

ANÍ MA'AMÍN Pronunciation Guide, Performance Notes, and Translation

Text: “Number Twelve” (excerpt) of *Thirteen Principles of Faith*
by Moses Maimonides, twelfth-century Jewish scholar.

A-ní ma-'a-mín b'-e-mu-na sh'-lé-ma [a 'ni ma a 'min bæ ε mu-' na jə le'ma] <i>I believe with faith full/complete</i>	[IPA] <i>(I believe with complete faith)</i>
b'- ví-'at ha-ma-shí-ach [bə vi 'at ha ma 'ji aχ] <i>in the coming of the Messiah</i>	<i>(in the coming of the Messiah,)</i>
v' - af al pí sh'-yit-ma-mé-'ah [və 'af al pi jə jɪt ma 'me a] <i>and even though that he may delay</i>	<i>(and even though he may tarry,)</i>
im kol ze a-ní ma-'a-mín [ɪm kəl zɛ a 'ni ma a 'min] <i>nevertheless I believe</i>	<i>(nevertheless, I believe.)</i>

Even though the ancient text *Ani ma'amin* is a strong, uplifting declaration of faith, it has become associated with devastating images of the Holocaust. Various reports surfaced that Jewish prisoners sang these words while being transported to Nazi concentration camps on crowded train cars and even while being led into gas chambers.

Pronunciation

In general, most all vowel sounds may be regarded as they would be pronounced in Italianate Latin with most “o” and “e” vowels being open, [ɔ] and [ɛ]. Exceptions would be
1) those “e’s” that bear an acute accent (é) that should be closed [e]
2) those “i” vowels that do *not* bear an acute accent that should be pronounced [ɪ] as in the English words *hit* or *knit*.

Largely speaking, consonants may be regarded as they commonly would be pronounced in English. The combination “ch” should be considered as a German “achlaut” [χ]—pronounced gutturally, far back in the throat (as in the German words *Buch* or *nach*).

Regarding the vowel sound (or concept) that is indicated by an apostrophe that follows consonants or consonant combinations such as “b,” “sh,” and “v,” there are various schools of thought on this performance matter and therefore, choices to be made. Wherever these instances occur, they nearly always are in an unstressed or unaccented position, both prosodically and musically speaking. A conductor may choose to pronounce these sounds as the neutral schwa [ə] or as an open “e” [ɛ] or something in between (that is, a “less-dull” schwa or a somewhat “neutralized,” less bright open “e”). In the above IPA version, it was decided to use a schwa in each case. However, in my own performances, I often ask choristers to mix or brighten their schwa’s with a hint of open “e.” For more detailed discussions of Hebrew pronunciation matters and of historical matters surrounding this text and singing in Hebrew in general, I would enthusiastically refer the reader to the excellent volume *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire, Volume IV: Hebrew Texts* by Ethan Nash, with Joshua Jacobson.

Tune

This text is associated with multiple tunes and musical settings, and the particular tune set here (that many regard as traditional) has a myriad of variants. In no way should this arrangement be regarded as an attempt to present the tune in its pure, original form (indeed, that may not be possible to know). Rather, this arrangement represents an amalgamation of my impressions of the many versions I came across, intermingled with my own artistic sensibilities and desire to deliver a humble offering to the iconic Elie Wiesel, himself once a choir director. This simple arrangement is bound up in “expectancy.” Paraphrasing what one of my student choristers wrote just before the arrangement’s premier (while also in a class that was studying some of Wiesel’s writings), “...it is not the arrival but the expectancy that keeps us alive with hope...it is our legacy and duty to wait...the waiting makes us human...there is holiness in the waiting.”

--Stephen Coker