

## TRIBUTES (“SPARKS PLUGS”)

“Your songs are well done – a great delivery system for sharing your unique (and uniquely Jewish) point of view. Hatzlacha rabbah.”

■ Peter Himmelman

ASCAP-winning film/TV composer, singer-songwriter, recording artist, corporate trainer

“From silly to sweet, tender and imagery-evoking, Larry’s Jewish-folk album ‘sparks’ joy with strong songwriting and clever rhymes.”

■ Joanie Leeds

GRAMMY-winning recording artist/songwriter, JRR artist

“Larry Lesser's *Sparks* album is inspirational, educational, historical and sometimes just plain fun. ...the album never comes off as preachy or scolding...[Co-producer Bill] Radcliffe has enhanced Lesser’s songs and performance with the talents of Amalia Kelter Zeitlin on violin, Sabiha Khan on flute, Larry Karol on harmonies, and his own bass, mandolin, electric, pedal steel and lap steel guitar abilities. The result is a broader and more emotional performance of the songs when necessary that doesn't get in the way of the vocals or lyrics.”

■ Jose Antonio Ponce

Songwriter, author, actor, and producer (since 2005) of the New Mexico Music Awards

“Larry Lesser is a rebbe sharing a beautiful Torah in tune, and doing it with passion, wisdom, and love – of all Jews, of the entire tradition, and genuine appreciation of how each of us journeys with it. An amazing accomplishment, *Sparks* packs an incredible amount of Torah – along with equal measures of sweetness, beauty and joy – into just over an hour of music. One could spend years unpacking the texts which inspire this album’s tracks, which add up to a method for living with greater meaning, purpose, and love – both of one’s self and of others. What more could we need? And when could we need it more?”

■ Rabbi Brad Hirschfield

President, CLAL (The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership)

“Many of us have been traveling down this path of the initial ‘Judaism doesn’t seem cool or relevant or deep or spiritual’ with the eventual spoonful of the real taste, where we peel back the bad PR to see Judaism for what it really is – the ultimate in all of the aforementioned adjectives. Your music certainly echoes that.”

■ Becky Tahel Bordo

director of award-winning documentary *American Birthright*

“Larry Lesser’s new album is both playful and soulful. His music not only creates the setting for his poetic messages, it also lifts the spirit. Larry’s thoughtful words shaped by Jewish ideals and values inspire thought and self-reflection.”

■ Rabbi Jerome M. Epstein

CEO Emeritus of United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and President of NACOEJ

“The music rocks and the meaning rolls. *Sparks* brings joy to the ear and heart. This is Jewish soul in every sense of the term. Reflect and enjoy!”

■ Alan Morinis

Founder of the Mussar Institute

“I listened to every tune, and I am completely dazzled by your remarkable songwriting ability. The depth and poignancy of *Seven Circles* made me cry; the heart-opening *Sparks*, and the deeply personal and timeless *Tearin’ the Sea*, connecting heaven and earth. You really take clever irony to a hysterical new place with *Spiritual Not Religious*, and *Bark Mitzvah* is over-the-top brilliantly silly.”

■ Janice Rubin

ALEPH Mashpi’ah Ruchanit, award-winning photographer and recording artist

“With multiple layers of meaning and ways to connect, Larry’s album engages those new to Jewish learning or observance as well as those with long histories of loving and learning Judaism. The songs can be readily used to spark, apply, or reinforce Jewish learning – and they’re fun to listen to!”

■ Rabbi Eli Gewirtz

Director of Partners in Torah

“The depth of his songwriting, social consciousness, Jewish awareness, and his legendary sense of humor makes him a true standout in the canon of Jewish contemporary music. *Sparks* sparks deep thought, great laughter and is an album that, like our Torah, you will turn to again and again.”

■ Rabbi/Cantor Robbi Sherwin

past President of the Women Cantors’ Network, JRR artist, member of Sababa

“These songs are rich in Torah-Jewish content and values in a very adorable and unique style. I marveled over your ability to express so beautifully the words of our Sages Z”L from the Talmud and Mishnah and you capture the essence of their deep meanings with your incredible lyrics.”

■ Rabbi Shmuel “Torah Fiddler” Geller

Rosh Yeshiva of Ohr Yaakov Yeshiva (in Zichron Yaakov, Israel)

“So awesome that these songs are grounded in amazing midrashim! I love the ‘Two Pockets’ song – so beautiful! Glad to have new music to share as teaching tools!”

■ Rabbi Josh Warshawsky

Nationally-touring Jewish educator, musician, songleader, and composer, JRR artist

“Many Jewish musicians have come along to share powerful music. Very few create and share powerful music which also inspires the listener to follow them down the deep well of Jewish knowledge like Larry does. This album is for you, no matter how you engage with Jewish tradition (or don’t)!”

■ Rabbi Ben Zeidman

Temple Mount Sinai (El Paso)

“There are some lovely delicate moments in your chord structures and expression that simply don’t happen with a flatpick. The textures you’ve chosen seem almost reflective of where you live in a hard-to-pin-down way – that’s cool. ‘Spiritual Not Religious’ is hilarious, smart, and awesome. ‘Stack the Stones’ is really powerful in its simplicity.”

■ Beth Hamon

Jewish educator, JRR artist, songleader, and cantorial soloist

“Many thanks, Larry, for the [4/19/2020 online concert]. It offered comfort and distraction as we struggled to adapt to our new world of pandemic and sheltering-in-place.”

- Congregation B’nai Zion (El Paso) in its June 2020 newsletter

“The songs on this album are a new form of *Midrash*, expounding on *Torah* and *Talmudic* stories. The music brings the characters, ideals and lessons of Judaism alive. ‘One-Way Train’ and ‘Stack the Stones’ will move the listener to tears, bringing the lessons of the Holocaust into our lives and hearts.”

- Karen I. Treiger  
author of the award-winning book *My Soul is Filled with Joy: A Holocaust Story*

“it’s pretty rocking...witty lyrics and really nice guitar riffs as well!”

- Ari Lesser (no relation)  
Jewish rapper, singer, songwriter and spoken word artist

“*Sparks* is chockful of gems....It breathes new life and perspective into seemingly stodgy ideas....Lesser is a warm and thoughtful communicator, which shines through on *Sparks*.”

- Rabbi Tzvi Gluckin  
Speaker, educator, author, recording artist, guitarist, music journalist

“A project that no one else could have done. A unique blend of things that you value brought forth in cleverness, humor and tenderness.”

- Nance Pettit  
co-songwriter/artist (with David Wilcox) on *Out Beyond Ideas*; healing arts practitioner

“Wow! This album has so much variety. And so much heart. Twenty-four songs is an amazing effort. The world needs to hear your message.”

- Joy Jordan  
national award-winning educator and mindfulness teacher

# QUOTES IN THE MEDIA

“new genre of Jewish music.... emphasizes Jewish texts while going beyond narrow denominational interpretation.... quite unlike most Jewish music collections”

- Aaron Howard, in his Jan. 6, 2022 [feature](#) in the *Jewish Herald-Voice*, Houston’s Jewish weekly newspaper

“Each song is very different. You hook the listener as soon as the laser touches the disc...the music is just incredible.”

- Louie Saenz, during his February 21, 2020 show  
Host of weekly “Focus on Campus” program, NPR-station KTEP-FM

“the CD feels like a *maggid* singing stories”

- Mitch Gordon, during his March 22, 2020 show  
Host of weekly [Jewish music program \*Shirim\*](#), WCUW-FM

“the folky tunes transcend denomination. Some are thoughtful reflections...while others...are playful romps.”

- author Jennie Latson’s review in the [fall 2020 issue](#) of *Rice Magazine*  
quarterly periodical of Rice University

“heartfelt and educational”

- Kosherfest founder Menachem Lubinsky, in *KosherToday*  
[12/2/2019 post](#) in bimonthly leading trade publication on news in kosher food industry

“an ambitious album”

- [story](#) in Spring/Summer 2020 issue of *HaLapid*  
biannual journal of The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies

“Let there be songs to fill the air”, 8/20/2021 *Las Cruces Bulletin*, 54(34), [p. 27](#)

“New Mexico Music Awards Showers ‘Sparks’”

- [story](#) in Autumn/Winter 2021 issue of *HaLapid*  
biannual journal of The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies

“grounded deeply and accessibly in Jewish text and values”

- [story](#) in Feb. 2020 issue of *The Jewish Outlook*  
monthly [newspaper](#) for the Austin, TX community

“Noted album features TBE connections”

- [story](#) in Sept. 2021 issue of *Adelante*  
monthly [newspaper](#) for Las Cruces, NM congregation Temple Beth El

“deep, thoughtful, and sometimes funny songs”

- [story](#) by David Kimmelman in November 2018 issue of *The Jewish Voice*  
monthly newspaper for the El Paso, TX community

---

## SONG VIDEOS

“[Sparks](#)” (2021), directed by Ricardo Barajas, Jr. & Lauren Davis  
(featured at the end of the Feb. 18, 2022 “Music by Scientists” [issue](#) of *Mixture*,  
Eva Amsen’s international biweekly newsletter on science, music, art and culture)

“[Lights Lead Home](#)” (2023), videographer Joel A. Carrasco (debuted at the  
biennial conference of The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies and also part of  
museum/gallery exhibits in 2023)

## AIRPLAY

**Songs:**

<https://larrylesser.com/airplay/> lists first known airplay of **13+ songs**; some have  
been “in rotation,” such as “Sparks” on [Episode 34 of “Emerging Artist Showcase”](#)  
each Mon and Thurs of March-April 2020. In addition to Jewish Rock Radio,  
songs have aired on FM stations (in TX, NM, MA, etc.) which also air online.

## **Interviews:**

15-minute [interview](#) (of me and *Sparks* flutist Sabiha Khan) by host Louie Saenz on his February 21, 2020 “Focus on Campus” program, NPR-station KTEP-FM

13-minute [interview](#) of me by host Marina Monsisvais on her July 18, 2020 “State of the Arts” program, NPR-station KTEP-FM

## **PEER-REVIEWED/CURATED ITEMS**

### **Competitions:**

“One-Way Train,” competitively-selected by Albuquerque Poet Laureate Mary Oishi for [3/15/21 National Endowment for Arts ‘Big Read’ event](#)

[Finalist in FOUR categories](#) (including Album of the Year), [WINNER](#) of Best Humorous Song, and [invited performance](#) at the 2021 New Mexico Music Awards

Semifinalist (top 11%) in 2021 [International Songwriting Competition](#)

### **Journals:**

[article](#) in [Sept. 2021 issue](#) of *The Israeli Journal of Humor Research*

[article](#) in [fall 2020 issue](#) of (NewCAJE’s) *The Jewish Educator*

[piece](#) in Spring/Summer 2020 issue of *HaLapid*, the biannual journal of The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies

### **Conferences and Exhibits:**

“[Bruria: Noteworthy Badass Woman of the Talmud](#),” competitively-selected presentation for the 2020 UTEP Women’s and Gender Studies Virtual Conference

“[Lights Lead Home](#)” video debuted at plenary session at the 33<sup>rd</sup> biennial conference of The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, El Paso Convention Center, August 2023

Poems/lyrics/songs/videos picked for exhibits at <https://larrylesser.com/exhibits/>