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“The most direct means for attaching ourselves to God from the material world is through music and song.” –Rebbe Nachman of Breslov.

Music has always been a source of comfort to me; a clear and organic part of my soul. Music has a way of exposing and reaching the soul in a way unlike any other medium. When music combines with Jewish liturgy and prayer, the effect results in a deep and powerful connection with history, faith, God, and community. I am blessed to have been exposed to this powerful combination very early in life. My earliest recollection of my calling to the Cantorate, and my earliest memory of being in a synagogue, is my cousin’s bar mitzvah. As I watched my cousin move through the rubrics of the service and chant his Torah portion, I was riveted. I know now, reflecting on this experience, that I was moved by the weaving of text and song. I felt a connection to something greater than myself; I felt a connection to God. This particular memory, and the memories I have of growing up in synagogue: singing with my cantor and my choir, filling in for my cantor when he was away, joining together with my family and celebrating Jewish holidays; instilled in me a deep love of Judaism.

In 2001 I graduated from the University of Southern California with a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Arts Performance. I spent a number of years singing with regional opera companies in Los Angeles. Though I was living my dream, I realized I was missing something; I felt unfulfilled. It was a time in my life where I had lost touch with my synagogue. I began seeking out synagogues, looking for work as a B’nai Mitzvah tutor, something I had done throughout my years in High School. I phoned every synagogue within the San Fernando Valley.

The very last synagogue I contacted was Temple Judea of Tarzana, California, whose clergy, particularly Rabbi Cantor Alison Wissot, became instrumental in my journey to the Cantorate.

An early moment that stands out for me at Temple Judea was the day I watched one of my first students become a Bar Mitzvah. He was a particularly troubled child from a broken home, and often would burst in to tears at the slightest mistake. Eventually he would begin to chant more confidently, with my gentle guidance, gaining courage as time went on. When I watched my student chant from the Torah, I saw a transformation occur. I watched as a sense of pride and accomplishment came over him. As the Rabbi and Cantor blessed him, I saw a flicker of wonderment cross his face. It was a truly humbling and amazing privilege to watch my student, and to know that I had a part in this formative experience. I helped facilitate a young student's connection to Judaism. He will remember that experience forever, and so will I.

Another solidifying moment for me occurred just after a Kabbalat Shabbat service I led at Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills. An elderly woman came up to me after the service and told me that she was moved by my singing and praying on the *bimah*. She explained that she was there that night to say *Kaddish* for her husband. I took her hand, and told her that I was so glad she was there. I humbly felt that God was present in that connection. I realized what my true calling was: to use my voice through music and prayer, and through my passion for teaching those of all ages to help facilitate their connection to Judaism, God and community. I feel there is a sense of the divine in the relationships I create with my congregants. Whether they feel that they are connecting to their heritage, to their family or community or to God, I feel a sense of the sacred in those relationships.

I believe my sense of faith comes from the fact that I really should not be able to what I do. Born with a minor hearing loss, it is a true miracle that I am able to sing. That leads me to believe with my whole heart that there is something greater than all of us. It is a sacred privilege

to have the opportunity to share my voice with people and facilitate their connection to Judaism, to God. It is even more meaningful because facilitating that for others allows me to experience Judaism and God in a unique and deep way.

Enabling and empowering others to help grow their connections to Judaism enriches my life in a multitude of ways. As members of my congregation strive to grow and learn, so do I. I feel my students' excitement as they master Torah and Hebrew skills; I feel pride as I watch my students become *B'nai Mitzvah*. I am moved by the congregation when they join their voices with mine. I feel honored and humbled to be a part of people's most intimate lifecycle moments. It is my mission to help anyone who wants to learn more about Judaism, who wants to connect with their heritage and religion, and connect with others in their community. It is my mission to serve and to act with empathy, grace and compassion, energy and enthusiasm, flexibility and joy. I hope and pray that this mission always be for a blessing.