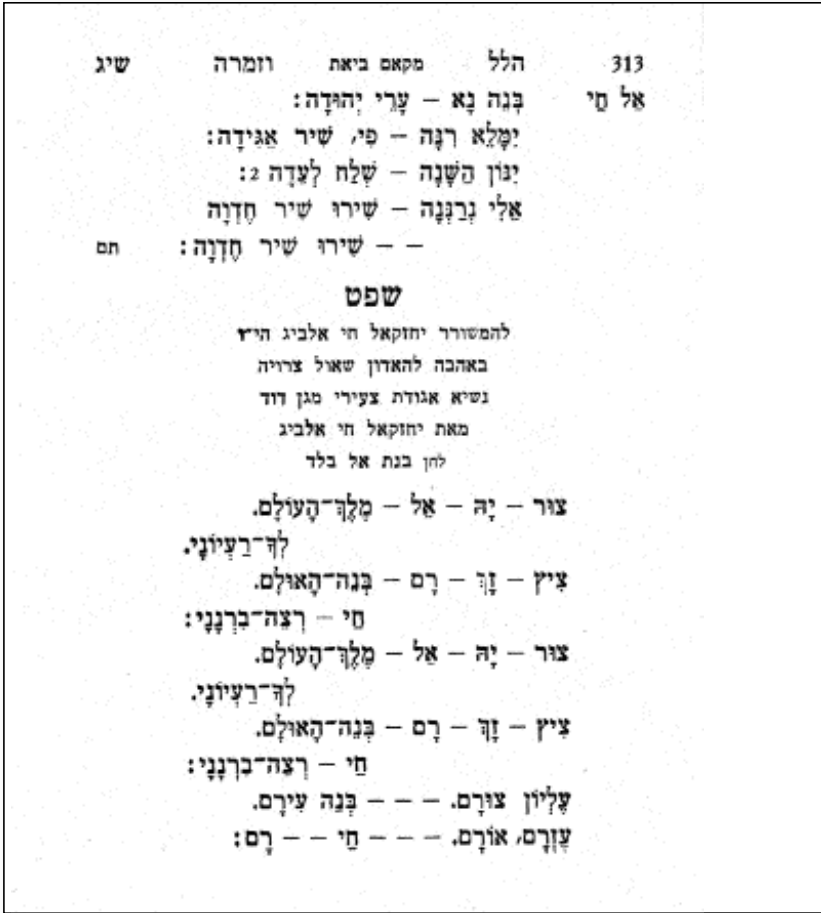


Pizmonim of the Patriarchs

“Sur Ya” Page 313 in the Red Book

Ezra C. Ashkenazi



Charlie Serouya A"H



Charlie in the army

This pizmon was written in the 1950s by a fine gentleman named Ezeiel H. Albeg, a hazzan, Torah reader and the editor of our High Holiday prayer books. He wrote the song for Charles A. Serouya, one of the most influential and colorful men of our great community. Charlie, as everyone called him, founded the Young Magen David Congregation on 67th Street next door to the “big shul,” which is what we called the Magen David Synagogue. It was the forerunner of the Youth Minyan today, but it really stood all by itself as a self-governing congregation. When most synagogues would

serve kaak and spongecake on Saturday afternoon, “Charlie Shul” (as we called Young Magen David) served tuna fish and egg salad sandwiches, Pepsi cola, and seven-layer chocolate cake. On Sukkot, throngs of people would come with their families to have corned beef and pastrami sandwiches. All the work in the shul was done by the youngsters. I remember helping to put up a new tile ceiling in the main room. All the hazzanut was done by the boys; the committee consisted of all young men. We had daily minyanim, classes and outings. On Purim, Charlie took the whole congregation, 526 kids, to

see the movie *The Ten Commandments* at the Marlboro Theater on Bay Parkway. Every year just before summer, he would announce to all the boys and girls who needed summer jobs that they should come to see him at his office in Bibi and Co. on 5th Avenue and 28th Street. When they arrived, he would give them the names of all the SY firms in the city, where they could find work. Back to the song: Mr. Albeg wrote it out of love and admiration
Continued on page 2

Pizmonim...

Continued from page 1



Charlie, far left, at YMD in the 1950s



In the sukkah

for Charlie. He made a play on the name Serouya with the words Sur Ya, and throughout the song he alludes to the names Shaul Serouya and Magen David. The original Arabic tune was Bint IL Ballad. Most of the words are praises to the almighty, which is a befitting tribute to Charlie, who always could be heard saying “Yishtabach Shemo.”

The very first time the song was sung was at a surprise birthday party for Charlie, performed by Mr. Albeg and community members, accompanied by middle eastern instruments.

I am personally thankful for the years I spent at “Charlie Shul.” They will be with me forever.

Thanks to Abe Serouya, Jacques Doueck and David M. Betesh. □