

## ***Hatikvah*: Conceptions, Receptions and Reflections**

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If you have ever searched for *Hatikvah* online, you were surely exposed to a barrage of factual and fictional information that, in the Internet Age, circulates virally in diverse variants, dosages and combinations *ad nauseam*.<sup>1</sup> These writings and their indiscriminating viral spread tell us more about the speculators and reproducers of these stories than they do about the song's actual historical past. Untangling these stories behind the story of *Hatikvah* is the core of this essay. For *Hatikvah* both is and is not what you think. It does not derive from Smetana nor from a Sephardic prayer. And an early Zionist pioneer did not compose it spontaneously. Nor did it become the national anthem of the State of Israel until very recently.

The truth is that *Hatikvah* ("The Hope") is a perfect example of the early Zionist movement's creative drive and haphazard, experimental character. It also exemplifies the elusiveness of the symbols of modern nation-states. From the outset, we note that this is a rare case of bottom-up creativity. A song made its way to consecration by a state that adopted it as its national anthem on a journey involving grass roots energy rather than legislative design. Because of the "folk" origins of its music and the re-writing of Naftali Herz Imber's poem 'Tikvatenu' by its users, attempts at

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\* The present essay benefitted from a close critical reading of an earlier version by my colleague Professor James B. Loeffler. I remain extremely grateful to him for his unflinching intellectual generosity and care for this text whose origins lie in an inquiry of 2009 by Cantor Marlina Fuerstman regarding the information about *Hatikvah* in the JMRC website. This article is therefore the (very) belated response to her query and I thank her for being so patient. After the article was finished, Eliyahu Hachohen, the undisputed authority on the modern Hebrew song (aka *Shirei Eretz Yisrael*, Songs of the Land of Israel) and the main historian of *Hatikvah* read it at my request and sent me within one day important amendments and additional oral information about his 1965 radio broadcasts and public lectures on *Hatikvah*. The kindness of his immediate response touched me deeply and revealed once more his passionate and openhanded dedication to the subject and to his colleagues. Finished precisely at this time, this article becomes my personal gift to the JMRC on its fiftieth anniversary.

<sup>1</sup> One of the latest journalistic articles published close to the writing of the present article is Ilan Ben Zion, How an unwieldy romantic poem and a Rumanian folk song combined to produce 'Hatikva,' *The Times of Israel*, April 16, 2013. The subtitle reads, "The national anthem only actually became the national anthem nine years ago, and that's just one of the twists in the 'loathsome' hymn's ongoing quest for harmonious acceptance." Available online: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/how-an-unwieldy-romantic-poem-and-a-romanian-folk-song-combined-to-produce-hatikva/>. The vast majority of the writings about *Hatikvah* are in Hebrew. Neil W. Levin, editor of the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music prepared a fair synthesis (not devoid of several inaccuracies) of the *Hatikvah* story in English for his commentaries on Kurt Weil's orchestral arrangement of the song. Since its publication, it has been cut and pasted by many other websites. See <http://www.milkenarchive.org/works/view/413> (Accessed March 15, 2015).

reconstructing the “true origins” of the melody and text of *Hatikvah* as known in the present have generated a rather dense, one-hundred year old literature on the subject. This quest produced speculative theories that are today obsolete since we know the precise circumstances in which Imber’s poem was shaped and the musical *contrafactum* (adaption of a preexisting melody to a new text) behind which *Hatikvah* was conceived.

An immediate trigger for the present essay was the release of a booklet titled *Hatikvah: Past, Present, Future: An Interdisciplinary Journey into the National Anthem* by the Israeli pianist and music appreciation expert Astrith Baltsan published (with two CDs) by the Ministry of Education of Israel in 2009. This production became part of a wide public campaign by its author, presented as “up-to-date, revolutionary research” on the subject and delivered in live performances to the (un)critical acclaim of the press. This show, which is neither “up-to-date” nor “revolutionary,” runs nowadays as a world tour. Baltsan’s text not only fails to acknowledge many earlier substantial studies on the subject but, in spite of a short discussion of the split reception of *Hatikvah* in one of its chapters, it offers an overall ideological stance serving a clear nationalist agenda.<sup>2</sup>

However, the present essay’s goal is not necessarily to contest or criticize Baltsan’s narrative but rather to contextualize it within the larger frame of the literary and scholarly narratives about *Hatikvah*. Therefore, we rely solely on common knowledge previously published and reproduced by a long chain of authors but address this body of data with the tools of critical theory.

Studying *Hatikvah* shows how a distinct Zionist music culture emerged in Palestine and spread throughout the Jewish world with remarkable speed. It also shows how its practice at ceremonies of Jewish institutions, synagogues, schools and youth movements, as well as its commercial distribution in sheet-music and commercial recordings throughout the European, Middle Eastern and American Jewish diasporas, was a crucial component in the nourishing of the modern Jewish national sentiment in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>2</sup> For studies on the subject disregarded by Baltsan, see, for example: Cecil Bloom, *Hatikvah – Imber, his poem and a national anthem*, *Jewish Historical Studies – The Jewish Historical Society* 32 (1992), pp. 317-336. An abridged version of Bloom’s piece was reproduced online as Naftali Herz Imber and *Hatikvah* – the ‘Erratic’ Genius, the National Anthem, and the Famous Melody, in *Midstream: Jewish Quarterly Review*, Spring 2012, <http://www.midstreamthf.com/2012spring/feature.html>, accessed April 3, 2015; Zvia Ben-Yosef Ginor, *Is there hope for Hatikvah? Text, context, pretext*, in *Yakar Le’Mordecai; Jubilee Volume in Honor of Rabbi Mordecai Waxman; Essays on Jewish Thought, American Judaism, and Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. Zvia Ginor. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav and Temple Israel of Great Neck, NY, 1999, pp. 167-185. See also the interesting observations (in spite of inaccuracies regarding the when and where of how *Hatikvah* was conceived) by Ariel Hirschfeld, *Locus and Language: Hebrew Culture in Israel, 1890-1990*, in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale. New York: Schocken Books, 2002, pp. 335-336. See below in this article for a discussion of Hirschfeld’s essay.

At the same time, the opposition to *Hatikvah* on account of the un-Jewishness of its tune or the ethnic exclusiveness of its text is a proof of how racial discourses had permeated modern perceptions of “being Jewish.” Finally, studying *Hatikvah* informs us about the modern crisis of the diasporic Jewish community and its splintering into discrete and often irreconcilable groups whose last moment of global solidarity was marked by the attempt to annihilate that very same community during World War II. And, understandably, it offers, by means of a symbol, a lesson about the daily and unsettled contradictions of contemporary Israeli existence.

## Text

Naphtali Herz Imber (1856-1909) wrote the poem *Hatikvah* (Heb. הַתִּקְוָה), with first drafts probably made in Iași (Rumania) in 1877 or in Zloczow (Galicia in Poland, today Zolochiv in Ukraine) in 1878 (scholars are divided over this issue, and their various views were summarized by Bloom, see note 2 above). Apparently, the poet constantly revised his poem, alone or in the company of Jewish settlers from Rishon Le-tziyyon, adding additional stanzas after he moved to Palestine in 1882. Published for the first time as *Tikvatenu* (“Our Hope”) in Imber’s inaugural collection of poems *Barkai* (‘Morning Star,’ Jerusalem, 1886), its superscription reads “Jerusalem 1884”, probably referring to the last revision prior to publication but certainly not to the date of its inception. Here is a translation of the two stanzas of the poem that eventually became, after several alterations (discussed below), the Israeli anthem.

As long as in the heart, within,  
A Jewish soul still yearns,  
And onward, towards the confines of the East,  
An eye still gazes toward Zion.

Our hope is not yet lost,  
The hope of two thousand years,  
To be a free people in our land,  
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.

Its inspiration seems to have been the news about the founding of Petah Tikvah (“Gate of hope”), one of the first modern Jewish settlements in Palestine established with an overt Zionist orientation that reached Imber while still in Rumania in 1878. The themes and phrasings of this poem have polyphonic resonances in Romantic European poetry. Different scholars cited two nineteenth-century patriotic German songs, certainly known to German-speaking Jews, as a possible source of inspiration: [\*Die Wacht am Rhein\*](#) (text: Max Schneckenburger; music: Karl Wilhelm; Imber’s song, *Mishmar hayarden* is in fact a paraphrase of this German song; see more below) and *Der Deutsche Rhein* or *Rheinlied* (by Nikolaus Becker, especially the “As long as” motive). Eliyahu Hacohen, the ultimate *connoisseur* of the Israeli Hebrew song, who wrote one of the

most authoritative studies on *Hatikvah* ever, notes that a Hebrew translation by Mendel Stern of *Die Wacht am Rhein* was printed in the journal *Bikkurei ha- 'etim ha-hadashim* in 1845 and that this translation was widely known.<sup>3</sup>

Another likely source of inspiration of *Hatikvah*, looking a bit more eastwards, could have been *Mazurek Dąbrowskiego*, the famous Polish patriotic song written in 1797 by Józef Wybicki that soon acquired the status of a national song. The incipit of the original poem was modified to become *Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła*, “Poland is not yet lost, while we still live” (compare to “Our hope is not yet lost”) and in this version, it eventually became the national anthem of the Republic of Poland in 1926. The process of gestation and reception of this Polish anthem show similarities to that of *Hatikvah*.

Alternatively, scholars have invoked the Biblical ‘Vision of the Dried Bones’ (Ezekiel 37, 11-12) as the inspiration for the poet of *Hatikvah*.

“They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.”

One can see in this diverse set of literary sources of inspiration for *Hatikvah* how present-day agendas suggest options according to their divergent perceptions of the wellspring of the modern Zionist movement in all its variants. Given Imber’s Galician background, the Polish inspiration of a debased nation struggling to restore its past glory, is of course a probable one. Yet, the German option is not without justification, considering the heavily German cultural and linguistic leaning of the early Zionist intellectuals Central and Eastern Europe. On the other hand, the “Biblical” thesis speaks

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<sup>3</sup> Eliyahu Hacohen, Keitzad hafkha Hatikvah le-himnon, *Eyn zo hagadah – Tziyonut ha-sippur ve-ha-ma’aseh*, ed. Joel Rappel, Tel Aviv: Miskal, Yediyot Ahronot, 1997 (How did Ha-Tikva became the National Anthem, in Joel Rappel [ed.], *It Isn’t a Dream: Zionism—The Story and the Facts*). Available online: <http://lib.cet.ac.il/pages/printitem.asp?item=8131>. Hacohen’s text developed over time in several overlapping versions of which the earliest one is, Hatikvah sipuro shel himnon, *Gittit* 37 (June 1968), 4–5 (Hatikvah, the story of an anthem), followed by Keitzad hafkha Hatikvah le-himnon [‘Naphtali Herz Imber - Hatikvah’s 100th year’], *Et-Mol* 4, no. 2 [22] (Cheshvan 5739 [November 1978]), pp. 3-5 (How did Hatikvah became an anthem). See also by the same author: ‘Od lo avdah tikvaenu, *Ariel* 186 (2009), pp. 100-104 and ‘Al hararei tziyyon: be-hipus ahar hymnon le’umi, *Lesoheah tarbut ‘im ha-‘aliyah ha-rishonah*, ed. Yafa Berlovitz and Yossi Land, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hamehuchad, 2010, pp. 223-247 (On the Hills of Zion: Searching after a National Anthem). For an abridged English version of Hacohen’s text, see the article that accompanied the launching of the *Hatikvah* stamp by the Israeli Philatelic Federation in 2008 on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Israel’s independence: <http://www.israelphilately.org.il/en/catalog/articles/882>. For a thorough contextualization of the poem by Imber within the poetry of the First Aliyah, see Yaffa Berlovitz, *Mi-shirat hibbat tziyyon le-shirat moledet: Ha-zemer ba-‘aliyah ha-rishonah ke-masad la-zemer ha-yisrae’li, Bikoret u-parshanut* 44 (2012), pp. 13-59. (From the Songs of Hibbat Tziyyon to Homeland Songs: The Songs of the First Aliyah as a basis for the Israeli Song)

more about a desire to ground the narrative of *Hatikvah* on canonic Hebrew texts. Imber, a Jew raised in a traditional family, certainly had access to the Hebrew Biblical text, and indeed *maskilic* poetry did rely on the Bible. However, the likeness is that a secularized Hebrew poet writing a nationalistic poem in the 1870s would be exposed to the resonances of modern national themes and motives emanating from the poetic milieus of the struggling surrounding non-Jewish nations, Poland, Germany as well as the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires.

The text of Imber's *Tikvatenu* was not bound to remain a stable written one once it started to circulate orally. It underwent, in the process of its reception and musical performances, changes and adaptations. The printed version of 1886 is apparently not the original one and resulted from the contacts between the poet and teachers of the Rishon le-Tziyyon school who hosted Imber, such as Israel Belkind, Mordecai Lubman and David Yudlovitch. Some of these changes, included the new title of Imber's song, *Hatikvah*, appeared already in the songster 'Shirei 'am-tziyyon'.<sup>4</sup> According to Hacoen (see above note 3) and Shahar (see below note 20), further changes in the text were introduced by Dr. Yehuda Leib Matmon-Cohen (1869-1939), who immigrated to Palestine in 1905, served as a school teacher in Rishon le-Tziyyon in that year and later founded the famous Gymnasia Herzliyah in Tel Aviv-Jaffa. The changes from Imber's 'Hatikvah ha-noshanah' to 'Hatikvah shnot alpayim' and from Imber's 'lashuv le'erezt avoteynu, le-yir bah David hannah' to 'Liyot 'am hofshi be-artzenu, Eretz Tziyyon Yerushalayim' are attributed to Matmon-Cohen.

Hacoen also maintains that composer Hanina Karaczewski (1877-1926; sometimes spelled as Chanina Krachevsky; immigrated to Palestine in 1906), who set a choral arrangement of *Hatikvah* for the Gymnasia Herzliyah was responsible for adding the word "bat" to 'Hatikvah bat shnot alpayim' in order to better adjust the text to the rhythmic pattern of the melody. Another source credits educator and Zionist activist David Yellin (1864-1941) with the change from 'lashuv le'erezt avoteynu, le-yir bah David hannah' to 'Liyot 'am hofshi be-artzenu, Eretz Tziyon Yerushalayim' and more importantly with the shift in the order of the first and second stanzas that turned 'od lo avdah tiqvatenenu' into a sort of refrain.<sup>5</sup>

These textual variants, however, stripped the original poem of its Biblical allusions of messianic hope in favor of references to the territorial Zionist agenda lingering among Hebrew educators in late Ottoman Palestine. These changes circulated therefore mostly in the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine while in the Jewish Diaspora Imber's original version continued to be more customary at least until 1948. The present-day text then was forged in an elaborate communal process with the participation of various educators

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<sup>4</sup> Jerusalem, 1895/6 printed by Abraham Moshe Lunz, compiled by the Zionist pioneer and member of the Bilu movement, Menashe Meirovitz (1860-1949). A copy of this precious item is in possession of Eliyahu Hacoen.

<sup>5</sup> Israel Abrahams, *By-Paths in Hebraic Bookland*, Philadelphia 1920, p. 361.

from the Yishuv in Palestine over a period of almost two decades. This collaborative ethos is certainly a major feature in the gestation of the Zionist anthem and its popular reception.

## Music

In 1884, Imber read his poem *Tikvatenu* to the farmers of Rishon le-Tziyyon, one of the earliest Zionist settlements in Ottoman Palestine, who received it with enthusiasm. Soon afterward, Samuel Cohen (1879-1940), who immigrated to Palestine from Rumania in 1888 and settled in Rishon le-Tziyyon, set the poem to a melody which he borrowed from the Moldavian-Rumanian song, *Carul cu Boi* ('Cart with oxen'). He did so probably between 1887, after the poem appeared in print in Jerusalem and a copy of the book reached him in Moldavia through his brother, and 1888.

Cohen's own recollection of the events were published in 1937 slightly before his death and many years after they took place. Abraham Yaari later reproduced this crucial testimony and from him this passage is often quoted.<sup>6</sup> It is worthwhile to quote this testimony (with our editorial additions in square brackets) in its entirety (for the first time in English) to understand the context in which *Hatikvah* emerged into the public sphere as a performed song:

I would like to tell how the song 'Hatikvah' and its melody became the anthem of the Zionists.

In the early days [of Zionism] there were no musicians among us in the Land of Israel. Except for [Leon] Igli, one of the six youngsters who were sent to Palestine in order to strengthen the connection between the Russian Hovevei Zion and the employees of the Baron [Rothschild]. And for the earliest songs of Zion we were forced to use imitations of the songs of foreigners. For example, the song 'Hushu ahim Hushu, narima pe'ameinu' that R. Yehiel Mikhal Pines wrote was sung to the melody of a well-known Russian song. And in secret I will reveal to you that the earliest pioneers ---and first among them the enthusiast Mikhael Halperin [1860-1919]--- used to wander around the streets of Rishon le-Tziyyon loudly singing the Russian revolutionary song 'Mi za svobodu stradaem / Mi za narod svoi stoim.' ('We suffer for freedom, we stand up for our people'). And the

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<sup>6</sup> The original appeared in *Bustana 'i 9*, no. 30 (September 17, 1937) and Menashe Ravina (see below note 10) quotes it from there. The text is reprinted in Abraham Yaari (ed.), *Hitpashtut shir 'Hatikvah' be-yemei yyisod Rehovot: Mi-zikhronot Shmuel Cohen, 1890-1891, Zikhronot Eretz Israel: meah-ve-esrim pirkei zikhronot mi-hayyei ha-yishuv ba-aretz...*, Jerusalem: Youth Department of the World Zionist Organization, 1947. Second ed., Ramat-Gan: Masada, 1974, part 2, pp. 671-674. (Memories from the Land of Israel: one hundred and twenty memorializing chapters from the life of the Jewish community in the Land [of Israel]...).

beautiful, noble and gentle Halperin, with his blond curls, beats his fist on his heart during the singing --- to express his fervor, bravery and courage...

To the 'Shirei Yisrael' of [Lord] Byron [sic, should be 'Zemiroth Israel,' the name of the Hebrew version of Byron's *Hebrew Melodies*] ---translated by Yehudah Leib Gordon [published in 1884]--- Yehudah Grazowsky [aka Yehudah Gur, 1862-1950, immigrated in 1887] applied a melody. Only God knows from which source he adopted it; and we all sang with a weeping voice "Nudu lameyalelet ['al neharot bavel 'al shirah ki shavat mi-pi ha-nevel; 'Oh! Weep for those that wept by Babylon's stream; Whose shrines are desolate, whose land a dream']" and he ended with the same sad melody and with tears in his eyes. 'The wild-dove hath her nest, the fox his cave, Mankind their country -- Israel but the grave!'<sup>7</sup> Also the song 'Al tal ve-al matar' by Sara Shapira we used to sing according to a foreign melody.<sup>8</sup> And 'On the rivers of Babylon' according to the mourning melody [probably 'You fell victims in a fatal battle of selfless love for the people'] for the funeral of [Russian revolutionary Andrey Ivanovich] Zhelyabov [1851-1881]. They said that this funeral melody was chosen for 'By the rivers of Babylon' by Itzhak Epstein. To the truth of this claim, I cannot be held responsible.

In that same year Baron Rothschild toured the Land for the first time [1887], and my older brother, Zvi, tried to plant wheat on the soil of the *moshava* [agricultural settlement] Yesud Ha-ma'alah. In those days, the poet Naftali Herz Imber was in Rosh Pina. He gave my brother the collection of his songs *Barka'i*, with a warm dedication as a souvenir. And my brother sent this book to me in the diaspora. From all the songs the one I liked was 'Shir Hatikvah'. In particular I was impressed by the last verses: 'for the Jewish people our hope is finally come'. A short time later, I emigrated to Palestine.

In my home country [Maramureş county, today in northwest Rumania], we used to sing in the choir the Rumanian song 'Hâis, cea!' ('Right! Left!'; with this cry one induces the bulls while ploughing) [This is the refrain of the song *Carul cu Boi*]. When I arrived at Rishon le-Tziyyon fifty years ago [1888] I saw that 'Hatikvah' was not sung, nor were the rest of the songs in [Imber's collection] *Barka'i*. I was the first one to start singing 'Hatikvah' with this foreign melody

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<sup>7</sup> Lord Byron's work, in Russian translation, was a favorite of the Russian readership (including the Jewish urban one) throughout the nineteenth century. See, James Loeffler, *The Most Musical Nation: Jews and Culture in the Late Russian Empire*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2010, p. 36. See also, Ruth HaCohen, *The Music Libel against the Jews*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011, pp. 171-175.

<sup>8</sup> The melody of this song is by D. Kawunowski. This is one of the earliest Hebrew songs of the Hibat tziyon movement. It appeared for the first time under the title of 'Tziyon' in *Knesset Yisrael* 2, ed. Shaul Pinchas Rabinowitz, printed by Yehoshua Yehudah Horwitz, Warsaw 1887, p. 107.

that I knew, the same one that is sung today in all the Jewish communities. At the beginning, neither the song nor the melody [of *Hatikvah*] received attention. We used to sing other more important songs according to the melodies by... [Leon] Igly, who was a student at the Conservatory of Saint Petersburg [and later on an opera singer in that city]. He composed melodies for two songs about Rishon Le-Tziyyon. One by Imber and the second one ‘Ah, Rishon Le-Tziyyon’, and another melody for the song by Imber ‘Mishmar ha-yarden’.<sup>9</sup>

The precise source of the melody of *Hatikvah*, i.e. the attribution of the melodic adaptation to Samuel Cohen following his testimony, was then public at least from 1938. However, it remained curiously concealed from public attention until it surfaced independently in two separate publications appearing barely a year apart. The first publication is the aforementioned one by Eliyahu Hacoheh (note 3 above). The other one is a self-published monograph by the music critic Menashe Ravina (1899-1969).<sup>10</sup> Since then, a barrage of additional information or reworking of the story were published, mostly without adding spectacular novelties (e.g. later publications by Hacoheh himself and by Nathan Shahaar, below note 20). As mentioned at the opening of this essay, Internet websites have recycled this information in countless variations without further examination.<sup>11</sup>

Although *Carul cu Boi* is usually described as “folk song,” at least its text is relatively “modern” for it bemoans the progress introduced by electricity, the vapor and the railways while nostalgically celebrating the old ways of plowing the fields. Put differently, when Samuel Cohen learned the song in Rumania, it must have been a relatively new creation. The melody of [Carul cu Boi](#) is therefore not original to this song but a variant of a melodic pattern circulating in Rumania/Moldavia.<sup>12</sup> According to Levin (note 1 above) the song about a farmer carting his oxen to the market “was known by then [1888?] as *Carul cu Boi* (Wagon and Oxen)” and “the lyrics [of *Carul*

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<sup>9</sup> A Hebrew paraphrase on the aforementioned German song ‘Die Wacht im Rhein’ that was set to different melodies. Abraham Zvi Idelsohn composed one of the most widely accepted ones. Idelsohn’s arrangement of ‘Mishmar ha-yarden’ appears in one of his earliest publications upon his arrival to Jerusalem, *Shirei tziyyon, zmirot le-makhela*, vol. 2, Jerusalem, c. 1908, pp. 5-6. However, this reference can hardly refer to Idelsohn’s widespread setting that he composed on or before 1908. He may have composed the song prior to his arrival, but there is no hard-core evidence about it.

<sup>10</sup> Menashe Ravina, *Ha-tikvah: meqoro shel ha-himnon, toldotav u-tekhunotav be-hashya’ah le-himnonim shel umot aherot: ‘al semakh mehkarim, ma’amrim, mikhtavim u-te’udot*, Tel Aviv, 1968. (*Hatikvah*: the origins of the anthem, its history and characteristics in comparison with the anthems of other nations: based on researches, articles, letters and documents)

<sup>11</sup> See especially the [Jewish Agency website](#) that includes numerous links to materials associated with ‘Hatikvah’.

<sup>12</sup> Related variants of some of its melodic motifs appear in other Rumanian/Moldavian songs, such as [Cucuruz cu frunza-n sus](#) (“Maize with standing leaf”), a fact that was already pointed out by Abraham Zvi Idelsohn in his introduction to *HOM* 9 (1932), xxi-xxii. See more below.



*cu Boi*] had been applied at some point [to the melody] prior to 1888 by G. Popovitz” (should probably be Popovici). However, this piece of information that has been quoted widely on the web since its publication online is not supported by any concrete reference. Most probably there is a confusion here with the name of the Rumanian musicologist and composer Timotei Popovici (1870-1950) who published the same melody set to the song ‘Cântecul de Mai’ (incipit: ‘[Luncile s-au deștepta](#)’) that continues to be quite popular in Rumanian and Moldavian schools to this day.<sup>13</sup> In short, it appears that the melody that Samuel Cohen adapted to *Hatikvah*, a melody that is not distinctively Rumanian, circulated in Moldavia among Jews and non-Jews and was adapted to several texts in Rumanian, one of which was *Carol cu Boi*. Therefore, the ascription of the authorship of the melody of *Hatikvah* to Samuel Cohen, as it appears in countless sources in the web, does not reflect the widespread folk practice of *contrafactum* that lies behind the turning of *Hatikvah* into a song set to music.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, the immediate reception and musical arrangement of *Hatikvah* was not as swift as it appears in many sources. Crucial (and overseen) information regarding the early competitors of *Hatikvah* for the “title” of the national Jewish song appear further on in the second part of Cohen’s testimony that we translate in its entirety:

We could not imagine turning ‘Hatikvah’ into our national anthem. The song ‘Mishmar ha-Yarden’ was sung then as a national anthem; according to our Zionist feelings, this [latter] song deserved that honor.

It is worthwhile noticing that the young intelligentsia of Rishon Le-Tziyyon (and all the young intelligentsia of Yehudah [central Israel in the terminology of the early Yishuv]) established the custom for the first time to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The first pilgrimage was under the guidance of [the teacher] David Yudelevich [1863-1943] because he was familiar with the roads of Jerusalem and knew its intellectuals [*maskileyah*]. [Eliezer] Ben Yehudah, David Yellin, and Efraim Cohen arranged a performance in honor of these ‘pilgrims.’ It consisted of the first play in Hebrew, ‘Zeruvabel’ by [Moshe Leib] Lilienblum, written in Yiddish and translated into Hebrew. Within the play songs were inserted, and among them ‘[Mishmar ha-Yarden](#)’. And the song was not performed according to the melody by [Leon] Igly but to the melody of the German song ‘Die Wacht im Rhein’. And indeed, our youth wished to make ‘Mishmar ha-Yarden’ our

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<sup>13</sup> However, contrary to Eliyahu Hacoheh, the melody of the Moldavian song ‘Foia verde’ (‘Green leaf’) does not belong to this melody type. See Hacoheh in <http://english.israelphilately.org.il/articles/content/en/000882>. On the other hand, the Swedish song ‘Ack Värmeland du sköna’ does belong to the melody-type and it apparently stands behind Smetana’s ‘Moldau’ (on this melodic relation see more below). In turn, the Swedish song may have Dutch antecedents.

<sup>14</sup> For example, “The melody was written by Samuel Cohen, an immigrant from Moldavia. Cohen actually based the melody on a musical theme found in Bedrich Smetana’s ‘Moldau’” [www.stateofisrael.com](http://www.stateofisrael.com)

national anthem. And when the leader [Vladimir] Zeev Tiomkin [1861-1927] came to visit us we received him with the song 'Mishmar ha-Yarden'.

Our wish was not fulfilled. Not only 'Mishmar ha-Yarden' but also all the rest of the melodies by Igly to the songs of Zion were rejected by the public and were forgotten. It is a pity that those early sounds of the passion of our souls were silenced. Our children who come after us will not feel those inner feelings and those sounds that tie them to their parents and to the pioneers of the passing generation.

Among the songs of Zion that were sung at the time in Rishon le-Tziyyon was also 'Hatikvah'--- especially in the hall of Rabbi Zvi Levontin. The hall of Rabbi Zvi Levontin was called the Rishon le-Tziyyon Hostel. There the youngsters of the settlement ate [at the Hostel] and there our guests and passers-by visited it. Rishon was considered then the center of the Yishuv. Those who came to Palestine tried first of all to visit Rishon. The tendency here was to sing 'Hatikvah' often due to its catchy and pleasant melody; but it was still not considered a national anthem.

Then came a big immigration to Palestine. In the days of [Hovevei Tziyyon leader Vladimir Zeev] Tiomkin the settlements Rehovot and Gedera were founded. We thought that at the foundation of each settlement there was a melody that fitted it – according to the character of its population and perhaps also according to its geographical characteristics: Rishon le-Tziyyon and its song '[Ah, Rishon le-Tziyyon](#),' Gedera and the song of the Biluim, '[Hushu ahim hushu](#)' --- Hedera and the song 'Mas'at nafshi' by Mane. I still remember how the young Moshe Smilansky deafened my ears by singing the song '[Mas'at nafshi](#)' out of tune, especially when he was excited by the verse 'Ma na'amat tor ha-aviv'... This happened on the year of the founding of the *moshava* Hedera. The song of Rehovot was 'Hatikvah'... Four hundred Hebrew laborers worked there then; and when they returned from their working places they sang 'Hatikvah'.

In spite of our insistence, the public did not respond positively to the original melody of 'Mishmar ha-Yarden'. They liked the melody of 'Hatikvah' better. And the song became famous among the whole people and developed anyway into the Zionist anthem. In my opinion there is no need to investigate the composer who composed the melody of this song. After all, it is not a genial work; and it is even not important. Only this is important: our masses chose 'Hatikvah' and its melody. And may I add that time after time I participate in gatherings, conferences, and parties, and the song 'Hatikvah' is sung in a 'formal manner,' I am reminded of the first time that we sang this song and I consider myself the

luckiest person because I had the privilege of being the first one to sing the song ‘Hatikvah’.<sup>15</sup>

Despite this clear account of the genesis of *Hatikvah*’s melody in websites and articles about our song, the melody is credited not to Samuel Cohen’s adaptation but as a composition by Leon Igly. Consistently we find it stated that Samuel Cohen, was then the first one to set *Hatikvah* to music at the request of Israel Belkind from Rishon le-Tziyyon. Thus for instance on the website of the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music we read that:

“Leon Igly, a musician and settler in Zikhron Ya’akov who had studied at the conservatory in St. Petersburg, has been identified as the first composer to set *Tikvatenu* to music—devising a musical version in 1882 that apparently ignored the strophic structure of the poem and provided instead a through-composed version without musical repetition from one stanza to the next. In that form it proved difficult to sing communally, and it did not take off—despite token prizes offered to children who could learn it.”<sup>16</sup>

For the sake of accuracy, it is worthwhile to provide, as we did with the memoirs of Samuel Cohen, the entire original text as Israel Belkind (1861-1929) included it in his memoirs. These memoirs, which provide another angle to the same historical context described by Samuel Cohen, appeared many years after the author’s death but on the other hand are closer than Cohen’s in time and place to the events leading to *Hatikvah*.<sup>17</sup>

In that year [1884] our poet Naftali Herz Imber was in Rishon le-Tziyyon. He spent two years in our country, but most of the time he lived at the home of the Lord Oliphant on Mount Carmel, and eventually came to Jaffa and lived in that city and in Rishon le-Tziyyon. And in this settlement he split his time between the home of Joseph Feinberg and our home, namely in the house of my brother. And thus, we had the privilege that in our house he wrote some of his best poems that eventually published in his collection of poems titled ‘Barka’i.’

The song ‘Hatikvah’ was the most privileged among his poems, and has become our national song. However, the song did not receive this honor in our country but rather abroad, and from there it returned to us, to the Land of Israel. In Rishon le-Tziyyon they used to sing then with great enthusiasm the songs ‘Mishmar ha-yarden’, ‘Hashofar’, and especially the song of the pioneers which was dedicated to Rishon le-Tziyyon and its institutions. The sons of Rishon le-Tziyyon

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<sup>15</sup> Yaari (ed.), *Hitpashtut shir ‘Hatikvah,’* note 6 above.

<sup>16</sup> Levin, note 1 above.

<sup>17</sup> *Bi-netiv Ha-Biluim: Zikhronot Israel Belkind*, ed. with an introduction by Ran Aharonson. Tel-Aviv, 1983. [On the Path of the Biluim: Memoires of Israel Belkind]

perceived in this song their own history, and sang it with great pride [here the song is quoted]

As one can see, this song suffers from problems of grammar, as also does 'Hatikvah' and the rest of the songs by Imber. But who cared about grammar? With a beautiful melody they used to sing the songs with great enthusiasm, the adults sang, the children sang.

And if there are poems, then they need melodies. As usual they used to solve this question as follows: you take a Russian, Ukrainian, Rumanian or also Arabic or Turkish melody, adapt it to the new Hebrew song, and everything is ready for singing. And so our national song 'Hatikvah' is also sung with a foreign melody. Some say it is a Russian melody. Other claim that it is Rumanian, and there are those who say that it is Turkish... But at that time [early 1880s] lived in Rishon Le-Tziyyon a composer of ours, who crafted melodies for most of Imber's songs, and this composer was Mr. Igly, and it is interesting how he came to Rishon Le-Tziyyon. [Here follows the detailed story of the six Russian youngsters that came to strengthen Baron Rothschild's settlements]. The sixth one was Igly. He lived previously in Saint Petersburg and it seems to me that he used to sing at the choir of the opera there. And in that city lived my sister [Olga] who played a prominent role in the Hovevei Tziyyon [movement] there [in Saint Petersburg]. Of course when he came to our country, my sister gave him letters and greetings for me, my brother and my [other] sister [living in Palestine]. The labor in Rishon Le-Tziyyon was very hard for him, and he used to ask me to release him from his situation. I used my influence on [Yehoshua] Ossovetzki [1858-1929], the administrator [of the Baron], and [Igly] was not required to work intensive labor. The administrator loved music, and Igly was one of the regulars at his home.<sup>18</sup> That was at the same time that the poet Imber was in Rishon Le-Tziyyon and wrote there his poems and in fact, Igly took upon himself to set up melodies to those poems.

The whole *moshavah* then started to deal with poetry and singing. Imber used to write a new poem, Igly would set up a melody and perform it for the first time at our home. They say about me, and justly so, that I do not know how to sing, but I used to get the melody I heard and transmit it to others... Therefore, I used to leave the house, gather all the children of the *moshavah* and give them a singing lesson. I used to promise candies and chocolate to the children who learned the [new] song and its melody by heart. Frequently, I used to pull into this work one of the farmers, Mr. Reuven Yudelevitch [1862-1933], who used to play the violin

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<sup>18</sup> According to the biography of Ossovetzki in the Rishon le-Tziyyon Digital Family Album: "In 1900, after the Eretz Israel's settlements had been transferred to the IKA company, Yehoshua Ossovetzki left the country and settled in Paris, where he established a factory of music records." See: <http://www.gen-mus.co.il/en/person/?id=14017>

in order to promote the new songs. The children of this Yudelevitch [he had eight] were the best “buyers” of chocolate.<sup>19</sup>

And because I already revealed the secret, that I am no expert on musical matters, I can say that I cannot estimate to what extent Igly’s melodies were fit [to the poems], to what extent, they were Hebrew [in their melodic character]. I can only point out a disadvantage in his works, a practical disadvantage that may have been a great artistic merit. He did not compose one melody for each poem, but rather a unique melody for almost each stanza of the poem. And for this reason it was difficult to learn them... Also for the song ‘Hatikvah’ he composed different melodies for each stanza, and for this reason the public accepted the simple and monotonous tune that came from abroad and Igly’s melodies were totally forgotten.

Although Igly’s settings did not survive, one can just imagine what kind of music such a person would design for Imber’s poems. As an immigrant from Saint Petersburg, student at that city’s most prestigious Conservatory and member of the opera’s choir, Igly must have experienced in the Russian capital first-hand music of the highest artistic quality. Composing a different melody (or perhaps variants of one melody, since one cannot know what “difference” means in this context) for each stanza of a strophic song was a standard practice of Russian *romans* and opera composers. In short, one can surmise that there were certain disparities in the musical taste and sensibilities among the Jewish immigrants who gathered in Rishon Le-Tziyyon, from the ones from the sophisticated imperial capital of Russia to those who arrived from the Eastern confines of Europe, such as Moldavia (i.e. from the former Ottoman Empire). It is in this social context of difference that we need to read the Igly affair in connection with *Hatikvah*.

### **Reception and Theories of Origins**

Hacohen found that the text of *Hatikvah* reappeared in the earliest documented songster printed in the Jewish settlement in Ottoman Palestine, the aforementioned ‘Shirei ‘am-tziyyon’ and also it is the opening song of another important and more widely distributed Hebrew songster ‘Kinnor tziyyon’ also published by Abraham Moshe Lunz (Jerusalem, 1903), with the title *Hatikvah* instead of *Tikvatenu*. These publications and the prominent positioning of our song in them reflected the central status that it had already acquired in the proto-Zionist song repertoire of Ottoman Palestine.

Yet, in spite of its rootedness in the Hebrew Yishuv, *Hatikvah* attained its status as a national sonic icon on European lands. Indeed, the earliest known printed version of *Hatikvah* with its melody in music notation appeared far away from Palestine, almost

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<sup>19</sup> From this source it is clear that candies and chocolate were not the exclusive reward for children who learnt *Hatikvah*, as it appears in many sources, but rather for those who learnt any of the new songs.

at the same time when the text was being printed as a “folksong” in Meirovitz’s ‘Shirei ‘am-tziyyon’ (to be sung to “the well-known tune” as written in the title there).

The first musical notation of *Hatikvah* is included in a collection of lieder for voice and piano titled *Vier Lieder mit Benutzung syrischer Melodien...* (Leipzig, 1895), arranged by Cantor S.T. Friedland from Breslau. The song found its way to Breslau via an envoy from the Land of Israel, Moshe David Shuv. A firsthand testimony from a witness close to the individuals involved in this encounter provides us with another decisive moment in the saga of *Hatikvah* and demonstrates how crucial the agency of individuals is in the making of culture.<sup>20</sup> A Rumanian-born envoy from Rosh Pinah (one of the earliest Zionist settlements in Palestine), Shuv was in Europe on a fund-raising mission on behalf of the Sha’are Tzedeq hospital in Jerusalem. In the year 1894, while visiting Breslau, Shuv sang songs from the Land of Israel to the students of the famous rabbinical seminary of that city. One of these students, Rabbi Efraim Finkel, introduced Shuv to Cantor Friedland who wrote down the words and music of *Hatikvah*. *Hatikvah* was thereafter included in Friedland’s collection of lieder, next to other of the songs from the Land of Israel that Shuv transmitted, under the romantically-loaded German title ‘Sehnsucht’ (‘Longing’).

Another telling testimony corroborating the astoundingly rapid reception of *Hatikvah* in Europe is the prophesy by the Galician Zionist writer and journalist Isaac Fernhof (1866-1919). In his utopic text ‘Shene dimiyonot’ (‘Two visions’, included in the second issue of his short-lived journal *Sifre sha’ashu’im*, Krakau: J. Fischer, 1896), Fernhof predicts, under the impression of Herzl’s *Der Judenstaat* published just a few months earlier in February 1896, the establishment of ‘Medinat Israel’ (‘State of Israel’) whose anthem (in his words ‘manginah le’umit’, ‘national melody’) will be *Hatikvah*.

The entry on Naftali Herz Imber in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (London, 1901-1906) is a further testimony of how fast the song had caught in Europe, especially through its performances in the Zionist Congresses on 1900 and 1903: “Imber has, however,

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<sup>20</sup> Eliyahu Hacoen provided me with the firsthand source from which he learned about this crucial episode in the early dissemination of *Hatikvah* in Europe: Magnus Davidsohn, Entstehung der Hatikwa, in *Theodor Herzl Jahrbuch* ed. Tulo [Naftali] Nussenblatt. Wien: Heinrich Glanz Verlag, 1937, pp. 209-210. At the time of writing his article, Davidsohn was Oberkantor at the liberal Farsanenstrasse Synagogue in Berlin. Born and educated in Beuthen in Silesia (today Bytom in Poland), Davidsohn was close enough in time and space to all the personalities involved in the events he describes rendering his testimony an ethnographic quality. Natan Shahar mentions in detail this vivid testimony of oral transmission with no sources provided to back it. See “‘Od lo avdah tiqvateni: Hatikvah sippuro shel himnon,” [Our hope is not yet lost, Hatikvah, the tale of an anthem], in Natan Shahar, *Shir shir ‘aleh-na: toldot ha-zemer ha-‘Ivri [Song O Song Rise and Soar: History of the Hebrew Song]*. Ben Shemen: Modan, 2006, pp. 37-46, for the incident see p. 42. Hacoen included this information based on Davidsohn’s article, amid copious other details about *Hatikvah*, in two 1965 radio programs about the anthem that were later on widely quoted without providing due recognition to the sources or to the transmitter of these original sources.

obtained his reputation by the mastery of Hebrew verse displayed in his two books of collected poems, 'Barḳai' (1877-99). These show great command of the language. His most famous poem is, 'Ha-Tiḳwah,' in which the Zionist hope is expressed with great force, and which has been practically adopted as the national anthem of the Zionists." For the first time the expression "national anthem" is used here in relation to *Hatikvah*. This occurred at a time when back in Palestine its status as "national anthem" was still contested by other songs as the witnesses of Samuel Cohen and Israel Belkind show while abroad the Zionist leadership continued to try and find a new song as the movement's anthem by calling for submissions to a contest.

At a time when new songs and adaptations of existing songs to new Hebrew texts in the incipient Jewish settlement in Ottoman Palestine became "folksongs" almost overnight, as we have seen in the testimony of Samuel Cohen, the adaptation of the Moldavian/Rumanian melody to *Hatikvah* had become anonymous in an astonishingly swift process. Even the distinguished musicologist Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, who settled in Jerusalem in 1907 and was close in time and space to the place of creation of the song, approached it, from the musical point of view, as an anonymous folksong. He also published *Hatikvah* as early as 1912 in his pioneer songster for Hebrew teachers in Palestine.<sup>21</sup> Many years later, Idelsohn would testify that when he first arrived to Palestine, the Jewish children knew only two Hebrew songs, *Hatikvah* and "a song by Bialik" (most likely '[Tehezakna](#)' that competed with *Hatikvah* for the title of anthem of the Zionist movement).<sup>22</sup>

Added to the rapid circulation of *Hatikvah* were its early translations to other languages, especially those by Israel Zangwill to English and Heinrich Loewe to German. From the moment *Hatikvah* started to circulate as a "folksong," spectacular theories about its musical origins started to thrive. Eliyahu Hacoheh set the record straight in two trailblazing radio programs on *Hatikvah* (1965) aired by the Israeli Radio followed by Menashe Ravina's monograph (1968) by making public Samuel Cohen's testimony that was available since 1937 but buried in the pages of an obscure Hebrew agricultural journal. These hypotheses reveal, as we have seen in the case of the text of the song, more about their proponents than about historical realities.

#### a. Comparative Musicology Hypotheses

In the fourth volume (1923) of his *Hebräisch-orientalischer Melodienschatz (HOM*, Berlin, Jerusalem, Leipzig, Vienna, 10 vols., 1914-1932) dedicated to the music of the "Oriental Sephardic" Jews, the distinguished musicologist Abraham Zvi Idelsohn

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<sup>21</sup> Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, *Sefer ha-shirim – qobetz shirim 'ivriim le-ganei ha-yeladim, le-batei ha-sefer 'amamiim ve-tikhonim*, Berlin: Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden, 1912, p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> Idem, Unzer natsionale muzik, *Das Yidishe Folk* 51 (29 Kislev 5682 [1921]), 19.

carried the first thorough analysis of the cross-cultural melody-type to which *Hatikvah* belongs. In the spirit of *Vergleichende Musikwissenschaft* (comparative musicology), Idelsohn compared a set of melodies *a propos* a discussion about a certain “south-Slavic melos” that is cross-culturally widespread and of which the Western Sephardic piyyut [\*Lekh le-shalom geshem\*](#) (see detailed discussion below) is one specimen. Idelsohn then offers a table that includes Spanish, Polish and Czech (one of Smetana’s *Moldau* themes; see below) versions of this “melos”. This comparative table includes the melody of *Hatikvah* as one specimen of this “melos” (Idelsohn 1923, p. 115-117, table in p. 116). It was indeed an awkward move by Idelsohn to interpolate this table in a volume not precisely dedicated to the “Slavic melos.” One can surmise that he was perhaps eager to make public his findings about the melody of the emerging national Jewish song and its Sephardic relative.

Idelsohn reproduced this table with few amendments in his seminal book *Jewish Music in its Historical Development* (New York, 1929, pp. 222-223) and later on it was reprinted by the musicologist Peter Gradenwitz and by Menashe Ravina in his above-mentioned monograph on *Hatikvah*.<sup>23</sup> This table remained a source for references about this set of melodies ever since. For example, Paul Nettl, in his often-quoted study *National Anthems*, tried to tailor to *Hatikvah*, inspired by Idelsohn’s table, a medieval Hispano-Arabic ancient pedigree by linking it to the Spanish folksong ‘Virgen de la Cueva’ that was published by the folklorist Felipe Pedrell and was already included in Idelsohn’s table of 1923.<sup>24</sup>

Idelsohn returned to the melody of *Hatikvah* in volume 9 of *HOM* (1932, p. xix) that is dedicated to the folksong of the Eastern European Jews (not exclusively as it turns out for it includes copious “Palestinian” materials, i.e. Hebrew songs from the Jewish Yishuv in Mandatory Palestine). He includes *Hatikvah* among the “modern Hebrew songs” (no. 147 in the original version by Imber, not the “Palestinian” one and with a transliteration in Yiddish pronunciation) as well as a Yiddish parody (no. 200 only the first part of the melody, text by “S. Lejman”). He expands the geography of his comparative study to include Rumanian (‘Cucuruz’ rather than ‘Carul cu boi’ of which Idelsohn apparently was unaware), Ukrainian and even Armenian (a song about the hope of the Armenian victims of Ottoman persecutions!) songs belonging to the same melody-type (mostly of the first part only).

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<sup>23</sup> Peter Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel: Its Rise and Growth through 5000 Years*, New York: W.W.Norton, 1949, chapter on *Hatikvah*, pp. 301-304; Ravina, *Hatikvah*, p. 66.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Nettl, *National Anthems*, New York 1952; 2<sup>nd</sup> enlarged ed., New York, 1967, p. 24; Felipe Pedrell, *Cancionero musical popular español*. Valls, Cataluña, 1922, vol. 2, p. 22. However Nettl defines the melody of *Hatikvah* as a “global melody” but still insists on the Sephardic hypothesis, even after attributing the “notation” of the song to Samuel Cohen, implying that the latter learnt the melody “in the Orient” where it was carried by Sephardic Jews (Nettl, *National Anthems*, p. 138). The table appears, in an expanded version, in Baltsan’s *Hatikvah: Past, Present, Future*, p. 42-3.



The tunes of the Moldavian/Rumanian songs that we already mentioned such as ‘Carul cu boi,’ ‘Cucuruz cu frunza-n sus,’ and ‘Cântecul de Mai’ that lay in fact behind the melody of *Hatikvah* are all variants of a well-known melody-type found throughout Europe in both major and minor scale versions. This melody-type has been the object of a study in the spirit of comparative musicology that was not mentioned in any of the Israeli studies of *Hatikvah*. The distinguished ethnomusicologist George List dedicated part of his important essay “The Distribution of a Melodic Formula: Diffusion or Polygenesis?” to this pervasive melody-type that been circulating throughout Europe for centuries and has generated innumerable incarnations of which the Rumanian-Moldavian melody of *Hatikvah* (also mentioned by List) is just one of them.<sup>25</sup> This pervasive and ubiquitous European melody-type was the engine that activated during the first half of the twentieth century the need for speculations in order to find a more genuinely “Jewish” or “ancient” origin for the tune. We shall examine below the pedigree of these “Jewish” hypotheses.

But before we move into these hypothesis one should point out that the comparative musicological approach was never abandoned and in fact reached another peak with the remarks by Philip Bohlman in an essay claiming, strangely enough for a discussion of *Hatikvah*, that Zionist song existed “before Hebrew song.” Bohlman introduces into the discussion other melodic “relatives” of *Hatikvah* such as the Swedish folksong, ‘[Ack Värmeland, du Skön](#)’ and the anonymous French pastoral song (in major) ‘[Ah, vous dirais-je maman](#).’ This is the name that this French song acquired when it was first published as an instrumental piece in 1761 (in François Bouin, *La Vielleuse Habile Ou Nouvelle Méthode Courte, Très Facile Et Très Sûre Pour Apprendre À Jouer De La Vielle...*). The name derives from the children rhyme added to it apparently some years earlier. This melody is known today on a global level as ‘Twinkle, twinkle, little star.’ Mozart’s variations (K. 300a) immortalized it and since then it was endlessly reproduced.

Bohlman is the only scholar I know who refers to George List’s article in the context of *Hatikvah* and stresses, on the basis of its structural affinity with an endless number of European tunes, the lack of individuality of the melody:

“What do such peregrinations of ‘Hatikvah’ throughout European song history reveal? First, they make it clear that there is nothing special or even distinctive about ‘Hatikvah’ as a song. Second, the histories of melodic distribution and the skeletons produced by computer analysis notwithstanding, ‘Hatikvah’’s impact

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<sup>25</sup> *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* 10 (1978), pp. 33-52 [on *Hatikvah* see pp. 42-43]. Talila Eliram pursued this line of thought (that there is a melody-type) in ‘Shirei Eretz Israel,’ *A Century of Israeli Culture*, ed. Israel Bartal. The Hebrew University Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 2002, pp. 238-240. Eliram adds a Finish folk song to the discussion but concludes that in spite of the borrowing process, the (Zionist) practitioners of *Hatikvah* “Hebrewiced [‘ivretu] the song and gave it meaning, and so the song acclimatized itself in Israel.” No details as of the “meaning” are provided.

on the earlier Zionist movement was indeed very special and distinctive. Third, it is because the melody is so quintessentially quotidian and unexceptional that it could become such a powerful emblem of nationalism.”<sup>26</sup>

Bohlman suggests then that precisely the unremarkable musical quality of the melody of *Hatikvah* (remember Samuel Cohen’s caustic remark about it, “it is not a genial work”) fitted the assortment of pasts that strove for representation within Zionist aesthetics. And yet, from the story unfolding in this essay one cannot but observe that as much as *Hatikvah* may be “the most iconic of all Zionist songs,” (per Bohlman) its immediate reception had more to do with the in-house set of codes embedded in its Hebrew text rather than with the universal music archetype that set those words in motion. This is one of the main reasons why locating an identifiable melodic Jewish pedigree for this melody became a matter of public concern.

#### b. Sephardic Hypothesis

The melody deriving from a Jewish context that is frequently mentioned as the possible forerunner of the melody of *Hatikvah* (including by Idelsohn), is found in the liturgical repertory of the Western Sephardic communities. It is the melody of the *piyyut Lekh le-shalom geshem* (‘Go in peace, Rain, and come in peace, Dew’) included in “The Prayer for the Dew” ceremony on the seventh day of Passover. From this context, the Western Sephardic Jews also adopted it to the Hallel Psalms for the same festival. The *piyyut* with its melody appears in the early collection *The Ancient Melodies of the Liturgy of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews* by Emanuel Aguilar and David Aharon de Sola (London, 1857).

This assumed Sephardic link of *Hatikvah* was pursued in an early stage by Rabbi David de Sola Pool of the Shearith Israel congregation of New York City. In 1917 De Sola stated:

“Another famous Sephardic melody is one of those to which the Hallel is sung... When in the New York Tribune of September 26, 1915, I traced back its age as demonstrably earlier than 1750, [American music critic] Mr. H.E. Krehbiel [1854-1923] rebuked me for my needless caution... But although not much is known of its ancestry, I can give authentic information about its descendant, for its child is no less famous a melody than the one to which *Hatikva* is sung. To my certain knowledge, the Rev. Mr. [Asher] Perlzweig [Kremenetz-Podolsk, Ukraine, c.1870 - Oxford 1942], *hazzan* of the Finsbury Park Synagogue, in London,

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<sup>26</sup> Philip Bohlman, *Before Hebrew Song*, in *Nationalism, Zionism and Ethnic Mobilization of the Jews in 1900 and Beyond*, ed. Michael Berkowitz. Leiden: Brill, 2004, pp. 25-59; on *Hatikvah* see pp. 38-40.

adapted the traditional Sephardic melody to *Hatikva*. The relation of the two melodies is so close as to be obvious to even the least musical of us.”<sup>27</sup>

Since the De Sola left London for New York in 1909, we can assume that the story was handled to him (“to my certain knowledge”) on this date or earlier. This extraordinary account linking the famous cantor from London to the Zionist anthem has been perpetuated in the scholarly literature as well as in narratives that are more popular. It reappeared as recently as 2007 in an Israeli documentary film directed by Reuven Hecker and titled precisely *Lekh leshalom geshem*. The film cleverly focuses on the Sephardic tune as the most “ancient” specimen of the melody-type, dramatically leading towards the end to its most celebrated reincarnation, *Hatikvah*.

However, it should also be noted that De Sola Pool’s testimony was contested months after its first publication. Dr. Joseph Reider (1886-1960), Bible scholar and polymath, criticized De Sola Pool with the following remarks:

“It is interesting to note that also the melody of *Hatikvah*, the *cheval de bataille* of the Zionists, which of late is being used for *Shir ha-ma’alot* [on this matter, see below] and other liturgical purposes, appears to be foreign and secular, as its main theme occurs in Smetana’s symphonic poem entitled *On the Moldau*. I am aware of Dr. Pool’s contention that this tune is rather an adaptation from the old Sephardic tune to Hallel. However, aside from the authentic information and

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<sup>27</sup> De Sola Pool reproduced this argument much later in ‘The tune of *Hatikvah*’, *Commentary* (July 1951), p. 84. In this brief note he reacted to the following commentary (of June 1951) made by Henry Marcus from Jerusalem to the “interesting article” about Imber (Gerard Wilk, *The Bohemian Who Wrote Hatikvah*) published in *Commentary* on January of the same year. “I would like to inform you that the ‘tune of uncertain origin’ to which the words of ‘*Hatikvah*’ were written... is the tune of a very old Rumanian popular song... *Cucuruz cu Pana’n sus*... . Imber had lived in Rumania and must have known this popular tune (Smetana’s similar melody is probably only a reminiscence of the Rumanian song.)” See also David de Sola Pool and Tamar de Sola Pool, *An Old Faith in the New World: Portrait of Shearith Israel, 1654-1954*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1955, p. 150. In this last book he states: “the traditional Sephardi melody to which are sung Psalm 117 in the Hallel of praise and a part of the Passover prayer for dew has become familiar to Jews the world over as the melody of *Hatikvah*. [Cantor] Asher Perlzweig of London adapted the ancient Sephardi theme to Naphtali Herz Imber’s hymn *Hatikvah*, the Zionist song adopted by Israel as its national anthem.” The “Sephardic hypothesis” also emanated in a series of letters on this topic published in the *Jewish Chronicle* of London. It was sparked by a note (26 November 1943) by the noted cantor and teacher, Reverend Herman Mayerowitsch (1882-1945) who denied the connection to Smetana’s *Moldau*. He believed that the adaptation of the Sephardic melody to *Hatikvah* was done by the composer and arranger Henry Alexander Russotto (1871-1925, born Alexander Niswizski) who published *Hatikvah* in his *Zion Album* for voice and piano also for solo violin (Hebrew Publishing, New York, c. 1914-1917, see, Irene Heskes, *Yiddish American Popular Songs, 1895-1950*. Russotto also published another arrangement of *Hatikvah* in 1911 for the Progressive Music Publishing Co with the text underlay in Yiddish translation). This information is included in the detailed and unfrequently consulted essay by Cecil Bloom, ‘*Hatikvah* - Imber, his poem and a national anthem’ (note 2 above).

certain knowledge of the fact which Dr. Pool claims to have and which I dare not to impugn, the assertion is based on the similarity of the first or ascending figure or phrase in both melodies. But this is not sufficient as a criterion for authenticity, for the same inceptive figure or musical germ [sic!] may be found also in other compositions of various lands and ages. In fact, the progression *la, ti, do, re, mi*, is characteristic of the minor mode and is quite common in folksongs of all climates. I found it even in English folksongs of the Elizabethan period. One thing is certain, that Smetana did not derive his melody from the Sephardic *Hallel*. As is well known, this Bohemian composer utilized popular tunes of Bohemia as themes to his larger compositions. The most striking thing is that there is more similarity between *Hatikvah* and Smetana's melody than between the former and the Sephardic *Hallel*, especially with references to the second or descending figure. However that may be, in its present elaborate shape it appears more like a folksong than an ecclesiastical [read: synagogue] chant, and hence it is inappropriate for liturgical use."<sup>28</sup>

Reider's remarkable intuitive, if polite, response is one of the earliest (and pre-Idelsohnian) comparative musicological critiques of the theories of "origin" of the tune of *Hatikvah*. By stressing the wide spread usage of the melodic patterns, Reider disarms the Sephardic hypothesis even if De Sola Pool's testimony is not *per se* contested. In short, despite this prestigious "Jewish pedigree" (and the Portuguese Jews who sing *Lekh le-shalom geshem* held an even stronger grip on Judaism having to overcome the forced conversions of the late medieval period), it is extremely improbable, as Reider already stated, that this melody could have ever been the source for the tune of *Hatikvah*.

On the other hand, a possible relation between *Lekh le-shalom geshem/Hallel* (and another Jewish melody, the *Leoni Yigdal*, see below under Ashkenazi hypothesis) with the Italian predecessors (see below Italian Renaissance hypothesis) could be explored. Many Portuguese Jewish liturgical melodies originated in the Spanish-Portuguese communities of Venice and Livorno and migrated from there with itinerant cantors to other communities such as Amsterdam and London. The Sephardic *Hallel* is well known as a prayer that absorbed new melodies, some of them borrowed from the surrounding non-Jewish society.<sup>29</sup>

### c. Ashkenazi Hypothesis

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<sup>28</sup> Joseph Reider, 'Secular Currents in the Synagogal Chant in America,' *The Jewish Forum* (1918), 6-17, quotation in p. 17.

<sup>29</sup> I discussed the oldest Spanish-Portuguese melodies for *Hallel* found in Jewish music manuscripts in *Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue Music: In Nineteenth-Century Reform Sources from Hamburg: Ancient Tradition in the Dawn of Modernity*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996, see esp. pp. 109-111, in the discussion of the (perhaps Ashkenazi) melody for 'Etz hayyim hi' that is also a distant variant of *Lekh le-shalom geshem*.

Also Ashkenazi melodies competed in the race for the origins of the tune of *Hatikvah*. The famous tune for the *piyyut Yigdal elohim hay*, known as the *Leoni Yigdal* after its alleged composer, Meyer Lyon, has been another source for the “Jewish” hypothesis of the origins of *Hatikvah*. Meyer Lyon, a legendary Jewish cantor/opera singer, was in the 1760s-1780s a *meshorer* (assistant cantor) at the Great Synagogue at Duke’s Place in London and later on served the Jewish congregation of Kingston, Jamaica until his death in 1796.

Several authors have already argued that melodic similarities between *Hatikvah* with Jewish melodies do not hold for more than the first two or four opening bars of the tune and thus any direct connection, such as the one between the *Leoni Yigdal* and *Hatikvah*, should be discarded. Yet, in spite of all the accumulated knowledge on the subject, a full rerun of the whole argument about the relation between *Leoni Yigdal* and *Hatikvah* appeared in July and August of 2007 at the Internet forum [Jewish Liturgical Music](#).

Peter Gradenwitz drew in even more confusion into the archeology of *Hatikvah*’s melody when he related a direct testimony by the composer Rabbi Israel Goldfarb (1879-1956) in a letter to him from 1948. According to Goldfarb, who met in his youth the poet Imber in New York, the origin of the melody was in an unpublished setting of the prayer ‘Vehavi’enu le-Tziyyon yirkha’ (from the Mussaf prayers for the first day of Rosh Hashanah according to the Ashkenazi rite) by the famous cantor Nissi Belzer (born Nisson Spivak, 1824-1906). It is probable that, if this piece of information is reliable, the opposite may be truth. Belzer probably became aware of *Hatikvah* when it already circulated widely in Eastern Europe by the mid-1890s (as we have seen above) and found pertinent to quote its melody in a prayer expressing specifically the longing of the Jewish people for Zion.<sup>30</sup>

The “Jewish” hypotheses of the origins of the *Hatikvah* melody strove to provide an authentic pedigree to the tune of the song that quickly attained the status of “the” national Jewish song. Other hypotheses attempted to provide the tune with another, characteristically modern stamp of authenticity, namely “antiquity.” This idea is developed in the next paragraph.

#### d. Italian Renaissance Hypothesis

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<sup>30</sup> Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel* (note 23 above). We could not locate thus far a version of this composition. Belzer’s compositions remained for the most part in manuscripts. One of the richest sources for his work is the Pinchas “Pinnie” Spektor Collection at the National Library in Jerusalem (Department of Music, MUS 074). This substantial collection does not include a piece that could fit Gradenwitz’s testimony. Interestingly, in contemporary American synagogues, the melody of *Hatikvah* is employed with a prayer that opens with the same word: ‘Vehavienu leshalom’ (from the ‘Ahavah’ blessing preceding the ‘Shma’ in the morning prayers).

Another closer variant of the melody of *Hatikvah* comes from even more remote and unsuspected sources. In 2004, the Israeli musicologist Don Harrán dedicated a substantial section of his article on the *barabano* to a widespread folk melody from north-east Italy documented since at least 1608 that shows remarkable structural affinities with melody of *Hatikvah*.<sup>31</sup> Known as *La Mantovana*, this melody was set to several texts of which ‘[Fuggi, fuggi, fuggi da questo cielo](#)’; attributed to the Italian tenor Giuseppe Cenci, aka Giuseppino del Biado (died in 1616), is the most widespread one in websites, publications and films carrying the history of the tune of *Hatikvah*. This version of the melody-type spread throughout the Italian Peninsula and beyond (with the spread of Italian musicians of the late Renaissance, several of whom were of Jewish origin, to European courts) with different names such as *partita*, *padovana*, *villanelle* and “*Ballo di Mantova*”.<sup>32</sup> Its longevity in Bolognese folk music is apparent and its high degree of melodic similarity with the melody of *Hatikvah* is remarkable indeed. Harrán discussed this striking melodic coincidence crafting it on careful theoretical terms such as the concepts of unconscious paradigms/archetypes versus “natural” evolutionary mutations/species. He does not propose however any specific chain of transmission to explain how or why *barabano* and *Hatikvah* could be linked.

Two years later, Nathan Shahar recapitulated this information in his chapter on *Hatikvah* without acknowledging the earlier article by Harrán. He provides just one of the countless Italian reincarnations of this tune, the one by Gasparo Zanetti, “from a manuscript [sic] that arrived to my hands”.<sup>33</sup> Unlike Harrán, Shahar had no misgivings in claiming that this Italian song is the “oldest source” of the melody of *Hatikvah* (even though he mentions the attribution to Samuel Cohen).

#### e. The Great Composer Hypothesis

We have seen that the melody-type of *Hatikvah* has endless variants, and that notable composers used some of these variants. This similarity linked *Hatikvah* to the great chain of genial Western composers and the case of Mozart is pertinent here. Comparisons between *Hatikvah* and ‘*Ah, vous dirais-je maman*’ (included in Baltsan’s publication, see above) underscore the attempt to “elevate” the pedigree of the national anthem by suggesting a possible (even if not direct) link to Mozart.

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<sup>31</sup> Don Harrán, The 17th-century *barabano*: A study in affinities, in *Music observed: Studies in memory of William C. Holmes*, ed. Colleen Reardon, and Susan H. Parisi. Warren, Mich: Harmonie Park Press, 2004, pp. 163-194.

<sup>32</sup> Luigi Tagliarini, *Il Ballo di Mantova*, in *Max Lütolf zum 60. Geburtstag: Festschrift*, ed. Bernhard Hangartner and Urs Fischer. Basel, Wiese Verlag 1994, 135-175, esp. p 175, n. 89, quoted in Harrán 2004.

<sup>33</sup> Shahar, ‘*Od lo avdah*’ (note 20 above), p. 41. In fact Eliyahu Hacohen mentioned the relation to and played a recording of the piece by Zanetti even earlier in his 1965 radio programs on *Hatikvah* (see above note 20).

However, the most famous “relative” of the first melodic phrase of *Hatikvah* in the canonic repertoire of Western classical music is, as widely disseminated, the first main theme of *Vltava* (The Moldau), no. 2 in the symphonic poem *Má vlast* (“My Fatherland”) by the Czech composer Bedřich Smetana which have been already mentioned in this essay. Although no direct relation between these two melodies can be sustained, they obviously drink from the same well as George List has shown and as Reider has suggested.<sup>34</sup> List’s arguments showed that it is impossible to trace clear-cut genealogies of such a widely diffused melodic pattern.

And yet, the idea that *Hatikvah* stems from Smetana’s *Moldau* was too attractive to many to be rejected pointblank. Perhaps the practice that strengthened this idea was that Smetana’s piece was played as a subterfuge substitute for *Hatikvah* by the Hebrew section of the Palestine Broadcasting Service during the British Mandate of Palestine. The issue of playing *Hatikvah* during PBS broadcasts was amply studied now by Andrea I. Stanton based on first-hand documentation, a file on this issue kept at the Israel State Archive.<sup>35</sup>

When the Mandate’s radio station opened its transmissions, it broadcasted on December 30, 1936 a live concert of the Eretz Israel/Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra (later on Israel Philharmonic Orchestra) under Arturo Toscanini from the Edison Theatre in Jerusalem. The concert ended with the British anthem and *Hatikvah*. The technicians were supposed to cut the broadcast short before the playing of *Hatikvah*, following the policy of the Mandate Government that no “national anthem” except the British was to be transmitted, but for some reason they did not. This was the first and last live broadcast performance of *Hatikvah* on the PBS. From then on, it was banned from the PBS until the end of the British Mandate, although as Stanton stresses the overall Mandate Government’s policy as to when *Hatikvah* could be played in public events was not always clear. Efforts by the newly-appointed PBS director Edwin Samuel from 1945 on, under the pressure of the Music Department’s director Karl Salomon, to put an end to this ban were unsuccessful.

Eliyahu Hacoen still had to disclaim this link between *Hatikvah* and Smetana’s symphonic poem as late as the early 1970s in the legendary Israeli TV program ‘Sharti

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<sup>34</sup> This similarity between the melody of *Hatikvah* and Smetana’s symphonic poem theme earned the Zionist anthem a rather detailed discussion (if compared to most other national anthems) in the ultimate (up to the time of writing of these lines) history of Western music. This honor may not be detached from the pedigree of its author. See, Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010 (*Oxford History of Western Music*), vol. 3, pp. 455-457, musical examples 41-4A-C. As we have shown, there is no connection between these melodies except for the sharing of the extremely widespread melody-type amply discussed by George List.

<sup>35</sup> Andrea L. Stanton, *This Is Jerusalem Calling: State Radio in Mandate Palestine*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013, pp. 175-181.

lakh artzi,' ('I sang to you, my land'), an invaluable documented history of the early Hebrew song. The second program of the series' first season (1974) was dedicated to the songs of Rishon le-Tziyyon and the first 'Aliyah. In this program, Hacoheh and his partner in the production, the play writer, poet, scholar, and journalist Dr. Dan Almagor, organized a performance of the Rumanian/Moldavia 'Carol cu boi' by a Rumanian Jewish immigrant to show where the musical origins of *Hatikvah* laid. Hacoheh remarked to those "who still think that the national anthem is based on Smetana," that this (Rumanian song) is the "true" original melody.

### **A Secular Anthem, Religious Song, Concert Lied or Popular Hit?**

The reception of *Hatikvah* was multifaceted and multi-dimensional. That the narrative of the secular national anthem prevailed obscures the other uses of the song that spread parallel to its increased canonization as the hymn of the territorial Zionists.

#### **a. Competing for Zionist Recognition**

The road of *Hatikvah* to recognition as the anthem of the Zionist movement was not a straight one. In spite of its broad early acceptance as one of the main songs of Zion, Zionist institutions and leaders did not rush to adopt it as their anthem. In fact they resisted it. Well-known was the dislike of Theodor Herzl towards the song (in fact towards its poet-author who was an embarrassment to some Zionist leaders), and in fact he openly supported the German song 'Dort wo die Ceder' (promptly translated into Yiddish and [Hebrew](#)) as the anthem of the movement he founded, as we have extensively discussed.<sup>36</sup> In spite of Herzl's dislike for Imber, the poet, who never attended a Zionist Congress, continued to play his cards based on his increasingly successful song. He wrote to Herzl during the 1901 Basel Congress that: 'I am a delegate at large and my credential is Hatikvah . . . and, although the Zionists treated me ill, I am still a Zionist and am happy to see my dreams realized.'<sup>37</sup>

Two competitions for a Zionist anthem, the first one proclaimed in the newspaper *Die Welt* in 1898 and the second by the Fourth Zionist Congress in 1900 came to nothing because of the unsatisfactory quality of the songs submitted.<sup>38</sup> At the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel in 1901, one of the sessions concluded with the singing of what was still called *Tikvatenu*. During the Sixth Zionist Congress (Basel, 1903), it was sung by

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<sup>36</sup> See, Edwin Seroussi, *Dort wo die Zeder/Ceder: Jewish-German Lyrical Encounters*, in *Die Dynamik kulturellen Wandels. Essays und Analysen*, ed. Jenny Svensson. LIT Verlag Münster, 2013, pp. 55-71.

<sup>37</sup> Letter in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem quoted by Bloom (see note 2 above), p. 326.

<sup>38</sup> See Hacoheh, 'Al hararei tziyyon (note 3 above). In a still unpublished sequel to this article Eliyahu Hacoheh delves extensively and with detail on all the aborted attempts to create an anthem for the Zionist movement. I am grateful once again to him for sending me this unpublished text.



those in favor of the Palestinian (expressed in “An eye still gazes toward Zion”), rather than the Ugandan territorial option.

The Seventh Zionist Congress (Basel, 1905) ended with an “enormously moving singing of *Hatikvah* by all present,” a key moment in the affirmation of its status as a patriotic song with a national anthem profile. Although already proposed by David Wolffsohn, the formal declaration of *Hatikvah* as the Zionist anthem was only made at the Eighteenth Zionist Congress in Prague in 1933 through a motion by Y.L. Motzkin that addressed both the flag and the anthem of the movement.

Under the British Mandate of Palestine, *Hatikvah* was the unofficial anthem of the Jewish settlement in Palestine. It was sung at the opening of the ceremony of the Declaration of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, and then played by members of the Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra at its conclusion. The standard orchestration is the one apparently by the Italian conductor Bernardino Molinari (1880-1952), who conducted the Palestine (and later on Israel) Philharmonic Orchestra on several occasions between 1945 and 1948. Another orchestration by the German-Israeli composer Paul Ben-Haim (1897-1984) is also current.

However, the song did not become officially the national anthem of the State of Israel until November 10, 2004, when it was sanctioned by the Knesset in an amendment to the “Flag and Coat-of-Arms Law” (now called “The Flag, Coat-of-Arms, and National Anthem Law”). The official text of the anthem consists of the first stanza (out of nine) and the (amended) refrain of the original poem by Naftali Herz Imber. We shall discuss this official sanctification below in more detail.

#### b. A religious song from West to East

The reception of *Hatikvah* as a religious song is perhaps one of the most ignored aspects in the dense net of Internet resources about the song. In this context we have to differentiate between two practices: the adaptation of its melody to other religious texts, and the performance of text and music in religious assemblies. *Hatikvah* appears as a *piyyut* in countless manuscript collections of sacred songs, sometimes as “*piyyut na’eh*”, and well as in printed books, especially (and not surprisingly) in Passover *haggadot*.

We have already seen that apparently the melody of *Hatikvah* made its inroads into the synagogue by the time of the great cantor Nissi Belzer in the late nineteenth century. But one of the best documented and still used practices is found in religious Zionist families, mostly German, in which there is a tradition of singing Psalm 126 ([\*Shir ha-ma'a lot be-shuv Adonai et shivat-Ziyyon\*](#)), the opening of the Blessing of the Meal (*birkat ha-mazon*), on Sabbaths and holidays to the melody of *Hatikvah*. We have this

practice documented as an established one already by 1918.<sup>39</sup> In fact, there was in religious Zionist circles a suggestion to substitute Imber's text with this "national" Psalm as the Zionist anthem.

A touching anecdote about the persistence of this practice is provided by Ariel Hirshfeld, an Israeli mosaic artist (not to be confused with the writer and professor of literature of the same name also quoted in this essay). Hirshfeld is deaf from birth and expresses his inner world of sound through his artistic creations, testifies the following:

"But it is difficult not to be connected on Friday evening to the Sabbath prayers, and the most difficult part is not being able to take part in Sabbath songs when you sit at the dinner table in your own family's home... As a child, I didn't sing because I could not. I could not sing with everybody. Now, as a father of five wonderful children, it is not easy for me to sing, because I am out of tune, sing in an unclear melody, and mix together several melodies... Once, my parents were invited as my guests for the Sabbath. At the dinner table, my parents sang and I mumbled something... at least my children will think I sing... At the end of the dinner, before saying the 'Grace After Meals', it is accustomed to sing Shir HaMaalot ("Song of Ascents"), and I, as the host, started to sing. Suddenly my father looks at me surprised and asks – "Why?" – "What do you mean by 'why'?" I replied with a question. "Why do you sing with the melody of HaTikva (the Israeli national anthem)?" It is not appropriate now, and there is no reason to sing it now..." Wow. Without knowing, I sing Hatikva? What an honor, how nice!! So, until this day, I sing Shir Hama'alot with the melody of HaTikva, because this is the only thing I know, and also because it is special to me...<sup>40</sup>

More remarkable, *Hatikvah* was printed in several collections of Hebrew religious poetry published in the Near East in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup> For this reason it entered Israel Davidson's canonical catalogue of Hebrew sacred poetry, *Otzar ha-shirah ve-ha-piyyut* (New York 1929, vol. 2, p. 481, khaf 386).<sup>42</sup> Davidson explains his decision as follows:

"On the other hand, a word of explanation is in place, why the *Ha-Tikvah* is included. It gained the right for a place among the *piyyutim* by the simple fact that it has already found its way in some Oriental book of prayers. So let no one deem

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<sup>39</sup> See, Reider, *Secular Currents in the Synagogal Chant in America*. (note 28 above)

<sup>40</sup> In <http://www.ariel-mosaic.co.il/en/catalogue/hear-and-accept-our-prayer/-shabbat/>

<sup>41</sup> See, *Shirei na'im be-leshon ha-koddesh u-farsi*, Jerusalem, 1913; *Shirei Israel be-Eretz ha-qedem*, Istanbul, 1926.

<sup>42</sup> Bathja Bayer already noted this fact, in 'Ha-Tikvah,' *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007, vol. 8, pp. 457-458. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Gale. Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Accessed 22 March 2009.

it an idiosyncrasy on my part, that Naphtali Herz Imber is represented in the Thesaurus, while all the great modern poets are ignored. The plan of the work demanded the inclusion of the one and the exclusion of the others.” (New York 1933, vol. 4, p. xv, English introduction).

*Hatikvah* was sung in paraliturgical assemblies in Jewish communities of the Eastern Mediterranean. For example, for the meeting of the ‘Hallel ve-zimra’ association of *paytanim* in Salonika that took place on April 15, 1926, a brochure titled ‘Fasil Nahawand’ with the songs to be performed on that occasion was published. It opens with the lyrics to the Greek anthem and ends with *Hatikvah*, a reflection of the complicated double allegiance of the Jews of Salonika in the years following its annexation to the modern Greek nation-state.<sup>43</sup> This conjunction between religious and national spheres was characteristic of the former Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire who found themselves caught in the new national configurations of the post-imperial era. Singing *Hatikvah* in such religious settings was not necessarily an exclusive act of identification with territorial Zionism but rather an affirmation of transnational Jewish solidarity as an antidote to frequent political upheavals.

In some cases, only the melody was used, set to religious texts, as we have seen in the Ashkenazi practices. The following case shows to what extent the song was part of the musical baggage of Oriental Jews. In 1931, the German composer and photographer Hans Helfritz (1902-1995), a disciple of the great comparative musicologist Erich von Hornbostel arrived to a remote area of Southern Yemen where he recorded Yemenite Jews. Among the songs he recorded was the *piyyut* ‘Sapperi tama temmima’ sung to the melody of *Hatikvah* with the refrain ‘Eretz Tziyyon Yerushalayma / Eretz Tziyyon Palestina’. This utmost case shows how widespread our song was through the Middle East.<sup>44</sup>

Even in the present, the singing of *Hatikvah* in synagogue contexts can be found in every corner of the Jewish world. Hereby follows a testimony from Belgrade: “In synagogue activities that I have attended, a relationship with the State of Israel is rarely expressed, aside from the weekly references to Israel that are a part of prayers, but the rare occasions communicate strong bonds. Sometimes the bonds are expressed musically, for example in the singing of the Israeli national anthem *Hatikvah* at the conclusion of the Rosh Hashanah community Seder [sic] in 2010.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Edwin Seroussi, *Musika osmanit klasit be-kerev yehudei saloniki* (Ottoman Classic Music among the Jews of Saloniki), in *Ladinar: Mehkarim ba-sifrut, ba-musika uba-historia shel dovrei ladino*, ed. Judith Dishon and Shmuel Refael, Tel Aviv 1998, pp. 79-92. (In Hebrew)

<sup>44</sup> Recording at the National Sound Archive of the Israel National Library, Y06525. Our friend, the late Dr. Efraim Yaacov, reported this piece of information to us.

<sup>45</sup> Kathleen Ruth Wiens, *A New Song: Emerging Sephardic Music in Serbia*. Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles, 2012, p. 172.

However, besides this favorable reception in synagogues throughout the Jewish world there was also staunch resistance to *Hatikvah* in other religious circles, and not only in anti-Zionist ones. The renowned Torah scholar and thinker Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hacoen Kook (1865–1935), the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of the British Mandatory Palestine and spiritual leader of what became the National Religious Movement, was not sympathetic to the Zionist anthem. As an antidote to *Hatikvah* Rabbi Kook wrote “Shir ha-emunah” (“The Song of Faith”) following the Balfour Declaration in 1918. The song exists in several versions and with more than one melody. In the notes to the CD ‘Nafshi takshiv shiro: Shirei Harav Kook’ (‘My soul will seek his song: The Songs of Rabbi Kook’, Jeursalem, Gal Paz 2011) Rabbi Eliashiv Berlin recounts:

[‘Shir ha-emunah’] was written in 1929 and published in a chapbook with other songs by Rabbi Kook. In this chapbook published when the Rabbi was still alive, it is written that one has to sing this song to the melody of *Hatikvah*. This information adds to the assumption that the Rabbi was not at ease with the text of *Hatikvah* and that he sought to substitute it with ‘Shir ha-emunah’. The motivation of the Rabbi was to add holiness and Jewish content to the national anthem. On 1962 Rabbi Shalom Nathan Raanan asked his students [of the Merkav Harav Yeshivah] to find a tune for the song. Rabbi Israel Ariel who studied at the time at the yeshivah proposed to sing it to the tune of ‘Harninu goyim ‘amo’ [Deuteronomy 32, 43] and since then this tune became the widespread melody for ‘Shir ha-emunah’. One has to point out that there are several versions of the text, but this version [in the CD] was sanctioned by [the Rabbi’s son] Harav Tzvi Yehudah Kook as the correct version and was printed in the Siddur [prayer book] ‘Olat re’ayiah’... The song appears there after the order of Hakafot to Simhat Torah [Rejoicing of the Torah].

In the collection ‘Mivhar shirei ‘amenu’ (‘Selection of Our People’s Songs’, Berlin-Vienna: Menorah, 193?) ‘Shir ha-emunah’ appears printed, apparently for the first time, immediately after *Hatikvah* and under its title is written ‘[sing] to the melody of *Hatikvah*’. In spite of this clue, it appears that Rabbi Kook’s song was generally not sung to the tune of *Hatikvah* and for this reason new melodies were sought by the Rabbi’s disciples. According to Rabbi Eliashiv Berlin, among the concepts that Rabbi Kook disagreed with in *Hatikvah* was the word “hofshi” (“free” or “independent”) in the verse ‘to be a free people in our Land’. The Rabbi feared an interpretation of this verse as “to be secular in our Land” in the sense of “free from the yoke of the Torah”. Rabbi Kook’s poem indeed paraphrases *Hatikvah* but with a deep theological twist: “steadfast faith in the return to our holy land... where we shall serve our God.”<sup>46</sup>

This challenge to *Hatikvah* by the undisputed spiritual leader of the National Religious Movement shows how volatile and complex the reception and reading of this song was

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<sup>46</sup> This paragraph on ‘Shir ha-emunah’ benefitted enormously from the rich information on this song available at the website [www.zemereshet.co.il](http://www.zemereshet.co.il).

in diverse religious circles. In fact, one may argue Rabbi Kook's contestation against the national anthem already in 1929 was a harbinger of the future challenges to the Israeli state, its institutions and symbols by extremist circles that follow Rabbi Kook's activist messianic theology.

But resistance to *Hatikvah* was not only coming from religious circles. In the 1930s there was a propensity by socialist Zionists to replace it with Haim N. Bialik's 'Birkat 'am' (aka. 'Tehezakena'), precisely because of *Hatikvah*'s suspicious messianic overtones and Biblical rhetoric. As we have seen above, 'Tehezakena' was a serious competitor of *Hatikvah* for the position of national anthem from the moment both songs spread in the last decade of the nineteenth century in Palestine and throughout the Jewish world. The powerful Histadrut (Worker's Union in Palestine) utilized Bialik's song (and the red rather than blue and white flag) in its celebratory rituals during the peak of its power in the 1930s. The characteristically assertive, chordal, marching, major (one is tempted to say 'masculine') Russian tune of 'Tehezakena' had a contrasting sonic signification in comparison to the minor, stepwise, 'feminine' melody of *Hatikvah*.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, not only textual but also musical considerations played into this competition between the advocates of each of these two songs.

#### *Hatikvah* among Jewish art music composers

We have already shown that the earliest version of *Hatikvah* with musical notation appeared in an arrangement for voice and piano by cantor Friedland from Breslau in 1895 in the form of a lied. As it gained popularity outside of Palestine, European composers continued to arrange *Hatikvah* as a lied, attempting to color it with alternative harmonic interpretations as a way of adding personal interpretative dimensions to the song.

A fascinating case of such an arrangement is Efraim Shkliar's. Shkliar (or Schkljar, 1871-1943) was one of the composers associated with the national school of Jewish music in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century. His arrangement dates back to 1910 and was analyzed by James Loeffler as an example of what he calls the "modern political song." Shkliar's attempt, as Loeffler has shown, tries to avoid "an Eastern European folk song, Jewish or otherwise," and resembles "a nineteenth-century central European synagogue chorale in the German Protestant tradition." What is more interesting and relevant to us here is that Shkliar's arrangement was severely criticized by no less than Joel Engel and Mikhail Gnesin, two towering figures of the Russian Jewish school.

Engel's dictum was that the melody is "entirely unsuitable for a national anthem." It lacks any typical "Jewishness," and furthermore, Engel claims, it resembles a Ukrainian

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<sup>47</sup> In fact Bialik's song is a Hebrew cover of a revolutionary [Russian song](#) honoring May 1<sup>st</sup> (Майская песня).

folk song (this observation came many years before Idelsohn noticed it), and it is in a minor, pessimistic character. Engel's critique is remarkable, for it identically matches the negative views held by many members of the Zionist movement, Herzl included, towards *Hatikvah*. Gnesin, on the other hand, opposed the haphazard arrangement of monophonic Eastern European Jewish "folksongs" (his own categorization of the Zionist anthem).<sup>48</sup>

At this point, one must notice that the "foreignness" for which *Hatikvah* was criticized by Engel and others is precisely the source of its resilience. This is Ariel Hirschfeld's main argument: "It was its resistance to Zionism's optimism that made it attractive. The song is deeply subversive: we have not arrived at Zion and have never been a free nation in its own land." He stresses reception over conception as the social mechanism of canonization: "Its selection as the national anthem was not an ideological gesture so much as a response to the hosts of singers that identified so deeply with it and valued it so dearly." Finally, Hirschfeld repeats an argument that he has proposed for the modern Hebrew song in general: "This ambiguity [between the messages conveyed by text and music] is rarely as plainly visible as in the case of 'Hatikvah,' the lyrics of which...speak of a movement forward and Eastward (kadimah) while the melody expresses a nostalgic gaze backward (kedem)."<sup>49</sup>

Interestingly, the argument regarding the "un-Jewishness" of the melody of *Hatikvah* reappears in the opinion of one of Russia's most eminent artists of the early twentieth century, the renowned opera singer and actor Feodor Chaliapin. During his American tour of 1924-5, the following report appeared in a Jewish newspaper:

Chaliapin is susceptible not only to Jewish cooking, but also to the charms of Jewish music. During the Revolution, in 1919 [sic], [journalist and writer] Herman Bernstein [1876-1935] happened to be in Petrograd. He was invited by the great basso [Chaliapin] to stay in his beautiful home on the Kammenoi-Ostrovsky Prospekt. In those days it was not safe for anyone –not even for such a popular favorite as Chaliapin - to travel unguarded through the streets, so a car, armored and provided with a number of soldiers and sailors as escort, carried the singer and guests to and from the opera house. After the concert for the Zionists, at which Chaliapin was wildly applauded for his singing of 'Hatikvah' he came home and played and sang a number of Jewish folk-songs.

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<sup>48</sup> Loeffler, *The Most Musical Nation*, pp. 140-142 (note 7 above). Loeffler's date of the original publication of *Hatikvah* is incorrect. Engel's dictum appeared originally in Iu. D. Engel, 'Evreiski narodnye pesni: II,' *Razsvet* 37 (Sept. 12, 1910). Menashe Ravina quoted Engel's opinion in his essay, *Joel Engel and Jewish Music*, Tel Aviv 1946/7. (In Hebrew)

<sup>49</sup> Hirschfeld, *Locus and Language: Hebrew Culture in Israel, 1890-1990* (note 2 above), p. 335 and 336.

“‘Hatikvah’ is all very well,” [Chaliapin] said [in this American interview] “but in my opinion it is a ‘made’ anthem. It is not a true national song. A song like ‘Af’n Pripetchick,’ [sic] for example, is really characteristic of Jewish life in Europe, and full of Jewish feeling. The melody is like the voice of a whole people. Why should it not be the national song?’ And in this opinion, many will agree with him.<sup>50</sup>

c. *Hatikvah* as a popular song: Commercial recordings and sheet music

*Hatikvah* is perceived today as a national anthem of a movement or a state and therefore its publication as a patriotic folksong in Zionist song collections for youth movements or Hebrewist educational songsters, such as the one by Idelsohn in 1912 (see note 21 above), is generally emphasized by scholars. Yet, its distribution in the early twentieth century was also similar to that of popular songs, namely through sheet music and commercial recordings.

Sheet music was a medium characteristic of the New York Tin-Pan-Alley scene and *Hatikvah* appeared in several arrangements for the consumption of the massive population of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in the Big Apple. A widespread arrangement for voice and piano was by A. R. Zagler (arranger), in a sheet titled ‘Zion Songs: Popular Hebrew National Songs’ that included another Zionist anthem that seriously contested *Hatikvah*, ‘Dort wo die Zeder.’ This publication, published in 1912 by Saul Schenker, erroneously credits the text and music of *Hatikvah* to ‘L.N. Imber’.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Shulamith Ish-Kishor, Jewish meals and Jewish music: Chaliapin gives his opinion of ‘Hatikvah’, *The Jewish Tribune and Hebrew Standard*, 18 December 1925, p. 5. Another testimony of Chaliapin’s memorable performance appears in a report by the Zionist leader Chaim Weizman who recalled the event with pride in a speech he delivered in liberated Jaffa on June 17, 1918. Weizmann quotes from a cable, “the first sent in a long time [to the Zionist leadership]” from Petrograd, saying “Palestine week celebrated in Petrograd from April 21st to 28<sup>th</sup>, remarkable success, almost all the [Jewish] population of the city participated... Also great success of Chaliapin who sang Jewish popular songs and Hatikvah, in which six thousand people joined.” See, Chaim Weizmann, and Barnet Litvinoff. *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann: Series B: The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann: August 1898-July 1931*. New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Books, 1983, pp. 189-191, paper 45, speech to Assembly of Jews in the liberated area of Palestine, Jaffa, 17 June 1918. See further, Mikhail Beizer and Martin Gilbert. *The Jews of St. Petersburg: Excursions through a Noble Past*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989, pp. 238-239. According to this last source, Chaliapin was fond of Jewish culture. He attended Jewish music concerts and synagogue services in Saint Petersburg and himself performed Jewish songs. Furthermore, according to this testimony the Jewish poet and scholar Yehiel Ravrebe was the one who taught *Hatikvah* to Chaliapin. The great Russian bass apparently sang the song (known at the time as ‘*Od lo ‘avda*, after the second stanza) in Russian translation. On Ravrebe see, Avraham Greenbaum, Yehiel Ravrebe, Jewish poet and scholar, *Jews and Jewish Topics in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* 17 (1992) 27-36.

<sup>51</sup> Schenker Publishers, whose store in 50 and later 66 Canal St. in New York was still active in 1942, was a prominent importer, distributor and publisher of Jewish books and music in New

Not only full Tin Pan Alley arrangements of *Hatikvah* appeared early on, but also fragments of its melody were quoted, as a “lick,” in popular songs of the early twentieth century. One of the earliest of such quotations appears in the ‘Yiddisha Rag’ (Joseph H. McHeon, Harry M. Piano and W. Raymond Walker, 1909). This song employs the first two bars of *Hatikvah* in the bridge section, but also uses the characteristic jump of an octave at the beginning of the second part (‘od lo avda tikvatenu) followed by a step-wise descending line in the first part of the melody.<sup>52</sup>

The greatest technological breakthrough in the history of sound, the gramophone, unquestionably facilitated the rapid spread of *Hatikvah* throughout the Jewish Diaspora. The immediate recruitment of this new technology of sound reproduction by Jews is utterly remarkable. The logic of the early recording industry was based on catching on wax the repertoires that were well established among the masses attending the live stages and making them available for the household.

Most of the early performers of *Hatikvah* in commercial recordings were by synagogue cantors rather than stage singers, a further testimony of the sacralization of this anthem in its early stages of existence. *Hatikvah* was recorded for the first time (as far as we know today) in Warsaw in 1902, hardly two decades after its conception by Samuel Cohen in Rishon Le-Tziyyon, by a certain Cantor Kipnis.<sup>53</sup> It is very possible that “Cantor Kipnis” may have been Menachem Kipnis (1878-1942), the celebrated Yiddish folklorist, pioneer photographer, humorist and singer, but perhaps also his older brother and mentor, known as Peysy or Peyse the Cantor. Around the time this recording was made, Menachem was a young tenor chorister at the Great Tłomackie Street Synagogue in Warsaw.<sup>54</sup>

The first American recording of *Hatikvah* (again, as far as we know at this moment) was probably the work of Solomon Shmulewitz-Small (1868-1943), a Yiddish poet, playwright, composer, and folk singer born in Pinsk, Byelorussia, who came to the

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York City since the turn of the twentieth century. It operated in close proximity to the heart of the Jewish immigrant population on the Lower East Side of New York City. A digital version of this score can be seen at <https://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/22300>

<sup>52</sup> Jack Gottlieb, *Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish: How Yiddish Songs and Synagogue Melodies Influenced Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, and Hollywood*. Albany, N.Y: State University of New York in association with the Library of Congress, 2004, chapter 8, includes other quotations of *Hatikvah*.

<sup>53</sup> The Gramophone Company Catalogue, No. 11654, Matrix No. 631C. In the same session Cantor Kipnis also recorded the Zionist patriotic song ‘Dort wu die Zeder’, Gramophone Company Catalogue No. 11655; Matrix No. 632C. I owe this information to the British discographer Michael Aylward and remain thankful to him for his assistance in this and other research projects.

<sup>54</sup> Issachar Fater, *Jewish Music in Poland between the World Wars*. Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1992, pp. 185-189. (Hebrew)



United States in 1891. He recorded the song for the Zonophon Company in New York in 1904 (the recording does not carry Shmulewitz's name but the other cuts in the series of recordings on the same day contains his name).<sup>55</sup> These early cantorial recordings of *Hatikvah* launched a trend in which the greatest American *hazzanim* cum opera singers of the twentieth century could not avoid but record it, as evidenced by the performances of Al Jolson, Jan Pierce and Richard Tucker.

Not only in Western Europe and in the United States was *Hatikvah* recorded in the earlier days of the recording industry. As early as May 1907 it was pressed (also by the Zonophone Company) by the Sephardic *tamburitza* (long neck lute) ensemble and choir 'La Gloria' in Sarajevo.<sup>56</sup> The recording industry in the Eastern Mediterranean also offers evidence of the status of *Hatikvah* as a *piyyut* that we have discussed above. Two of the greatest Ottoman/Turkish singers/cantors, Isaac Algazi and Haim Effendi included it in their recordings' catalogue of cantorial pieces next to songs in Ladino and Turkish.<sup>57</sup>

### One Song, Many Memories

The Holocaust is a powerful screen that in one way or another reshaped Jewish memory forever. Added to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, these two interrelated and transformational events changed and challenged the ways in which *Hatikvah* is perceived and consumed.

It is therefore not surprising that the most poignant (and deployed) recordings of *Hatikvah* circulating nowadays online are those related to testimonies from the Holocaust. The singing of *Hatikvah* by the surviving inmates of the Bergen Belsen camp immediately after liberation by the British tropes ranks first. Caught by a BBC reporter it has reached almost half a million views on YouTube since it was uploaded in January 2010. Another Holocaust-related recording appears in a scene of Claude Lanzmann's documentary film *Shoah* (1985) shot at the synagogue on the island of Corfu (today Greece). A survivor who lost all his family at the Dachau-Birkenau camp

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<sup>55</sup> Richard K. Spottswood, *Ethnic music on records: a discography of ethnic recordings produced in the United States, 1893 to 1942*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990, vol. 3, p. 1524, Zon 3002, Matrix 50043.

<sup>56</sup>Risto Pekka Pennanen, Immortalized in Wax: Professional Folk Musicians and their Gramophone Recordings Made in Sarajevo, 1907-1908, in Božidar Jezernik, Rajko Muršič and Alenka Bartulović (eds.), *Europe and its other: notes on the Balkans*, Ljubljana: Oddelek za etnologijo in kulturno antropologijo, Filozofska fakulteta, 2007, pp. 107-148, on *Hatikvah* see p. 127. I am indebted to Risto Pekka Pennanen for his magnificent work on the early history of recordings in Bosnia that led to this precious piece of information.

<sup>57</sup> Orfeon 11393 recorded in Istanbul 1929 (Algazi) and *Marche Sioniste*, Gramophone 7-212702 *Kol Hod Baleva*, recorded in Cairo, c1927 (Effendi).

appears in the film singing the piyyut *Yigdal Elohim hay* with the few remnants of this ancient Jewish community to the tune of *Hatikvah*.

Perhaps one of the most calculating uses of *Hatikvah* appears at the very end of the new Holocaust Historical Museum at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem that opened in 2005. This Museum is built as an enclosed path from which the visitor cannot escape. At the last station of this path, the visitor confronts a video screen that runs the historical clip of the children's and youth choir of the Hebrew Gymnasium in Munkács (then Czechoslovakia, today Mukacheve in Ukraine) singing *Hatikvah*. The impact of this clip is based on its dual connotation: it is implicit that most of the participants in this performance perished in the Holocaust; at the same time, the soundtrack transmits the sense that the spirit of these children and youth did not die.<sup>58</sup> The singing of *Hatikvah* by Israeli youth during the ritual visits to the death camps is imbued with similar resonances.<sup>59</sup>

It will be redundant to spare space in this essay to mention the obvious singing of *Hatikvah* in Israel after 1948 in key historical moments and events such as in the ceremony of the declaration of independence of the State of Israel in May 15, 1948 (twice, one planned and one extemporaneous). But no less meaningful are the performances of *Hatikvah* at less glorious moments, such as at the opening of international matches of the Israeli national soccer team. These performances are not dictated by sheer patriotism but rather by the etiquette of global sport institutions such as FIFA that, in order to maintain its transnational interests, continues to forge the national feelings of the fans by singing the national anthem in order to stimulate the indispensable antagonism that perpetuates sport's competition. Many of these performances desecrate the secular sacredness of the national anthem, when fans use the time of the singing to utter undesirable sonic expressions.

These two scenes of post-WW II and post-1948 *Hatikvah* performances, the sublime and transcendental (Holocaust death camps) and the mundane and coarse (soccer game), show how malleable the range of possible uses and abuses of the song are. But beyond this multiplicity of performances, the recruitment of *Hatikvah* to strengthen or destabilize the image of Zionism and its state became a widespread strategy in public discourses. To end this essay, we shall examine a few of these charged performances and interpretations of the anthem.

We return now to our point of departure, the "research" on *Hatikvah* by Astrith Baltsan published by the Ministry of Education of Israel. One can see the manipulative

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<sup>58</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zA7ihcXGzQ>. The crew of the legendary newsreel 'March of Time' filmed the clip apparently in 1933/4. It was included in a program released on October 1935.

<sup>59</sup> Jackie Feldman, *Above the Death Pits, Beneath the Flag: Youth Voyages to Poland and the Performance of Israeli National Identity*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2008, pp. 218-219.

operation that was involved in this publication. Many of the already well-known facts related to *Hatikvah*, published in succession by Eliyahu Hacoen, Menashe Ravina and Natan Shahar among others (and appearing in this essay too), are also present in Baltsan's booklet. However, the author (and the agents who commissioned this publication) does not hide her chief intention: instilling love and appreciation for the national anthem among the designated users of these materials, the Israeli Jewish children (except of course the Haredi, aka "ultra-orthodox" sector). Such a nationalist rhetoric is not unheard of in many other nation-states and in fact, one can say that such an attitude is even expected. Take for example what the popular encyclopedia online Jewish Virtual Library has to say in reference to *Hatikvah*: "When we sing the Hatikva together, we are doing much more than just singing a nice melody. We are making a promise that we will never forget the undying Jewish hope for independence and that we will do all within our power to help the State of Israel prosper."<sup>60</sup>

Even the systematic historians of *Hatikvah* give at times free range to their subjective appreciation for the subject of their inquiry. Says Eliyahu Hacoen:

For more than three generations *Hatikvah* was the best-known Hebrew song throughout the Jewish world, even in the mouth of all the Jews who could not speak a single sentence in Hebrew. For the first time after thousands of years the entire Jewish people shared one Hebrew song that is not Biblical, from the siddur or the mahzor. *Hatikvah* set in motion the wheels of Zionism more than a thousand speeches by leaders and emissaries. Every nation ought to be jealous of such an anthem that grew out of an open historical process and without any intentional intervention. The natural folk instinct, a healthy and irrational one, cast the destiny [of *Hatikvah*] beyond any formal decision.<sup>61</sup>

Beyond such celebratory utterances, one can seriously question the selectivity of the materials recruited by Baltsan for her state-sanctioned text. For example, even though *Hatikvah* is characterized in one instance in Baltsan's booklet as a "Jewish prayer", the reception of *Hatikvah* as a religious song in the Jewish communities of the lands of Islam is utterly absent from a publication that supposedly reflects the memories of a major Jewish sector of the Israeli Jewish citizenry.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/History/hatikva.html>

<sup>61</sup> Eliyahu Hacoen in *Et-mol* (1979; above note 3) quoted online by Zeev Galili, 'Leshanot et *Hatikvah* or le'abed et *hatikvah*' (To change *Hatikvah* or to loss any hope), <http://www.zeevgalili.com/2007/04/402>. Accessed March 31, 2015.

<sup>62</sup> Such aspect of *Hatikvah* is rarely discussed. Of the few conversations on the subject that I was able to collect, the most interesting one is the entry in the (right-wing nationalist) website <http://www.zeevgalili.com/2009/03/688> under "Hatikvah as a *piyyut* in religious texts." Accessed April 9, 2015. For the sake of accuracy, one of the illustrations in Baltsan's book is a photo of members of the Zionist movement in Tunis singing *Hatikvah*.

Another example: we have seen above that the legislative power of Israel, the Knesset, formally sanctioned *Hatikvah* as the national anthem of the State only in November 10, 2004. Baltsan traces all the aborted attempts to legislate such a law (at least since 1983) to protect the anthem from changes as well as to impose respect for it by force during its performances. The Knesset rejected all these initiatives on their early stages mostly because they were found to be counterproductive.<sup>63</sup>

The question warranting an answer is why only then, in 2004, almost one hundred and twenty years after its conception and uncontested reception, the law of *Hatikvah* was legislated. Yet this is the very question that Baltsan studiously avoids. The context of the most possible answer is indeed rather troubling. In the aftermath of the second Intifada (Palestinian uprising, 2000-2004) an unprecedented wave of nationalist legislation led, among other initiatives, to one that would protect the *de facto* anthem from any attempts to challenge it with changes of its text or alternative hymns.<sup>64</sup> Legislation of course is reversible, but this is a rather sad epilogue for a song whose history and reception represented a victory of the grass-roots voice of the people, as Hacoheh stressed above.

Baltsan also reluctantly addresses the staunch and uncompromising opposition of the Arab citizens of Israel to *Hatikvah* as such and to its performance in public, based on its unilateral and exclusive representation of Jewish hopes and interests. The 2007 refusal of the Minister of Science, Culture and Sport, Raleb Majadele, the first Muslim Arab citizen appointed to the cabinet, to sing the anthem during the official ceremony of his inauguration is the *causus belli* discursively discussed by Baltsan. Majadele had the following to say in an interview following the incident: “I fail to understand how an enlightened, sane Jew allows himself to ask a Muslim person with a different language and culture, to sing an anthem that was written for Jews only.” In the same interview

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<sup>63</sup> Michael Handelzalts called this move “an arrogant slap on the smarting cheek of a distinct minority, delivered by a self-righteous majority” a propos discussions in 2005 (after the *Hatikvah* legislation) about the anthem in the framework of designing a consensual constitution for the State of Israel (still pending). One of the motions was to amend the text: “As long as deep in the heart / The soul of an Israeli yearns / And toward the East / An eye looks to Jerusalem (Al-Quds, if need be) / Our hope is not yet lost / The hope of two thousand years / To be a free people in our land / The state of Israel, Jerusalem.” See, ‘Hope merits more than an anthem,’ *Haaretz*, July 12, 2005. <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/hope-merits-more-than-an-anthem-1.163605>. Accessed March 23, 2015. The issue continued to be discussed further on. See, Rewriting ‘Hatikvah’ as Hope for all Israel, *Forwards*, March 30, 2012, <http://forward.com/culture/153452/rewriting-hatikvah-as-anthem-for-all/> Accessed April 14, 2012.

<sup>64</sup> Challenges to *Hatikvah* stemming from members of the Knesset were not unheard of. The most celebrated case is the initiative of Uri Avnery immediately after the 1967 war to substitute *Hatikvah* with Naomi Shemer’s song ‘Yerushalayim shel Zahav’ (Jerusalem of Gold). The idea did not reach the advanced stages of legislation. Uri Avnery told that Naomi Shemer did not object the idea but also that she was not thrilled by it (personal communication of April 19, 2015 during Avnery’s visit to the National Library of Israel). Baltsan discusses this episode in, *Hatikvah: Past, Present, Future*.

Majadele pointed out that although he does not participate in the singing of *Hatikvah* he respects the song by standing when it is performed.<sup>65</sup>

This dissonance between *Hatikvah* and the feelings of prominent members of the Arab community of Israeli citizens hit a new height in 2012 when Justice Salim Joubran of the Supreme Court, a Christian Arab Israeli, refused to sing the anthem, an incident that reached the pages of *The New York Times*.<sup>66</sup> Others who defended his constitutional right to remain silent while standing in a show of respect balanced the voices calling for the resignation of the Judge. These incidents disclose the inherent and unresolvable tensions created by the Zionist enterprise in Palestine/Eretz Israel of which *Hatikvah* is just one more field of contestation between clashing narratives.

By now, *Hatikvah* is the quintessential and uncontested sonic icon of Zionism and Israel.<sup>67</sup> As such, it also invites its deconstruction by the critics and foes of the Jewish national movement and state. A poignant example of this trend is “The New Israeli Anthem” (*Himnon-Yisra’el He-ḥadash*) that the avant-garde Israeli poet David Avidan (1934-1995) wrote for the fiftieth anniversary of the State of Israel in 1998.

So long as inside the brain  
The little cells are working,  
And so long as the body copes  
With all that is old and dead,  
And so long as the soul is wide open  
To the spirit of freedom  
We shall not know death,  
We shall not know end,  
We’ll know only life  
And we’ll know only the good // x 2

As long as wisdom controls  
All matters of state,  
And as long as things such as peace  
Will be reality, not a dream,

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<sup>65</sup> From an interview by Amnon Meranda, ‘Majadele refuses to sing national anthem’ published on March 17, 2007, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3377681,00.html>. Accessed April 19, 2015.

<sup>66</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/05/world/middleeast/anger-and-compassion-for-justice-who-stays-silent-during-zionist-hymn.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/05/world/middleeast/anger-and-compassion-for-justice-who-stays-silent-during-zionist-hymn.html?_r=0) Accessed April 18, 2015

<sup>67</sup> I refrain from mentioning here the endless mundane quotations and reverberations of *Hatikvah* in popular music, cinema, sound installations, telephone ringtones, and more. These practices are common to most national anthems, as these songs function as a sonic icon of the state and therefore provide users an easy and effective tool for recalling the state through sound. For a selection of such mundane quotations of *Hatikvah*, see Baltsan, *Hatikvah: Past, Present, Future*.

And as long as we'll learn to look  
 Forward into the future —  
 We shall not know death,  
 We shall not know end,  
 We'll know only life

And we'll know only the best // x 2  
 As long as we shall be the chosen ones,  
 But not at the expense of others,  
 And as long as we understand that all —  
 And not one nation—is a world,  
 We'll be one special nation,  
 Trusting, brave, unafraid.  
 We shall not know death,  
 We shall not know end,  
 We'll know only life  
 And we'll know only the best // x 2]<sup>68</sup>

Riki Ofir had the following to say about this poem:

Avidan uses a very simple vocabulary, decidedly non-poetic, even resembling child-like language, to express under what conditions Israel could still thrive. From a current Left perspective it may be hard to accept Avidan's support of Zionism, but I believe that it still holds a certain power. Indeed, Avidan believes in “our” potential to be the chosen ones, but only under conditions of peace, not at the expense of others, and as long as “we” realize that one nation isn't yet a world. That is, “we,” whoever we are (he does not mention the term “Jews,” or any kind of past) will be wise, respectful, and inclusive; only then will we be the chosen ones. In this way the divine promise or demand becomes an earthly matter. Avidan puts it simply, although not without a certain amount of irony that invokes an ironic-sad cabaret song (Brecht once more). He says it simply, contrary to pathos of *Hatikvah*, the current national anthem, it is a song meant to be sung by many people together, expressing a hope for an intelligent forum to make wise decisions.<sup>69</sup>

Another particularly poignant peak in this process of sonic contestation was reached recently. In a congratulatory note for the 66<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Israel, the Gaza-based Palestinian Hamas released its own version of *Hatikvah* in a YouTube clip that appeared prior to the bloody operation ‘Solid Rock’ of the summer of 2014. Titled ‘Sof

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<sup>68</sup> David Avidan, *Kol ha-shirim*. Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, vol. 4, 2011, p. 290.

<sup>69</sup> Riki Ofir, *Why Read Poems in Such Hard Times? Sociopolitical History and Aesthetic Commitment in Modern Hebrew, Yiddish and German Poetry*. University of California, Berkeley and The Graduate Theological Union, 2014, pp. 44-46.

Hatikvah,' ('The End of Hope') it shows how even the most acerbic enemies of Israel have deeply internalized the meaning of the song and can elegantly produce its negative version (in perfect modern Israeli Hebrew, of course).<sup>70</sup>

The army of the Zionists was built of wax  
And now it is melted and has no hope.  
The vile Jews who were here before –  
Let someone tell me what is left of them.

Two groups — the first will be returned  
To its homelands if it chooses to do so,  
While the idiot, if he remains stubborn [in Palestine]  
His fate is sealed beneath the dirt.

The Holy City will return to its former name  
My capital Beyt al-Maqdis, not Jerusalem.

It would be unwarranted to end this essay on this dissonant chord (certainly to the ears of the faithful sentinels of Zionism). However, I listen to this last example as no less than a thorough affirmation through negation of the remarkable journey that *Hatikvah* has made through times and places in the hands of its users and abusers. Like Zionism itself, *Hatikvah* has always been a contested cultural asset and a bone of harsh disputations, and yet it remained remarkably durable due to its emotional power and appeal to a wide range of Jews (and non-Jews as well) across the world. Like Zionism itself, *Hatikvah* was always intensely political, conveying irony and even obfuscation and deliberate myth-making, yet strikingly simple and direct as a tool reflecting the ambitions of those modern Jews who embarked in what they envisioned as the renewal of the Jewish nation and the rebuilding of an ancient land. For these reasons, time will tell if the official legislative sanctioning of *Hatikvah* as the national anthem of the State of Israel will paradoxically mark the beginning of the end of this wondrous lyrical journey.

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