

WLG Spring 2023 | 5783
28th Series | Session No. 8
Rev'd Hazzan Daniel Benlolo

Women's Learning Group

Program Weekly • Fall & Spring
Designed by Rabbi Schachar Orenstein
Coordinated by Gladys Moollem
Everyone is Welcome !

Spanish & Portuguese
Synagogue of Montreal

Series 28 • Session N° 8

Wednesday • June 14th

Spring 2023 • 10:00 am

The Rev'd Hazzan Daniel Benlolo
A Musical Celebration to Complete Series 28

Join **ZOOM** Meeting • This is a recurring meeting...meet anytime:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84946975701?pwd=MWh5T084Uis4dTBGYjhienRodDJ4QT09>

Meeting ID: **849 4697 5701** • Passcode: **SPRING2023**

To Reserve or Donate: Office 514-737-3695, 101 • gladys@moollem.ca

Watch previous presentations on YouTube
www.thespanish.org/wlg-youtube.html

Rounding off another winning WLG series was a session offered by the cantor of the Spanish & Portuguese synagogue, Rev. Daniel Benlolo. This session was in fact the ninth in a series that ordinarily offers six presentations.

One of the most heart-warming parts of the entire session occurred at the very beginning when Rev. Benlolo warmly greeted and was greeted warmly in turn by a host of eager Zoom participants. Gladys' very name, Rev. Benlolo said, describes her character: Gladys is a person who gets enormous satisfaction out of making others happy. In other words, she is

gladdened by making others glad, which is why her and Rabbi Orenstein's brainchild, the WLG, is so successful. Without a moment's hesitation, Gladys, however, attributed the success of the WLG to her audience.

Referring to the age-old adage that music is food for the soul, Rev. Benlolo spoke about a severely depressed King Shaul who bade the poet David soothe his tormented soul by playing his harp and singing to him. The cantor also addressed the role of song in prayer, because it is said that God listens to music. Singing played a definite role during the March of the Living, Rev. Benlolo explained, when joyous times, difficult times, and soul-searching ones found an expressive outlet through song.

The first few songs in this session, accompanied by the lyrics visible on screen in large print to permit easy participation, revolved around the subject of appreciation and gratitude. *Al Kol Ele*, Naomi Shemer's hugely popular song was succeeded by another great song expressing love for what life offers us, *Od Lo Ahavti*. This latter was sung by another national icon, Yoram Gaon. Succeeding this beloved classic was yet one more masterful composition on a similar theme, *Yerushayim Shel Zahav*, sung by Rev. Benlolo. *Israel haBeit Sheli*, suggested by Mrs. Jack Sachs, was a perfect addition to this theme of deepfelt gratitude. The universally beloved Louis Armstrong singing the poetic *What a Wonderful World* completed this sequence of songs. This last song was one that Rev. Benlolo and his choir had once contributed to an event in Israel, the cantor informed us as he made a prayer for peace in Israel and in the world.

Four more thought-provoking songs concluded the presentation. The dismal situation of a meaningless modern society found the right words in Simon and Garfunkel's *Sounds of Silence*. Interspersed into that song and thereby alternating its description of contemporary life was the meaningfulness expressed in *Adon Olam*. Then, unexpected personal love, in Neil Diamond's *Sweet Caroline*, and sung as a duet by Rev. Benlolo and Albert Herscovitch was followed by the song of strength through faith sung by new recruits into the IDF, *MisheMaamin*. A song whose lyrics remind us to be happy with who we are, with what we have done, Rev. Benlolo explained, is Frank Sinatra's *My Way*. Perhaps no more appropriate finale could have been suggested than this one that Rev. Benlolo offered. Ultimately, the song tells us is that each person has to find his own voice, his own expression, or else he has not lived.

This session of prayerful songs - of thanks; of faith; of love of God, life, country, and individual - are songs that strengthen the bonds that give our lives purpose and contribute to the courage to be oneself.

Gigi Bitton for the WLG

June 14, 2023