

Songleading!

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Shalom Everyone!

Let's start off by saying...

WELCOME TO SONGLEADING (aka one of the most wonderful musical experiences Judaism can offer)

This manual will be a useful resource to help you along your way as a Songleader. Remember that while this manual will contain a lot of useful information to get you going, it won't be the only part of your training. It's important to take what is in here and apply it to hands on experience. You can read a book on how to be a great chef, but you need to cook a lot to become one. You can read this front to back, but you need to songlead to become a great Songleader.

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What Is Songleading, Anyways?

Songleading is the difference between singing *to* a group and singing *with* a group. Often when you go to a concert for your favorite band, you are there to be entertained. And the good news is they are there to entertain you! You hear your favorite songs being sung to you and you sing along as loud as you can. They are singing *to* you. In Songleading, you are singing *with* the group and sometimes not even singing at all. Your goal is to be a facilitator of music and of connection. When Songleading, you are not just concerned about your vocal or instrumental abilities, but also whether the group knows the words, if the key is good, how to increase participation, how to make this a meaningful experience for the group, and many other things. The group is singing together, you are the facilitator of it.

Songleading is a way to create connections through music.

Songleaders can create many different kinds of connections, sometimes without even meaning to. Here are a few examples:

- Self- connection: Through music someone can connect on a higher level to their religion/spirituality. For many people, music is their main spiritual connector. However, music can also connect people to themselves and they can have a very personal and self-realizing experience.
- Community: The power of music to create a connection between a community is incredible. Music also has the power to create community. Music can strengthen the bond of a friendship and turn a group of strangers into a community. Think of all the times you put your arms around your friends and swayed to a song, that is an example of connection to the community.
- Place: Certain songs can make people feel connections to certain places. For instance, someone's favorite camp song will always make them feel connected to their camp.

"No Patrick, songleading is not an instrument."

Guitar can be an incredibly useful skill to a songleader. However, guitar ≠ songleader. You can be the best guitar player in the world and not be a good songleader. You can be a great songleader and not play guitar. Instruments are a tool, but it doesn't make a songleader.

Prayers, What Do These Words Mean? How Can I Create A Meaningful Experience With Them?

N- Night

M- Morning

N/M- Both

S- Standing Prayer

L'chah Dodi (N): Welcoming in the sabbath bride. On the last verse we rise and face the east. Common versus done are 1, 2, 5, and 9.

Mah Tovu (M): How beautiful is your dwelling place. First thing you say before you start praying.

Modeh Ani (M): Belief that sleep is 1/60th of death. When you wake up, your soul re-enters your body. Thanks god for giving you your soul back when you wake up. First thing you say when you wake up.

Elohai Neshama (M): The soul you have put into me is pure.

Ashrei (M): Psalm of praise.

Barchu (N/M)-S: Preparing ourselves to pray. The prayer is responsive (leaders asks if group is ready, group responds). The leader bows from "barchu" to "Adonai" and stands straight at Adonai. "Baruch Adonai" is the communal response where the group bows.

Ma'ariv Aravim (N): Prayer for creation. Done at night because it mentions moon and stars.

Yotzeir (M): Prayer for creation. Done in the morning because it mentions light (Or means light).

Ahavat Olam (N): Torah as a sign of god's love for us.

Ahavah Rabah (M): Torah as a sign of god's love for us.

- Both prayers (Ahavat Olam and Ahava Rabah) are the same in terms of content. Rabbis decided which one is done in the morning and at night. There is no real difference.

Shma (N/M)-S: Central prayer, expression of god as our one god.

V'ahavta (N/M): We love god with all of our hearts. We show our love for god by following the words of Torah. We also show it by teaching them to our children and passing on the words of Torah.

Mi Chamocha (N/M): Prayer for freedom/redemption. Words are a quote from the Torah from the Song of the Sea where the Israelites celebrated their freedom from slavery. Also a hope for redemption in the future. Different verses in the morning and at night.

Hashkiveinu (N): Prayer for protection. Talks about need for protection during sleep (talks about a sukkah of peace over people). Also asks for guidance and defense.

Vshamru (N): Direct quote from Torah, just for shabbat evening. Shabbat is a sign of the covenant between God and the Jewish people because God rested on the seventh day.

Avot (N/M)-S: Our ancestors and the love God had for them. We are calling on a remembrance of that relationship in seeking a relationship with God.

"Namedropping" our ancestors to seek a relationship.

Gvurot (N/M)-S: About God's power. God brings healing to the sick, frees the captive, gives life to all, etc. All power in the world that we feel is God's power.

Shalom Rav (N): Prayer for peace. Always last prayer in tfillah section because of the recognition that nothing we pray for will happen unless we have peace.

Sim Shalom (M): Same theme as Shalom Rav. Done in the morning because that was the way it was established.

Oseh Shalom (N/M): Same theme as the other two prayers for peace.

Mi Sheberach (N/M): May the ones who blessed our ancestors bless those in need of healing. Complete healing of body and spirit.

Aleinu (N/M)-S: Bowing before God, creator of all. Praising God, recognizing God as the creator of all things.

Kaddish (N/M)-S: Praising God's name without reason. In aramaic. Has nothing to do with death. Connected to death because people used to believe that reciting Kaddish could redeem them after death.

Hinei Mah Tov (N/M): How great it is that we can all be here together. Psalm.

"When one sings, they pray twice"

When you songlead you are still praying. Just like you sing with the community, you also pray with the community. It is important to understand the words you are singing so you can be a facilitator of that meaning to the community.

Many prayers have multiple melodies of them done in the Reform Jewish Community. You can help create meaningful experiences by choosing versions you feel best fit the type of experience you want to give.

Knowing the context of a prayer is also important, as well as choreography that accompanies it (I.e- when to bow during the barchu)

Presence

Confidence, even if it's fonfidence

It is important to look confident. If you do not feel confident then access your fake confidence or "fonfidence." If you look like you know what you are doing, and act like you know what you are doing, people will believe you. Think of someone making a sale. Let's say someone needs to sell a chair they know absolutely nothing about. That person needs to act like they are 100% confident in their knowledge of that chair and sell it. Even if they just use statements such as "this is the best chair ever and you will never find a chair like this chair", saying it with confidence will result in a higher chance of a sale. Even if you are not completely sure of what you are doing, hold your head high, and "sell" the music you are leading. Make the group think this song is amazing and in this moment no song is as important as this song.

Smile, the camera loves you!

Okay, so the camera may not be on you. But you know who else loves you? The people you are songleading to! If a picture is worth a thousand words, a view of a happy songleader is worth a million. By smiling and showing you are happy, you create a welcoming environment that allows people to share in your happiness. This is not saying have an ear to ear beaming grin every time you get up there (that would make it fairly hard to sing). But try to keep the corners of your lips turned up, even if it is just slight. And besides, smiles are contagious!

Eye-Contact is key

Establishing momentary connections with people is a great way to connect to your group. It is also a good way to make sure your eyes are staying level with the group. Avoid looking up or down or to the sides, the ground and sky are probably already very engaged in what you're doing! Scan the group as you're singing and jump to different people in different places making eye contact. Sometimes it can even help in the beginning to make eye contact specifically with friends in different parts of the group. It gives you familiar faces to keep you comfortable and confident while songleading (and often even helps puts a smile on your face!).

Be passionate

Passion is essential! It is so important to love what you are doing and let others know you love it. Let them know not necessarily by explicitly saying "I LOVE SONGLEADING" in the middle of a service, but let them know by *showing* them

how much you love it. The goal is to let your passion not only be seen but also felt by the group.

Don't be afraid to move around

Don't feel confined to just one place and one position. Feel free to move your body and shift positions as appropriate in the situation. Try not to move so much that it is distracting, but moving to the music can show passion and personal engagement with the music. I like to describe this like a tree. The trunk does not move with the wind, but the branches sway side to side. Think of yourself more like the branches. Much like you can tell where the wind is blowing by how the branches are swaying, let people see where the music is going by how you are moving.

Do not have an ego

As said in the "Ten Commandments of Songleading" by Dan Nichols and Rosalie Boxt, "let the group, not you, be the star." Songleading is about creating a shared experience, so it is important to realize you are there for them, they are not there for you.

Levels Of Connection

To describe levels of connection, I'm going to use the song "One Voice" by The Wailing Jennys

Verse 1- Connection to yourself

This is the sound of one voice

One spirit, one voice

The sound of one who makes a choice

This is the sound of one voice

This verse represents the connection you have to yourself when you songlead: Your personal voice and effect on the musical experience. It is very important to be aware of yourself, what you are saying, and the effect you are having. This is the basic level of connection, in order to connect to the spirit of the group, you need to connect to your own spirit.

Verse 2- Special Connection To Participant

This is the sound of voices two

The sound of me singing with you

Helping eachother to make it through

This is the sound of voices two

This represents that moment when you create a special connection to a participant. Music can be powerful, and often connecting to that person can create a very meaningful experience for them. The two of you are singing with eachother, and

whether it is helping make it through the song or a struggle, the connection is powerful.

Verse 3- Connection to your team (if you are songleading with one or more people)

*This is the sound of voices three
Singing together in harmony
Surrendering to the mystery
This is the sound of voices three*

This represents connection to the other people you are leading with. It is important to create a connection so that it isn't multiple individual voices, but rather the voice of a team singing together. Dueling voices will make it harder for participants to be sold on the experience, but unified voices (teamwork makes the dream work!) can really bring in the participants to what you are doing.

Verse 4- Group Connection

*This is the sound of all of us
Singing with love and the will to trust
Leave the rest behind it will turn to dust
This is the sound of all of us*

This represents the connection you create with the entire group. You want the group to feel comfortable and that they can trust you and each other to fully create the experience. In many moments the group can put the day behind them, and allow themselves to just live in that moment together. This verse is the sound of a community, an essential connection.

Let's Teach A Song!

This is one of the most fun parts of being a Songleader! (But lets be real, what isn't fun about being a Songleader?)

What song should I teach?

- Choose with intention.
- If you are choosing a song for a siyyum, maybe don't teach something typically done at song session, and vice versa.
- Pick age-appropriate songs. Small children might not be able to handle long and difficult songs with a lot of Hebrew, but groups of middle school age and older might like the challenge! Likewise, older participants might be bored by incredibly simple songs that they can catch onto easily.

What should I know going into a song teach?

- The words and/or text
- The instrumental accompaniment part if you are using one. However, it is important that you know it well enough that playing it will not distract you

- from your teach. (i.e- if you have to look at your guitar before every chord, maybe try teaching it without your guitar, because that affects eye contact)
- The meaning and background, if applicable. A short goofy song might not need explanation, but if you are teaching a version of a prayer you should know the meaning.
 - Whether or not you are using song sheets
 - The structure of your teach
 - Potential areas of difficulty
 - The group you are teaching it to

I'm prepared, now what do I do?

It's time to start teaching!

- Before your teach, discuss the meaning/background of it, so the group has context.
- If the song has a lot of Hebrew, maybe start the teach by working with them on the Hebrew first to make sure they are comfortable with the words.
- Another way to start a teach is to teach the hook. Sometimes with time restraints that is all they will have time to strongly learn. However, even if the group can learn the entire song, a strong grasp of the hook can bring them in again if they get temporarily lost or disinterested.
- If the melody is difficult, maybe try the melody first as a niggun (yai lai lai/yai dai dai etc) before introducing the words.

What should I consider while teaching a song?

- Teachable phrases: Teach small chunks at a time. About one to two measures per chunk is a good starting point. If a part is particularly difficult then maybe less so they can grasp it. If a part is very simple, maybe they can feasibly handle more. If the group has song sheets, then you can possibly sing through the verse once and then they will repeat it after.
- Eye contact: Make sure your eyes are on the group and not the sky or the floor (again, I promise the sky and floor are very engaged already!)
- Don't hesitate to be a conductor: You may lack a baton, but your body is a useful tool. Guide the group with your movement. If they have to enter somewhere maybe lean in. If you want them to increase energy, start moving more and use your increased energy to increase theirs. You can also move your hand up or down to help with a moving melody. Also if you are telling them to repeat after you, it sometimes helps to point to them when they need to repeat.
- Call outs: If there is no song sheet, it sometimes helps to say the words or first few words of a line before getting to it as a reminder.
- Be engaged to engage: If you are not engaged in what you are teaching, it will be hard to make the group engaged in what you are doing. Have fun and transfer the passion to the group.
- Positive reinforcement: Saying things like "that sounded great!" or "you guys are doing so well!" helps boost their confidence in the song and keeps them engaged.

- Pay attention: Don't just go through the motions. If you hear they are struggling on a part you taught two minutes ago, go back and work on it again with them. Make sure they are not lost, because lost can quickly become disengaged.

Troubleshooting

Things go wrong, stuff happens. What is important isn't what happened but what you do about it.

- String broke: Have backup strings with you. If need be, you can still songlead without a guitar or with a missing string,
- Need a mic/amp but do not have one: This is where you can get creative. You can try to sing louder, but that can hurt your voice. Maybe try bringing the group closer to you.
- Lost your voice: Tea (throat coat, ideally), honey, vocal rest, water, throat lozenges, repeat.
- The group is completely disengaged in what you are teaching: This happens sometimes, and you just have to experiment to find a way of engaging them. However sometimes the song is not worth the effort, forcing engagement can be tricky. Read the group and make a decision.
- Chords are not in any of your resources: Find more resources! The world is your oyster and the Jewish community is very connected. Send some messages to some other songleaders, or even try to contact the composer if possible. There are also online chord resources such as oysongs.com that have sheet music!

Materials/Resources

Some recommended materials to have. You might need more or less, but these are some recommendations.

- Shireinu
- Shireinu Chordster
- Complete Jewish Songbook/Complete Shireinu
- Kutz 2011 Songleading Resource book (online at URJ music website)
- Honey/Tea
- Pen/pencil
- Water bottle (stay hydrated, friends)
- Sticky notes

If you have a guitar

- Capo
- Extra Strings

- Pick holder
- Hard case for travel
- Sturdy/adjustable strap
- Picks
- Half capo (covers A, D, and G strings)

Other resources

- Some Jewish musician's websites have chords and/or resources (i.e- Dan Nichols' website)
- Your clergy! Ask them for opportunities/resources and I am sure they will help you along your way.

JEWISH MUSIC ARTISTS

A list of (some) Jewish music artists.

- Dan Nichols
- Alan Goodis
- Noam Katz
- Julie Silver
- Alana Arian
- Elana Jagoda
- Noah Aronson
- Beth Schafer
- Stacy Beyer
- Josh Nelson
- Ellen Allard
- Jeff Klepper
- Shlomo Carlebach
- Billy Jonas
- Rick Recht

PRAYER MELODIES

This is not the "end all be all" list of Jewish music melodies. This is something to get you started, but take a look at the artists above and more and explore what is out there!

L'chah Dodi: Rotenberg, Taubman, Sephardic Melody, Kol Han'shamah Synagogue,
Mah Tov: Klepper

Modeh Ani: Klepper/Frelander, Billy Jonas

Elohai Neshama: Prusher, Mumford and Sons, Friedman, Emily Groff

Ashrei: Peri Smilow

Barchu: Aronson, Rachele Nelson, Siegel, Jacobson

Ma'ariv Aravim: Katz, Natalie Young
Yotzeir: Shankman/Lippe (sunshine/stars glow), Dylan Cotler (round)
Ahavat Olam: Friedman, Day and Night
Shma: Sulzer, Friedman, Pik, Jonas, Meditation Shma, until you run out of breath
Shma, Jordan Willensky, Groff
Mi Chamocha: Friedman (2), Nichols, Nelson, Redemption Song, Velvet Sea, Groff
Hashkiveinu: Taubman, Nichols, Groff
Vshamru: Rothblum
Shalom Rav: Klepper/Freelander
Sim Shalom: Silver
Oseh Shalom: Friedman, Jagoda, Nava Tehila, Nichols, Ochs, Groff, Jacob Shippel
Mi Sheberach: Friedman
Aleinu: Vehashevota
Hinei Mah Tov: Miami Boys Choir, Wynbrant, Carlebach, Recht, Pauker

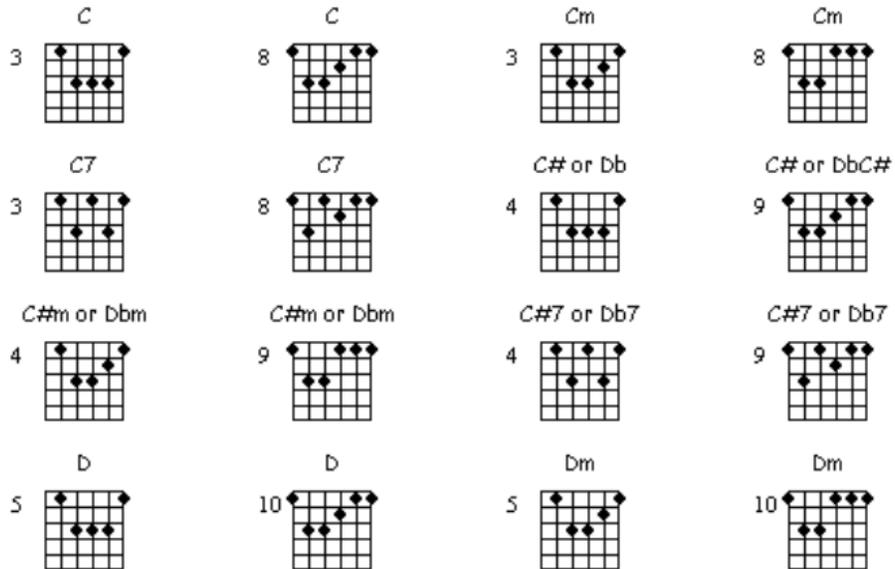
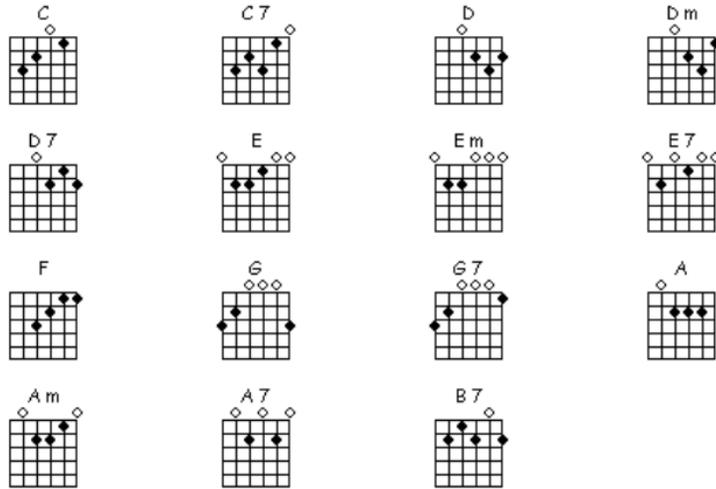
THE BIG 3

- BE ENGAGED TO ENGAGE
- FONFIDENCE BECOMES CONFIDENCE
- FENERGY BECOMES ENERGY

Not matter what you learned/got out of this packet, make sure those three are forever in your mind when you songlead.

As previously stated, this information is only useful if you apply it. Take what is here and go lead some music. Keep trying, keep leading, and never forget the incredible power that music can have on someone.

CHORDS!



Gm	Gm	G7	G7
10	3	10	3
G# or Ab	G# or Ab	G#m or Abm	G#m or Abm
11	4	11	4
G#7 or Ab7	G#7 or Ab7	A	A
11	4		5

Am	Am	A7	A7
	5		5
A# or Bb	A# or Bb	A#m or Bbm	A#m or Bbm
	6		6
A#7 or Bb7	A#7 or Bb7	B	B
	6	2	7
Bm	Bm	B7	B7
2	7	2	7