THE PERFECT CANTOR*

The perfect cantor goes to school to become an expert in liturgy so that the Ritual Committee can tell her what to sing. She sings like an angel, has the patience of a saint and is expected to work miracles with tone deaf b'nai mitzvah students. She keeps her voice in good condition and always kisses sick congregants in the receiving line. She plays the guitar, sings like a diva, and encourages congregational participation – all at the same time. She is a magician who is expected to help unmotivated students learn by osmosis. The perfect cantor is learned but never knows more than the rabbi. She isn't married to the rabbi, although at times she feels that she is. She spends 24 hours a day at the Temple but is a role model for spending time with her family. She sings for the joy of singing and does not burden her pretty little head with mundane questions of salary and health insurance. She introduces innovative melodies and sings only the traditional tunes her congregants remember. She only sings in a key that everyone else can sing in. She is conductor, director, composer, performer and only works on Friday nights. If your cantor does not measure up, simply send this letter to six other synagogues that are tired of their cantor, too. Then bundle up your cantor and send her to the synagogue on the top of the list. In one week, you will receive 1643 cantors and one of them will be perfect. Have faith in this procedure. One congregation broke its chain and got its old cantor back.

*With apologies to whoever authored the Perfect Rabbi.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis

Cantor Betsey Peters-Epstein