

THE SOUNDS OF ERETZ YISRAEL IN AMERICA: THE CRUCIAL 60's

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סיפורי מוסיקה
STORIES OF MUSIC



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Introduction

This lesson will explore how music of Israel grew in the consciousness of American Jews and entered American culture generally. American Jewry formulated its own brand of Zionism, which supported the enterprise in Palestine but remained committed to life in America. The Israeli music that penetrated American Jewish life seems to buttress this idea.

To show this, we will explore Israeli dance music and dances from the 1920's through the 1960's. Then we will examine what American Zionism is and how Israeli music navigated the ongoing relationship between American Jews and Zionism and Israel. The lesson will also show how pride in the new state of Israel empowered Jews to celebrate Israel through its music with a broader American public. Finally, we will explore how the connection between American Jews and Israel deepened further due to the crisis of the Six-Day War. Music, too, demonstrates this.

The Stories of Music team understands that every individual engages with Israel in a different way, and this engagement is something that can change over time. Our goal for this lesson is to raise an awareness of the impact of Israeli music on American Jewish life before Israel became a state and its ongoing impact through the Six-Day War (and beyond).

(NOTE: This lesson is intended to be taught over two sessions. For those completing the lesson over two sessions, we have marked where the instructor might break, giving bullet points that can help review that section of the lesson before the break and/or when resuming after the break. If completing this material in one session, the instructor will have to decide what material to include or not, yet still transmit the essence of the lesson. This can be comfortably done with some preplanning.)

This lesson was conceived and developed in conjunction with the lesson entitled "The Sounds of Eretz Yisrael in America: 1920's-1950's," also designed to be taught over two sessions. The Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions of these lessons overlap, as do the themes. Therefore, we feel that teaching these two lessons together will provide a real opportunity for deeper learning and greater staying power for the students. We also recognize and appreciate that some instructors may have particular circumstances and reasons for not teaching both lessons together. If doing so, you may wish to recap the main points of the first lesson when beginning the second.

Finally, for all lessons we have a Resource Guide and a Student Worksheet. Among the items these contain are lyrics. The Student Worksheet contains all the lyrics to musical selections intended to be explored/discussed. The Resource Guide contains more lyrics.)

Enduring Understandings

(What are the big ideas learners will take away from this lesson?)

- Israeli music was a primary means through which American Jews were exposed to Israeli culture and Zionism, and became and remained connected to Eretz Yisrael.
- Israeli music grew in impact on the synagogue and in Jewish education efforts, formal and informal, as American Zionism took hold.
- The “sound” of Israeli music has influenced the composition of Jewish American composers.
- American Jews’ integration and distribution of Israeli music reflects the contemporaneous relationship of American Jews to Israel.
- After the rise of the State of Israel in 1948, Israeli musical forms began to penetrate American culture more broadly.

Essential Questions

(What are the essential questions that frame this unit? What questions point towards the key issues and ideas that will be taught?)

- How has Israeli music and dance made its impact on American Jewish life? (Consider both formal and informal ways.)
- How has Israeli music and dance had an effect on American Jewish composers and songwriters?
- When and how did Israeli musical forms start penetrating American culture generally?

Outline of the Lesson

Entrance Music: “*Chorshat HaEkaliptus*” and “*Ani v’Ata*”

Part 1: The Role of Israeli Dance & Israeli Dance Music

- Our Personal Connection to Israeli Dance
- Optional teach or do a dance with the class
- “*Mayim, Mayim*,” “*Yesh Lanu Tayish*,” “*Debka Uriah*,” “*Tzaddik Katamar*”

Part 2: The American Form of Zionism

Part 3: The Reach of Israeli Music in American Culture

- The Concert Hall: Leonard Bernstein’s *Sabra* and *Silhouette (Galilee)*
- The Movies: Ernest Gold’s “Main Theme from *Exodus*”
- The Broadway Stage: Jerry Herman’s “Independence Day Hora” from *Milk and Honey*
- The Folk Music Revival: The Weavers’ “*Tzena, Tzena*”

Part 4: The Effects of the Six-Day War on American Jewish Life

- Rachel Shapira and Yair Rosenblum’s *Ma Avarech*
- Naomi Shemer’s *Yerushalayim shel Zahav*

Part 5: Music in the Aftermath of the Six-Day War

- Paul Ben-Haim’s *Kabbalat Shabbat*
- Jazz version of “Independence Day Hora” (Wild Bill Davis with Charlie Shavers)

- A capella version of “*Ma Avarech*” (Maccabeats)
- “*Ahavat Hadassah*” (Tal Ben Ari “Tula”)

Part 6: Coda/Conclusion (Outro: “*Hallelujah*”)

The Lesson

(NOTE: Play video of “*Chorshat HaEkaliptus*” and “*Ani v’Ata*.” as participants arrive. These are two popular songs from Eretz Yisrael (by Naomi Shemer and Arik Einstein/Miki Gavrielov, respectively) which are also popular Israeli dances. From 1963 and 1971 respectively, they well represent the pre- and post-Six-Day War periods that are the primary focus of this lesson. This might make a nice choice to provide a comfortable grounding for the participants. If you prefer, choose any of the Israeli dance music as entrance music, preferably from the 1960’s.)

Part 1 — The Role of Israeli Dance & Israeli Dance Music

SLIDE 1

Welcome to *Stories of Music*!

Open

Israeli dance was a primary way that the music of Israel became part of the consciousness of American Jews. “*Artza Alinu*” is a song about going to Israel and working the land. It was written outside of Israel in 1928, and is still widely sung and danced to outside of Israel. The first Israeli dance song is even earlier: “*Hora Agadat*” was written and choreographed in 1924.

In each generation of American Jewish life, music of Eretz Yisrael found its way into that cohort’s consciousness. Israeli dance became a prominent part of Jewish summer camp experiences, beginning with camps of the various Zionist movements, but extending over time to virtually all Jewish summer camps. Israeli dance often assumed an important role in Zionist youth groups, and later in other youth groups, which promoted Jewish summer camp experience.

Pair share (Discuss in pairs 3-5 min)

SLIDE 2

Pairing with the person next to you, please share with each other your responses to the following.

- ❓ Recall one (or two) experience(s) in which Israeli dance was a part. (You might think broadly of life-cycle events, holiday celebrations, summer camp, visits to Israel, youth group, etc.)
- ❓ What did this experience/these experiences mean to you as a person/Jew?

After the pair, perhaps ask 2-3 people to share what they heard/learned about their partner's experience with Israeli dance.

Great! Let's see several classic Israeli folk dances from different eras.

Notes

SLIDE 3

- If time is a consideration, choose only 2 or 3 of the following.
- Depending upon your community, this is a good place to have class participants do one of these dances (either instead of or in addition to the videos) or to learn one of these dances, or even another Israeli dance.
- [Videos of all four dances in succession can be found here.](#) (NOTE: Time markers are noted with each selection.)
- It is probably best to introduce each dance with the notes below before playing that dance.

"Mayim, Mayim" (1937, Music by: [Emanuel \(Pugachev\) Amiran](#); Lyrics by: Isaiah 12:3)
(Choreographed by: Else I. Dublin)

- *"Mayim, Mayim"* is done in a circle formation, facing the center through most of the dance, and holding hands except when clapping.
- The movement to the first four counts has become known as the "Mayim step" and is similar to the grapevine step found in other forms of dance.
- Dance was created in 1937 for a festival to celebrate the discovery of water at [Kibbutz Na'an](#) in the desert after a seven-year search for a natural water source to sustain the kibbutz.
- The text from Isaiah states, "Joyfully shall you draw water from the fountains of triumph" and is a perfect vehicle for the occasion. (Another example of the propensity to use the *Tanakh* as inspiration for music.)
- The dance's various movements have been interpreted as water splashing against shorelines or dams, irrigation sprinklers, joy at finding water, thanksgiving, and more.
- It is the earliest pre-state dance that is still popular today. ([See here for more on the history, meaning and choreography of "Mayim, "Mayim."](#))

Watch ["Mayim, Mayim"](#) in full here, or an excerpt on our compilation video (0:00-0:27) 

"Yesh Lanu Tayish" (1948) (Choreographed by: Raya Spivak)

Introduce Raya Spivak

- Student of the famed dancer and choreographer [Yardena Cohen](#), Spivak was a proto-feminist and proto-multiculturalist.
- She taught dance to people with disabilities.
- Among her many dances is the famous *"Ma Navu,"* produced as an assignment for a Martha Graham composition class, the only "folk" dance Graham ever accepted for an assignment.

“Yesh Lanu Tayish”

- This children's partner-dance in contra dance proper formation was choreographed in 1948. Couples are in longways sets, opposite each other.
- The dance is still widely taught to children; it is rather simple to learn.
- The lyrics are a poem by Yitzchak Alterman (father of famous poet Natan Alterman) published in Vilna in 1913 to teach the difference between a *tayish* (“male goat”), an *ez* (“female goat”) and a *g’di* (“kid”). (Composing settings to known poems is common within the music of Eretz Yisrael. For those who taught the first Eretz Yisrael lesson, you will recall that we heard Chaim Nachman Bialik’s poem “*Bein N’har P’rat u-vein N’har Chideke*” sung by Bracha Zefira.)
- Alterman actually published his poem with instructions for a dance, but that is not the one used today (and in this video).
- The words were put to various folk melodies, but the one used here quickly became popular and endured.

Watch [“Yesh Lanu Tayish”](#) in full here, or an excerpt on our compilation video (0:28-0:56) 

“Debka Uriah (Debkat Habir)” (1959) (Choreographed by: Moshiko Halevy)

Introduce [Moshiko \(Moshe Yitzchak\) Halevy](#) (b. 1932)

- He is famous for his debka dances, based on Oriental/Arabic motifs.
- Born to a Yemenite family in Jaffa, Moshiko studied classical ballet, modern, and jazz dance.
- In 1953 Moshiko joined the Inbal Dance Company on the recommendation of the famous choreographer Jerome Robbins. There he was influenced by Inbal’s founder, Sara Levi-Tanai. (*NOTE*: For those who taught the first lesson, we heard “*El Ginat Egoz*,” which Levi-Tanai composed and choreographed.)
- Moshiko left *Inbal* in 1960 and founded his own group, *Hapa’amonim* (in Hebrew, “The Bells”), an Israeli group dedicated to folklore, dance, and song.
- He dedicated himself to teaching choreography and working with minority groups.
- Many of his dances have become a permanent part of Israeli folk dance tradition.

“Debka Uriah (Debkat Habir)”

- [Debka](#) is a type of dance with intricate footwork and drumming rhythm “stomping of the feet.”
- It is most often performed in short lines, traditionally by men who tightly clasp hands or put their arms around each other’s shoulders. The line leader might twirl a handkerchief, napkin, cane or a string of beads called *masbaha*.
- The best debka dancers incorporate complex rhythmic footwork with a bouncy sense of rebound. Some may leap or drop to their knees displaying their daring and athleticism.
- The music and lyrics are by Nachamia Sharabi. Often, however, the music alone is performed to accompany the dance.
- In the music of Israel, it is not uncommon for the song to be more associated with a choreographer than the composer. This is the case here.

Watch "[Debka Uriah \(Debkat Habir\)](#)" in full here, or an excerpt on our compilation video (0:57-1:52). This is Moshiko's exact choreography performed at Hofstra University in 2001. 

"Tzadik Katamar" (1965) (Choreographed by: Yonatan Gabay)

Introduce Jonathan Gabay

- Renowned choreographer, considered a "pillar of Israeli folk dance."
- Other dances include, "*V'shuv Itchem*," "*Ma Avarech*," "*Od Yishama*," "*Shalom al Yisrael*," "*Sham Harei Golan*," and "*Sisu et Yerushalayim*."

"Tzadik Katamar"

- It is a closed circle dance, with hands starting off in V position.
- The dance has two sections, a walk-away and a grapevine turn.
- The music was written by Amittai Neeman (1926-2005); the words come from Psalm 92:13. The psalm is the psalm for Shabbat. The text joyfully claims that "the righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, the upright like a cedar."
- It is rather easy to learn, and is still widely taught and danced to, both here and in Israel.
- Here is another example of where music of Israel is more closely associated with the choreographer than the composer.

Watch "[Tzadik Katamar](#)" in full here, or an excerpt on our compilation video (1:53-2:20) 

Discuss

-  How does dance affect your connection to Israeli music, rather than just singing it or hearing it in a concert setting?

Part 2 — The American Form of Zionism

SLIDE 4

Background

In the lesson on the emergence of Israeli music in American Jewish life, we showed how American Jews developed their own brand of Zionism. This Americanized version of Zionism maintained an emphasis on Palestine as a place of freedom and refuge for Jews and highlighted the need for a Jewish state, without commending aliyah.

This distinctly American version of Zionism won out by 1927, and remained the basic American view and form of Zionism. Accordingly American Jews continued to support the need for Palestine as a refuge for beleaguered Jews abroad, especially as news about events in Nazi Europe emerged during the 1930's. Later, in 1948, American Jews celebrated Israel's becoming a state. Yet they could do this without any central push for American Jews to move to Israel or to make Israel central in their consciousness. ([See here for more on American Zionism.](#))

Discuss

(NOTE: Instructor may wish to limit this to 2-4 responses.)

- While American Zionism during this period focused on Israel as a refuge, American Jews felt some connection to the land and spirit of Israel through Israeli dance and other means. As we've learned about dance and Israel, which Israeli song or dance makes you feel deeply connected to Israel? Why do you think that it?

Part 3 — The Reach of Israeli Music in American Culture:

SLIDE 5

Independent Discovery

American Zionism, then, became non-threatening to most Americans. Jews were not committed to moving to Eretz Yisrael, and the United States was still the focus of American Jews' everyday life. In some ways, the support of American Jews for the rebuilding of Eretz Yisrael and later the new Jewish state of Israel could be understood as analogous to the respect and love that American Christian communities showed for the land of the Bible, the land where Jesus walked.

While antisemitism did (and does) exist, the United States, under President Harry Truman, became the first country in the world to formally recognize the new state of Israel in May, 1948, just 11 minutes after Prime Minister David Ben Gurion declared Israel a state. About two weeks later, President Chaim Weizmann visited President Truman, presenting him with a gift of a Torah.

It should come as no surprise, then, that beginning especially in the 1950's, music from the young Jewish state started penetrating not only Jewish American communities, but American culture generally.

Breakout Groups

SLIDE 6

Let's explore this. We will now break into groups/breakout rooms, each examining one song that represents the reach of Israeli music into different aspects of American culture. Have each group read the background information to the composer and song prior to listening to the recording. The groups should discuss provided questions, as well as any other points they find interesting or important. We will reconvene afterward to discuss what we have found in our small groups.

Each group will examine their case study using the same question set:

- In what aspect of American culture did this particular work find a place of influence?
- What messaging does it offer the American audience about Israel?

(NOTE: For smaller class settings, the instructor may choose to have only 2 groups. If so, the instructor should choose the topics that best fit their community. In some cases, the instructor may choose not to break out into groups. In such a case, time constraints may not permit the Instructor to do all three groups of material fully. If time is a constraint, then choose two.)

Group 1 — The Concert Hall: Leonard Bernstein’s *Four Sabras* (1950)

Introduce [Leonard Bernstein](#) (1918-1990)

- Bernstein has been hailed as one of the most important orchestral conductors of all time.
- Very eclectic, Bernstein composed in many styles, including symphonic and orchestral music, choral works, chamber music, opera, ballet, film and theater music, and works for the piano.
- Bernstein maintained a deep connection to Israel, which began with his visit in 1948, during the [War for Independence](#). Bernstein famously conducted a concert in Beersheba while fighting was taking place nearby.
- In his social and artistic circles, Bernstein was a fervent advocate for Israel, using his music and performances as a tool for advocacy.
- Bernstein wrote several works which reflect his interpretation of the local soundscape. These works demonstrate a deep interest in the music of all of the local peoples.
- He was also a pianist, author, music educator, and humanitarian.
- Bernstein’s honors include 17 Grammy Awards--including the Lifetime Achievement, 11 Emmy Awards, one Tony Award and the Kennedy Center Honor.

[Four Sabras](#)

- The sabra is a cactus-type plant with tough thorns on the outside and sweet flesh inside. In common usage, it is applied to [native-born Israelis](#). The Sabras in this piece are: 1) Ilana, the Dreamer; 2) Idele, the Hassidele (little Jew, the little Hassid); 3) Yosi, the Jokester; and 4) Dina, the Tomboy Who Weeps Alone. (NOTE: For the attempt to [save the sabra plant from insect devastation](#), see [here](#).)
- The title page is stamped Israeli Music Publications (IMP), suggesting that the piece might have been requested by that publisher—possibly as a set of children’s piano pieces—or, conversely, that it was simply a handy piece of paper found by Bernstein when he was conducting in Israel in 1948.

Instructor may wish to note the following

- The first portrait, “No. 1, Ilana, the Dreamer,” became “Candide’s Lament” in Bernstein’s celebrated operetta *Candide*. (It was also known as a piano piece written for an anniversary occasion for a friend, Cesarina Riso.)
- In “No. 2, Idele, the Hassidele,” a student is distracted during the *rav*’s Talmudic lesson. Idele is a variant of Yudel, the name of Bernstein’s paternal grandfather. Idele’s distraction is palpable—the pianist’s right hand—while the *rav* drones on in the left hand.

- In “No. 3, Yosi, the Jokester,” Yosi may refer to a friend of Bernstein’s, Yossi Stern, an Israeli artist known for his incisive cartoons. The rhythms are reminiscent of the “jump” sequence from West Side Story’s “Dance at the Gym.” A later echo of the middle *lento* section of “No. 4, Dina, the Tom Boy Who Weeps Alone” can be heard in Bernstein’s score for the film *On the Waterfront*.

Play [Four Sabras selections](#) (Instructor may choose to only listen to the first two movements) (No. 1, Ilana, the Dreamer: 0:00-1:36; No. 2, Idele, the Hassidele: 1:37-3:41; No. 3, Yosi, the Jokester: 3:46-4:43; No. 4, Dina, the Tom Boy Who Weeps Alone: 4:47-6:05.) 

Group 2 — The Movies: [Main Theme from Exodus by Ernest Gold \(1960\)](#)

Introduce [Ernest Gold](#)

- Ernest Gold was among the many great European composers that fled the rise of the Third Reich in the 1930’s. His deeply musical family fled from Vienna to New York where he was immediately embraced in the music scene.
- While many composers of his time were diverging from Romantic (a la Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Mahler) musical aesthetics in favor of atonality, Gold embraced a neo-Romantic style that became the bedrock of American cinema composers (think “Star Wars”).
- While many composers saw film music as a step in the wrong direction, Gold was impressed and excited by this new musical world and would move to Los Angeles where he pursued film music as his primary endeavor.
- Gold is known for his many contributions to film including scores to *Judgement at Nuremberg*, *It’s a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, *Ship of Fools*, and *The Secret at Santa Vittoria*, but he is still best known for his work on *Exodus*.

“Main Theme from *Exodus*”

- The main theme, from which an original song (with lyrics and vocals by Pat Boone) would be derived, sounds reminiscent of the early pioneer songs and emulates the “Mediterranean style” made famous by Israeli composers such as Marc Lavry.
- *Exodus* is a film that portrays the struggle to establish the nation of Israel. The film is based on the eponymous novel by Leon Uris published just two years earlier (1958).
- The score, which won the Academy Award, acts as a storytelling mechanism. For example, when immigrants from Europe are seen, elements of melody and harmony associated with Eastern Europe or synagogue music can be heard. Additionally, various early Zionist and Pioneer songs are referenced or heard in the score.
- The “Main Theme to *Exodus*” permeated the American popular sphere, and was covered by numerous artists.

Play [Main Theme from Exodus by Ernest Gold](#) 

*Optional and/or Alternative: **Listen** to [the version with Pat Boone’s Lyrics and Vocals](#) 

Group 3 — The Broadway Stage: “Independence Day Hora” from the Broadway musical *Milk and Honey* by Jerry Herman (1961)

Introduce Jerry Herman (1931-2019)

- Born in NYC and raised in Jersey City, Herman was the only child of musical parents. He was the writer of *Hello, Dolly* (1964), *Mame* (1966), and *La Cage Aux Folles* (1983), among others.
- To research *Milk and Honey*, Herman traveled to Israel via El Al to soak up the atmosphere. On board, were a group of widowed tourists that became the storyline for his musical that brought a loving first view of Israel into American homes.
- The *New York Times*, in reviewing a 1994 revival, suggests that the score to *Milk and Honey* may have been Herman’s best.

Milk and Honey and “Independence Day Hora”

- *Milk and Honey* opened in 1961, about 12 years after the end of Israel’s War for Independence. The play concerns a group of American widows who tour Israel in search of Israeli husbands.
- The first Broadway musical set in Israel, the show expresses a similarly jubilant and righteously proud attitude toward the young country, while remaining true to its own genre of the romantic book musical.
- The show includes a Jewish-Yemenite wedding, suggesting a Jewish community in Israel that was more diverse than the American Jewish community.
- The show featured the legendary Molly Picon, as well as Metropolitan Opera stars Robert Weede and Mimi Benzell. It ran for 543 performances and was nominated for five Tony Awards.
- “Independence Day Hora” is the second number of the first act, and proudly introduces to American musical theater audiences the sound of Israel, the excitement and passion of a young country, and Israel folk dance style.

Play “Independence Day Hora”

-  After reconvening, each small group should present to the larger group its song: what it heard, by which composer, what kind of sound etc. and, perhaps, play a 45-second snippet for the class. They should also strive to answer the question: What messaging does it offer the American audience about Israel?

Discuss

SLIDE 7

Discuss with the larger group after all groups have presented: How do you think American Jews as a whole or various Jewish American groups might have felt about the presentations of Israeli music (and therefore presentations of Israel itself) to the general American public?

Extension idea

SLIDE 8

Bernstein composed [Silhouette \(Galilee\)](#) in 1951 while in Israel deepening his connection to the country. [Silhouette \(Galilee\)](#) uses an old Lebanese folk song as source material, incorporating elements of the original Arabic with his English text. Before or after listening, the instructor may wish to note the use of Middle Eastern modes and a syncopated accompaniment. Does this change or illuminate the text in any way? What does this suggest about his understanding of, and appreciation for, the music of the region?

Play [Silhouette \(Galilee\)](#) 

Outro

SLIDE 9

(NOTE: If you are not doing this lesson in two sessions, you may want to skip to Part 4, with or without mentioning “*Tzena, Tzena*”’s warm reception by Americans.)

We have learned how the music of Israel penetrated American culture through the concert hall, film and Broadway. There’s more: it also penetrated the Folk Music Revival Movement. The [Weavers](#) was formed in 1948 by Pete Seeger, Fred Hellerman, Lee Hays, and Ronnie Gilbert. They gained success, but struggled during McCarthyism as an FBI agent informed on them as members of the Communist Party (the testimony, unproven, was later recanted). Among their early successes was their 1950 recording of “*Tzena, Tzena,*” composed in 1941 by Isaac Miron (1920-2015), who immigrated to Israel after losing his entire family in the Shoah. He wrote it as a soldier in the Jewish Brigade of the British Army in Palestine.

The lyrics, by Yehiel Hagiz, with translation by Mitchell Parish, asked women to see Jewish soldiers as heroes. The Weavers, in keeping with their folk roots and their pacifist convictions, used a translation attributed to Julius Grossman, that has removed the military context of the original and which, instead, strives toward a celebration of life by all people. The song became a big hit, with covers done by Vic Damone, Connie Francis, the Smothers Brothers, Chubby Checker, and other non-Jewish singing stars.

As we leave, today, let’s listen to this recording, and note this not only as one more example of how Israeli music entered American consciousness, but how the love of the new State of Israel started taking hold.

(NOTE: [Here is a short documentary on “Tzena, Tzena”](#) from the Milken Archives of Jewish Experience.)

Play [“Tzena, Tzena”](#) 

—BREAK—

Part 4 — The Effects of the Six-Day War on American Jewish Life

SLIDE 10

Welcome back!

Last time we explored further how Israeli music penetrated American Jewish life through the 1950's, particularly via dance, and how Israeli music even entered American culture generally, via the concert stage (Bernstein), film (*Exodus*), Broadway (*Milk and Honey*), and the Folk Music Revival ("Tzena, Tzena"). Today we will explore more of the 1960's, particularly how the Six-Day War in June, 1967, deepened the American Jewish community's connection to Israel, with music, of course, reflecting this deepening.

We'll start by listening to "*Ma Avarech*" ("How Shall I Bless You"). [Rachel Shapira](#) wrote the poem "Eldad" in memory of Eldad Krook, a classmate and fellow member of Kibbutz Shefayim who was killed in the Six-Day war, only 21-years old. [Yair Rosenblum](#) saw the poem in the kibbutz' memorial booklet, set the poem to music, and retitled it as "*Ma Avarech*." He returned to the kibbutz with singer Rivkah Zohar to sing it for Shapira. With her blessing, the song was recorded in early 1968. (Here is another example of a Hebrew poem set to music and choreographed as a dance!)

Play "[Ma Avarech](#)" (Performed by: Israel's Navy Ensemble, with soloist Rivkah Zohar, from their 1968 album, *The Third Day*.) 

SLIDE 11

Introduce

SLIDE 12

American Judaism continued to orient itself culturally toward Israel in the 1960's. Factors that propelled this orientation include the widely televised [Adolf Eichmann trial](#) (begun in April, 1961), visits to Israel by American Jewish leaders, and the increased role of Israeli cultural activities (such as Israeli folk dance) in American Jewish life and, especially, after the Six-Day War.

[The Six-Day War](#) represented a turning point not just for the young nation of Israel, but for American Jewry as well. The events leading up to, and the actual events surrounding the Six-Day War was a moment that galvanized American Jews. American Jews sensed a danger to the safety of Israel.

It was during this time that one of the most famous examples of *Shirei Eretz Yisrael* ("Songs of the Land of Israel") was released: Naomi Shemer's "*Yerushalayim shel Zahav*" ("Jerusalem of Gold").

Introduce [Naomi Shemer](#) (1930-2004)

- Shemer's music seemed to find the festive in the ordinary, celebrated the landscapes of Eretz Yisrael (especially her native Galilee), and kept the pulse of a

people longing for peace. Her music did not know despair, but, rather, evinced a certain optimism.

- This “first lady of Israeli song” was born on Kibbutz Kvutzat Kinneret, during the British mandate. She served in the IDF and studied at the Rubin Academy in Jerusalem.
- She often wrote in response to events. For example, after the Yom Kippur War (1973) she translated “*Lu Y’hi*” (the Beatles “Let it Be”, done at the request of singer Chava Alberstein). In response to the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin (1995), she translated and set to music Walt Whitman’s “O Captain! My Captain!” Her final song, “*Ilan*,” was a tribute to Israeli astronaut Col. Ilan Ramon, who died in the space shuttle Columbia explosion (2003).
- She was buried, per her wishes, in the Galilee, on Kvutzat Kinneret, among many heroes of the Second and Third Aliyah periods and, especially, the poet Rahel. One early hit was her setting to Rahel’s poem, “*Sham Harei Golan*” (also a popular dance).
- A number of revues of her songs have been staged, all to great acclaim. Many of her songs are staples of Israeli song.
- Israeli singer-songwriter Ariel Horowitz is Shemer’s son from her second marriage.

“*Yerushalayim shel Zahav*”

- The song was written for the 1967 Israel Song Festival, although not as part of the competition. The festival took place as tensions heightened shortly before the Six-Day War. The song struck a chord, receiving a standing ovation and, after the awards presentation, the crowd demanded that this song be performed again.
- Shemer personally chose unknown singer-soldier Shuli Natan to perform the song, and asked that it be done without orchestral accompaniment, only guitar.
- The song, at the time, evoked a sense of longing and emptiness. After nearly 20 years of Israel’s existence, the nation was still incomplete without a unified Jerusalem at its heart.
- Following the war, Shemer re-released the song with an additional verse boldly inviting “to travel to the Dead Sea by way of Jericho.” That passage to the Dead Sea had previously been off-limits to Israelis.
- “*Yerushalayim shel Zahav*” was translated into many languages and became an international statement on the reunification of [Jerusalem](#). It was suggested as a new “second” national anthem for Israel and remains one of the most popular patriotic songs.
- The song is often performed at occasions for Israel (such as Yom HaAtzmaut ceremonies). In Reform congregations it is often sung as part of Hakkafot on Simchat Torah. In Conservative congregations, the melody is often used as a setting for “Adon Olam.” In Orthodox communities, it is often used during the “*Kedushah*,” a highlight of the repetition of the Amidah.
- The song is ubiquitous in both Ashkenazi and Sephardic congregations during the Kedusha.
- Musically, the song was inspired by a Navarrese folk tune known as “*Peio Joxepe*.”

Play Naomi Shemer’s “[Yerushalayim shel Zahav](#)” (sung by Shuli Natan) 

— or —

Play this performance of [Naomi Shemer singing her own song](#) 

Part 5 — Music in the Aftermath of the Six-Day War (A Musical Montage)

SLIDE 13

Deeper feelings about Israel the reality and Israel the symbol seemed to emerge after the Six-Day War. The Jewish community was resolved not to allow any repetition of the atrocities in Europe to be reenacted, or to lose the State of Israel, the refuge it long supported. A new sense of solidarity between American Jews and Israelis was forged. In the wake of the Six-Day War, a number of changes occurred, including:

- Ashkenazic Hebrew was largely abandoned for the more Israeli-sounding Sephardic Hebrew.
- American Jews began to travel in much greater numbers to Israel.
- Israeli and Zionist songs became mainstays in synagogues and summer camps across the country.
- “*Sh’lichim*” (“ambassadors”) brought Israeli culture to summer camps and Jewish communities in a more earnest way.
- The future leadership of the Reform and Conservative movements in America were now required to spend a year learning in Israel. There, they experienced Israeli society and culture, weaving them into their own lives and bringing it with them to the communities they would serve.
- Cantorial concerts demonstrated the enthusiasm for Israel generated by the Six-Day War.
- The singing of “*Hatikvah*” became a prominent feature at many activities and events.

After the Six-Day War (and after “*Yerushalayim shel Zahav*”) Israeli musical styles continued to make a mark on American Jews and American audiences generally. Let’s listen to several pieces that illustrate this.

(*NOTE:* Instructor should pick at least two of the following options. Please share the information about the pieces and/or composer before playing the selection.)

- **Paul Ben-Haim** [Kabbalat Shabbat “IX. Hashkiveinu”](#) (performed by: the Ernst Senff Choir)

(*NOTE:* [Paul Ben-Haim](#) was another Israeli composer commissioned to write a Shabbat service (recall Marc Lavry). He had a long association with Bracha Zefira, whom we discussed in a prior lesson. He arranged her works, accompanied her, and used some of her works in his compositions. [Kabbalat Shabbat](#) was commissioned by the Reform Movement’s National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) specifically as an Israeli expression—and it premiered in 1968 at a celebration of Israel’s 20th anniversary, the year after the Six-Day War. The piece was a telling indicator of the extent to which Reform Zionist sensibilities and affinities with Israel had advanced.)

- **“Independence Day Hora” from *Milk and Honey***

(NOTE: This jazz version of the *Milk and Honey* song we heard earlier by [Wild Bill Davis](#) (with [Charlie Shavers](#)) was done on the 50th anniversary of the show's debut. It demonstrates the lasting impact of the show's effort to bring a love of Israel to American audiences.)

- **“Ma Avarech”**

(NOTE: We heard this song at the beginning of this session. Although Israel was victorious in the Six-Day War, the song captured the nation's grief at the losses. Due to its emotional power, the song is traditionally performed on *Yom HaZikaron* in honor of those who have fallen. It shows how the Six-Day War, and its music continued to make its impact. Here it is performed by the [Maccabeats](#), a modern Orthodox a capella group.)

- **“Ahavat Hadassah”**

(NOTE: The poem/song uses the element of love as an allegorical expression of the longing for redemption. The emotion of love and the groom's longing for the bride reliably express the Jewish people's intense longing for redemption and the return to Zion. The words of “*Ahavat Hadassah*” hail from a beloved poem by [Rabbi Shalom Shabazi](#) (1619-1720). This classic Yemenite song has been put to several melodies and is widely played/sung today, often at weddings. (And again we have a Hebrew poem set to music!) It has also been choreographed.)

Discuss

- ❓ How do these selections we just heard reflect an ongoing way of promoting the Israeli sound and/or messaging about Israel for Jewish Americans and Americans generally?

Part 6 — Coda/Conclusion: Weaving Our Learning Threads Together

SLIDE 14

We have spent some time showing how the dance and music of Eretz Yisrael has always penetrated American Jewish life and, even more so, how the music of Eretz Yisrael has penetrated American culture generally in a number of forums.

- ❓ Can you share what you have learned today (or over the past sessions)?

Notes

- Instructor should keep list in a public place (e.g. whiteboard)
- Instructor should supplement the participants' suggestions with the following:

We saw how the songs and music of Eretz Yisrael penetrated American Jewish life (and American culture) in a number of ways:

- through dance (e.g. “*Mayim, Mayim*,” “*Yesh Lanu Tayish*”),
- via the concert stage (*Four Sabras*),
- at the movies (“Main Theme from *Exodus*”),
- through musical theater (“Independence Day Hora” from Jerry Herman’s *Milk and Honey*),
- as part of the folk music scene (“*Tzena, Tzena*”), and
- adopting the melody for a prayer setting (e.g. the use of “*Yerushalayim shel Zahav*” for *Adon Olam*).

We have also learned much about the music of Eretz Yisrael, including:

- Many Israeli songs use lyrics from the Tanakh (e.g. “*Mayim, Mayim*,” “*Tzadik Katamar*”).
- Some songs were sometimes specifically composed for dance (“*Mayim, Mayim*”).
- Sometimes Hebrew poems served as inspiration for music (“*Yesh Lanu Tayish*,” “*Ma Avarech*,” “*Ahavat Hadassah*”).
- Some Israeli composers wrote settings for prayer that were performed in the United States (Ben Haim’s *Kabbalat Shabbat*).
- Sometimes works mark special occasions (“*Hag HaBikkurim*”; “*Mayim, Mayim*”; “*Yerushalayim shel Zahav*,” “*Ma Avarech*”).
- Sometimes songs became associated with their performers more than their composers and/or lyricists (e.g. Bracha Zefira’s works).
- Sometimes songs became associated with their choreographers more than their composers and/or lyricists (e.g. “*Tzadik Katamar*,” “*Debka Uriah*”).
- While we did not discuss this explicitly, one might make a correlation between the music of Eretz Yisrael that has penetrated American Jewish life and culture either because they supported Jewish American religious life or they supported American Jewry’s own indigenous form of Zionism, or both.

We also saw that the Six-Day War had a tremendous impact on the American Jewish community’s orientation toward all things Israeli.

Outro

SLIDE 15

As Israeli culture matured in the late 1960’s and 1970’s, its influence on the international scene continued to increase. This is exemplified by Israel’s participation in the Eurovision song contest beginning in 1973, and winning two years in a row in 1978 and 1979.

To close our session today, let’s listen to Israel’s 1979 Eurovision winner “Hallelujah” by Milk and Honey. As you listen, consider how the songwriters, [Kobi Oshrat](#) and Shimrit Or, cleverly connected to an international, non-Hebrew literate audience by making the focal point of the chorus a word that many people outside of Judaism would understand: “Hallelujah!” As we listen, we can say “Hallelujah!” to the music of Eretz Yisrael that continues to nurture us!

Play [“Hallelujah” by Milk and Honey](#) 

Enjoy! // **שלום!** // *L’hit-ra’ot!* // See you soon!