from Talmudic and Kabbalistic sources, the theme of which is that on the Sabbath of Creation man and angels both joined in song. The Bobover *Rebbe* was fond of this melody and sang to it the words: *B'tseis Yisroel Mimitrayim, L'shonah haboo birusholoyim* (When Israel went forth from Egypt / Next year in Jerusalem).

On *Shabbos B'reyshis* we all dance together;
On *Shabbos B'reyshis* we dance together.

9. Keyl Echod • The One G-d

WORDS: Abraham Ibn Ezra. Usually sung as a Friday evening *z'mirah*. (The wording of the refrain used in this version, preserved by oral tradition, differs from the usual printed text. Note also the variant *uviv'vonah* in the second stanza.) • MUSIC: Hayyim David Blum of Chrzanov

The living G-d created me
To life. Yea, as I live, spake He,
No living man my face shall see,
Shall see my face and live.

Refrain:
Weakened our hands, feeble our strides;
The Voice of Heaven doth console—
Thy Father infinite abides—
To the Living G-d sing body and soul!

He fashioned all with judgment wise,
With understanding that lies
For ever hidden from our eyes,
The eyes of all who live.

Supreme o'er all His glory reigns,
Extolled on earth in holy strains,
Blessed is He Whose hand maintains
The soul of all who live.

10. Mim'kom'cho • From Thine Abode

WORDS: From the *K'dushah* (Sanctification) of the Sabbath Morning Service • MUSIC: Rabbi Laizer Halberstam

From Thine abode shine forth, O our King,
And reign over us,
For we wait for Thee.
When wilt Thou reign in Zion?
Speedily, even in our days,
Do Thou dwell there forever.
Exalted and sanctified mayest Thou be
In the midst of Jerusalem, Thy city,
Throughout all generations and to all eternity.

O let our eyes behold Thy kingdom,
As spoken in the psalms of Thy majesty
By David, Thy righteous anointed.

11. Aseyh • Do So

WORDS: From the Meditation closing the *Amidah* (*Sh'moneh Esreh*) • MUSIC: Rabbi Laizer Halberstam. Composed on an Israeli motif to celebrate *Kiryat Bobov*, the Bobov settlement in Israel, established by the *Rebbe*, Rabbi Shelomo Halberstam of Brooklyn.

Do so, do so, do so, do so
That Thy beloved may be rescued.
Save with Thy right hand and answer us.

12. Sholosh S'udos Nigun • Melody for the Third Meal

Song without words • MUSIC: Composer unknown

13. Adir Oyom • Mighty Art Thou

WORDS AND MUSIC: Author and composer unknown (medieval period). A *z'mirah* for the *M'laveh Malkah*. (Escort of the Queen), at the conclusion of the Sabbath. The melody is attributed to the author of the poem.

Mighty art Thou, awesome and revered;
In my distress I call to Thee.
The Lord is with me; I shall not fear.

Restore my fallen temple walls;
Hasten, All-High, the Messiah's day
Be Thou my aid, Oh Lord; my hope is in Thee.

Lo, my hope is in Thee;
For Thy redemption I wait,
Oh Lord, my strength and my salvation.

14. Bravo, Bravo • Bravo, Bravo

WORDS AND MUSIC: Humorous Chassidic folk song in Polish, describing the weekday morning ritual.

Mornings when the Jews arise,
First they wash their hands.

Refrain:
Bravo, Bravo, Bravo,
Bravo, Bravo, Bravo!

Modeh Ani — they praise the Lord;
To the synagogue they hurry.
Talis and *r'filin* they put on;
B'rochas then they say.

With *Hodu* they begin to pray;
At *Borach Sheomar* they kiss *istitsis*.
At *Vay'vorech David* they rise;
At *Bor'chu* they bow their heads.
Sh'moneh Esreh they say silently;
Kodesh, Kodesh — they rise on toes.

At *Tahanun* they beat their breasts;
At *Olelu* they expectorate.

Adon Olom — they end their prayer;
Then to their homes return.

There they pour a little drink;
L'hayyim is the good wish heard.

15. Z'chor Hashem • Remember, O Lord

WORDS: Psalm 137:7-10 • MUSIC: Rabbi BenZion Halberstam. This was the sainted *Rebbe's* last composition, prophetic in view of his murder later by the Nazis.

Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom
In the day of Jerusalem;
Who said, "Raze it, raze it,
Even to the foundation thereof."
O daughter of Babylon,
Who art to be destroyed,
Happy shall he be that rewardeth thee
As thou hast served us.
Happy shall he be, that taketh
and dasheth thy little ones
Against the stones.

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 repertoire 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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