The Israeli Folksong (Song of the Land-of-Israel)

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At the present day, the genre of Israeli Folksongs stands out as a unique genre within the corpus of popular Israeli music.

The Name of the Genre

At the beginning of a discussion about any genre, one must first attribute it with a name. However, in the case of the genre that we are dealing with, its name is still not agreed upon. Different research papers on the genre have used different names for it; these include: 'Israeli Folksong' (Shirei Erets Yisrael), 'Hebrew Folk-Singing' (Zemer Ivri), and 'Folksongs' (Shir 'Amami) (Seroussi 1991). Hirshberg (1981) speaks in one place about 'The Hebrew Folksong' (Shir Ha'am Ha'ivri) while in another about 'Original Land-of-Israel Songs' (Shir Eretsyisraeli Mekori). Cohen and Katz, in one paragraph, reference three different terms: 'Israeli Folk-song' (Shir Amami Yisraeli), 'The Israeli Song' (Hashir Hayisraeli), and 'The Hebrew Song' (Hashir Ha'ivri) (Cohen & Katz 1977). Shmulei (1968), Ravina (1968), and Bayer (1968) use the term 'The Israeli Song' (Hashir Hayisraeli). Smoira-Cohen (Smoira-Cohen, 1968) speaks about 'The Israeli Folksong' (Shir Ha'am Hayisraeli). Ron (1993), in the same sentence, references both the 'Israeli Singing' (Zemer Yisraeli) and the 'Israeli Song' (Shir Yisraeli) while Almagor (1994) is of the opinion that the 'Hebrew Folksong is the same as 'Israeli Folksongs' (Shirei Erets Yisrael). Gil Aldema (composer of many songs that are considered to be Israeli Folksongs, has been the instructor of communal singing workshops for many years, is the editor and arranger of radio shows, and was awarded the Israel Prize in 2004) has been quoted on the topic of the origin of the name 'Israeli Folksongs', saying:

> "The term was coined when Naomi Shemer wrote the song *Behiahazut Hanahal BeSinai*, where she wrote, 'the Land-of-Israel, small and forgotten,' and this awakened nostalgia for those days, when we were a small nation. She was able to get in touch with the old Israel, and that's when it started. Daliah Guttman made a radio show with Naomi Polani and released an album that she

called 'Songs of Old Israel,' and it was from there that the term started appearing. "

(from an interview conducted by the writer on 23.1.1994) [1]

Characterization of the Genre

Another issue that is as problematic as the name of the genre is the characterization and definition of it, that is to say, what are the Israeli Folksongs? If we were to ask professionals who work in the field, or amateur singers, it can be assumed that they would know what we are referring to, and would even give examples of songs that fit the definition. However, there is no clear or accepted definition of this genre. When interviewees try to define the genre, or when it is referenced to in professional literature and media articles, there are a few characteristics that repeat themselves, among them: a certain usage of language, the themes of the text (love for the land and its scenery), the use of plural language in these songs (especially the earlier ones), the fact that many of them are relatively old, the framework in which they are performed, their function, and their composers and performers.

During the framework of the interviews conducted by the writer of this entry with composers, lyricists, broadcasters, and communal singing instructors, the interviewees were asked to attempt to give a definition to the Israeli Folksongs. All of them found it to be very difficult. In fact, none of them were able to give an immediate answer and had to have a long conversation about it. Their spontaneous replies (for example those of Moshe Vilensky interviewed on 25.1.1994, and those of Nurit Hirsh, interviewed on 20.2.1994, both of whom composed many songs that are considered Israeli Folksongs) were, to name a few: "that is a difficult question", and "the term is not clear." Gil Aldema said: "I do not know what Israeli Folksongs are, I am aware that such a term exists, but I am not very fond of it." Michal Semoira-Cohen (a musicologist who has researched and written about the genre) says that: "Today there is great embarrassment in regards to this term, I do not know what it

[1] All of the quotes presented throughout this paper are from interviews conducted by the author, unless otherwise noted. The date of the interview will be presented next to the interviewees name only after its first appearance

means and I do not know what to place in it." (20.1.1994) Naomi Shemer, a winner of the Israel Prize, and who is regarded as *the* composer of the genre, referred to the term and claimed that she "is not crazy about it." According to her, it is a fluid and unclear term that in every period signifies something else (3.3.1994). After a bit of indecisiveness, the interviewees tried to define the term Israeli Folksongs in extramusical terms that will be expanded upon below. Many of them connected between the definition of the genre and the performance of the songs within the framework of communal singing. Later, we will try to define the genre by a few different criteria.

The Themes and Language as Central Factors in Defining the Genre

Researchers and professionals in the field of culture and Israeli Song emphasize the importance of the themes and language of the songs. Shokeid writes that: "Despite the fact that even the most beautiful Israeli poems would not have survived without their heart-wrenching melodies, there is no doubt that the emotional impact of many Israeli Folksongs is caused by the impressive combination of words with music." (Shokeid 1993, 108). Ariel Hirshfeld, a researcher of literature and music, states on the *Hateiva Hamezameret* television show (September 1998), that:

> "When singing together, the importance of the words to the Israeli Song is not always felt. Sometimes one is awakened mid-song to realize that the connection between the lyrics and music is crucial. There are lyrics in some songs, like *Shimri Nafshekh* and *Yatsanu At*, that cannot be said without their melody and whose melody cannot be recalled without the lyrics. These words, with their unique Hebrew, their context to the culture and with life here in general, have entered into the music, and have suddenly achieved a new presence. Sometimes, all of their meaning is built through the music."

Amitai Ne'eman is of the opinion that "with Israeli Folksongs, the strength lies in the lyrics." Effi Netzer says that "Israeli Folksongs are songs from twenty to fifty years ago, or later songs that survived. The reason for their survival is that they hold a truth, and that truth depends on the worth of the lyrics." Ronit Hirsh and Naomi Polani (the choreographer of the Israeli band HaTarnegolim, in an interview conducted on 21.3.1995) think that the words are what make the song 'Israeli', because it is when dealing with themes that are connected to the land that make the

song Israeli. In Sarale Sharon's opinion (in a letter from June 1994): "The Israeli Folksongs are songs whose lyrics and music were written in the Land-of-Israel, especially the words, because they talk about things that are connected to this land."

The songs' most common theme, according to everyone who deals with them, is the love of the land and its scenery, which creates a sense of belonging to the land. Gil Aldema states that: "expressions of love of the land are found in these songs: 'we love you homeland' or 'we follow you blindly'." According to Naomi Shemer, Israeli Folksongs are "anything that can be called 'songs of the place', 'songs of the land…'" In her opinion, the scale by which it is decided whether they are Israeli Folksongs or not, is whether they emit a sense of belonging, of what is 'ours' and what belongs to home. Eliahu HaCohen (in an interview) discusses "shepherd songs and songs of the earth, the songs of the land of the gazelle and the date, the railroad track, scenery, and people." Gabi Berlin (a communal singing instructor) discusses (in an interview conducted on 13.5.1992) songs that refer to Israeli scenery and the connection of the people to the state. Amitai Ne'eman says (in an interview, 8.2.1994):

> "They are Israeli Folksongs in a completely non-musical aspect, but rather, in an aspect of experiencing this land. These are songs that could not have been written anywhere else except in the Land-of-Israel. This is because they express the spirit and the atmosphere … these are songs that referred to life here, working, and the homeland. "

Hanokh Hasson also speaks (interview, 3.3.1994) about belonging as an important criterion for defining the Israeli Folksongs and is of the opinion that "Israeli Folksongs are part of our being, songs that have a belonging, that portray a sense that 'this belongs to me'." Hasson quotes Eliahu Hacohen (who, in turn, quoted Naomi Shemer): "Any song whose words bring about the scent of the Land-of-Israel, becomes an Israeli song." He continues:

> "The scent of the land is a more correct feeling than musical analyses. The scent consists of things that connect you with a spiritual and physical association of something that makes you closer to the landscape and to nature. Throughout all of the stylistic changes that the Israeli Folksong has gone through, is going through, and will go through, one of the prominent characteristics that will always remain

with it is its scent of the Land-of-Israel. This is a combination of many different feelings, emotions, and associations that are connected to the wonderful history that we have here."

Former MK Prof. Amnon Rubinstein writes: "The Land-of-Israel essence with its working-the-land appearance is outdated, but its substance does not age; its songs express a secular Zionist ethos that is centered around two attributes: a belonging to the land and its intoxicating beauty, and the pain at the price of this belonging" (Rubinstein, 1998).

According to Ehud Manor (interview, 23.3.1994):

> "The real Israeli Folksongs are songs that express unconditional love to the state, to the land, love that has not a drop of criticism, love that has accepted the pain, the disparity, and hopes. These songs were, in their time, very beautiful, and maintained their beauty up to this day. They have a special importance when looked at from a musical and historical perspective. The connection to the landscape is one of the main attributes of the Israeli Folksongs."

In a review of a collection of Sheike Peikov's songs (2), Amos Oren refers indirectly to the connection between the term 'Israeli Folksongs' and the songs' literary themes, namely, the Land-of-Israel. On one of the two CDs in the collection Oren writes: "The CD is characterized by its nationalistic orientations: Not only towards the 'land' in general, but also to its landscapes and regions, from North to South, and unconditional love towards Jerusalem. It is not only an expression of Land-of-Israelness (EretzYisraeliyut), which became a widely used term in the local music scene, but also to the poetic creativity of poets such as Elisheva, Amihai, Rachel and others" (Oren, 1999).

Muli Shapira, the former head of Galei Zahal's (the IDF radio station) Culture, Art, and Entertainment Department, produced and edited a hits album from the "Marganit Countdown" that was released in 1995. In his introduction to the album, he defines the themes of the songs and connects them to the Land-of-Israel: "For fourteen years, Israeli Folksongs were featured on Galei Zahal's 'Marganit Countdown'; songs of the landscapes and the homeland, marches, popular tunes for

the campfire, songs of labor, humorous songs, and love songs. These songs conserve the tone and the façade of the Land-of-Israel, these are our folksongs."

The attributes that characterize the Israeli Folksongs, especially the early ones, connect between the texts language and the themes. For example, the use of first person plural and the meanings that can be extracted from that. The Israeli Folksongs are not personal, but rather, speak for everyone. According to Ehud Manor (interview, 28.3.1994), "The true Israeli Folksongs are the songs from the era in which we all sang in the first person plural, that is to say, that they were not personal, but rather represented the general public." Gil Aldema says about Israeli Folksongs (interview, 23.1.1994):

> "When people speak about Israeli Folksongs, they refer to the old songs, the songs from before the state was founded, songs of 'together', where many expressions in first person plural can be found. For example: *Nivne Artseinu* (we will build our country), *Nalbishekh Slamat Beton Va-Melet* (we will dress you [the country] in a dress of concrete and cement) and also in non-personal love songs, such as *Hayu Leilot* (I remember the nights), that do not tear at the emotions of the listener."

The characterizing of Israeli Folksongs as non-personal songs also appears in the words of interviewees who tried to define them through negation. That is to say, to point out characteristics of other songs in order to say what is *not* found, or is in contrast to what is typically found in the Israeli Folksong. For example, Moshe Vilenski said about songs that were not part of the genre (interview, 25.1.1994): "These are songs that have no substantial connection whatsoever to the Land-of-Israel, they are personal songs, chansons that could have been written in any language." Like Vilenski, Amitai Ne'aman lists attributes that do not apply to the Israeli Folksongs (interview, 8.2.1994): "These are individualistic songs; they deal with the problems or the love of the individual, and, in general, deal with personal issues. The same song could have been written anywhere, and just by chance it was written in Hebrew. There is no reference to this land, to labor, to the homeland; they only deal with the world of the individual."

The songs that Wilenski and Ne'aman refer to as "personal" and "individualistic" are pop and rock songs. Hanokh Hasson notes (interview, 3.3.1994) that in newer songs, such as the pop and rock songs, the text has become secondary. From this it is deduced that, according to him, in the Israeli Folksongs, the text is the most important factor. Ehud Manor expresses his opinions about pop and rock songs, and specifically about Shlomo Artzi, when he states (interview 28.3.1994):

> "The song *Tirkod*, for example, is easy to sing for young people, but it is not an Israeli Folksong. It is a personal song that focuses on an individual, and it is not easy to connect to it. If one does connect to it, it is only when one sings along with him, like a cantor with a congregation. This is a bond between individuals and a singer, not the bond of a community."

In these quotations, one can find a link between a song's character, whether collective or personal, and the period in which it was written. That is to say, in the present day mostly personal songs are being written, an attribute that is characteristic of pop and rock songs, while in the past mostly 'first person plural' songs were written.

This is the place to point out an interesting and important phenomenon that relates to the subject. In 2002, the most popular song in Israel, that was at the top of the charts for several weeks, and was constantly played on the radio, was the song Darkenu (our path; words- Ya'akov Rotblit, Music- Yizhar Ashdot). Rotblit wrote the song as a personal song, to his wife, and it was first broadcasted on the radio in 1990 when sung by Danny Basan. The song was not very successful, and was quickly forgotten. In September 2001 it was re-recorded by the actresses Sarit Vino-Elad and Hani Furstenberg, for the successful television series *HaBurganim*. The song was used for a promotional clip for the upcoming season, and was also featured on the last episode of that season. It became a hit and was even chosen as the Song of the Year by two leading Israeli radio stations.

The explanation behind the song's success has to do with the timing of its release. During the period of the Second Intifada when there were many terrorist attacks, it was easy to connect to the first line of the chorus that states "It is not easy, our path is not easy." The song was even featured as the "song of the era" on a

program on the Israeli channel 2 that discussed war songs (22.2.2002). During that program, Rotblit noted a returning to "collectivism" by latching on to the song's words "our path," and stated that: "Here we can see people taking an innocent love song, because it has "we" in it, and turn it into the "we" that they need at this point in time."

Songs with "imported" melodies- Are they Israeli Folksongs?

In the context of content and language, there is room to pay attention to an important matter that has to do with defining the genre- what is the position of songs whose melodies are foreign- like the Russian and Greek songs- but have been Hebraized. The prevalent opinion is that they should be included in the corpus. Effi Netzer is of the opinion that (interview, 2.2.1994): the Russian songs entered the corpus of Israeli Folksongs, because they have become a part of us, they are a co-production. Although the melodies are Russian, the lyrics were written in the Land-of-Israel, and the content belongs to the land." Eliahu HaCohen says (interview 8.2.1994):

> "There are songs whose melodies are not Hebrew, but they have been absorbed into the Hebrew Folksong and have become a part of it. These songs, over time, have achieved legitimacy as Israeli Folksongs. However, not every translated and reworked melody is accepted into the corpus. A song is recognized as an integral part of the Hebrew Songs (such as Shir HaFinjan whose melody is Armenian) when it is entered into the songbooks and is sung by Hebrew singers and at communal singing events. It is melded into the pit of experience and pulls behind it activities in which it is at the forefront. The song becomes acclimated to the land."

Gal Ben-Shakh claims that (interview, 27.2.1994) "There are songs that "made Aliyah" and they are, by any standard, fully landed residents, that is to say, they have become proper Israeli Folksongs. A few examples include: *Eifo Hen HaBaḥurot HaHen, Tkhol Hamitpaḥat, Dugit*." These three songs, mentioned by Ben-S.H., are all originally Russian.

Dugit

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XEuwwFoovo

Naomi Shemer also claims (interview, 3.3.1994) that there are foreign songs that can be included in the corpus of Israeli Folksongs. In her opinion, the Israeli Folksongs are connected to the ethos of the first Aliyot (waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine, which included many Russian Jews), and hence to the Old Russian and the old Land-of-Israel; for that reason the Russian songs are automatically entered into the category. In addition to those songs, there are also songs that, as Shemer puts it, were 'adopted', 'converted', or applied with the 'Law of Return,'[2] that have also entered into the corpus of Israeli Folksongs. Some examples are the songs *Ayelet Ahavim* (Greek origin) and *Ilu Tsiporim* (French origin), that Shemer herself wrote the Hebrew words to, and *Marsh HaDayagim* by the Brazilian Dorival Caymmi, whose Hebrew lyrics were written by Ya'akov Shabtai.

Naomi Shemer automatically includes all of the Russian songs into the category of Israeli Folksongs. The Israeli military's former Chief of Staff, Rafael Eitan claimed in an interview with Rivkah Michaeli, which was broadcasted on *Kol Israel*, that the most beautiful Hebrew songs were the ones that stemmed from Russian origin. In addition to the Russian songs, one can find many different and varied sources to the songs. These include: Hassidic, Yiddish, Arabic, Armenian, Bucharian, Greek, American, French, German, Italian, Yemenite, Latin American (such as Brazil, Venezuela, and Mexico), Gyspy, and Sephardic.

The Russian songs stand out because of their popularity at communal singing events. It would seem that the communal singing instructors could sense the affection that the audience felt towards the Russian songs, and because of that included many of them in the events that they held. Although, as was previously mentioned, in the genre of Israeli Folksongs, and in the communal singing repertoire, songs with other foreign sources were used as well, with the Greek songs being especially popular. Among these 'translated' songs, some have become so well acclimated that the audience is not aware of their foreign origins. An example of this is the song *Sayarim* [Scouts], whose origin stems from a French song about a ticket inspector on the Parisian Metro, which was composed by Serge Gainsbourg, and sung by the Frere Jacques Quartet. The

[2] Translators note: The Law of Return [Hok HaShvut] is an Israeli law that allows any Jew in the world to get citizenship and live in the state of Israel

Hebrew text was written by Haim Hefer and the song was 'converted' and sung, in 1959, by the Nahal military music troupe. The song was so well received that only a few knew of its French origins.

The original Serge Gainsbourg song

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HsX4M-by5OY

Characterization of Israeli Folksongs through their Use

Another criteria for characterizing the Israeli Folksongs is their use; for example, broadcasting them on national holidays (such as Independence Day), on days of national remembrance and mourning, and in the event of a tragedy (such as a terrorist attack). Remarks such as the following can often be heard: "it is a shame that these beautiful songs (said by someone who assumes that everyone will know to which songs he refers) are only heard on days of remembrance and mourning." The reason that these songs are used as the soundtracks to these days is because they have become symbols that unite all Israelis, and when the media- in this instance the radio- is recruited to symbolize Israeliness, they use these songs. Perlson (1994) writes that: "These are the days in which only the symbols of consensus are broadcasted."

When asked 'what is Israeli culture?' the Israeli author Yehudith Katzir replied: "maybe this is banal, but for me, Israeli culture is the type of songs, which upon hearing them on the radio, one immediately associates them with the smell of the citrus blossom and with Memorial Day (Amir, 18, 1999). It can be noted that Katzir, like Honokh Hasson and others, combines in her characterization, the scent of the land with the songs. Uri Gordon, the former president of the Israeli Zionist Council, while describing the songs' themes, also connects between the songs and Memorial Day:

> "I was asked: why are the beautiful Israeli songs, the reflections of my homeland, the voices of the Gallilee and the Negev, only heard on days of memorial and of mourning? What sin did these wonderful melodies, and words by our poetic greats, commit, so that they are only heard in moments of sadness, and therefore have become

associated in our consciousness with grief and bereavement?" (Gordon, 1999)

Amitai Ne'aman explains (interview, 8.2.1994):

> "The Israeli Folksongs are broadcasted on Memorial Day, Holocaust Memorial day, or if, god forbid, a tragedy occurs. Then quiet songs are played, and they are usually the Israeli Folksongs. These songs help people, give them a feeling of belonging, and a chance to share their grief, even if they hear these songs when they are alone, they feel that they belong to this land."

Gil'ad Ben-Shakh., speaking as a radio personality, is of the opinion (interview, 27.2.1994) that the reason for using Israeli Folksongs on days of memorial and mourning is that "there is a 'togetherness' of the people during those periods, everyone is united, and these songs are more heart wrenching than the pop songs."

One of the most dramatic examples of this characteristic of Israeli Folksongs happened after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Youth and adults alike sat around candles in city squares and sang Israeli Folksongs. These songs were played for an entire week on the *Galei Zahal* and *Kol Israel* radio stations. Whoever ended up at Malkhei Yisrael Square[3] during that period will never forget the image of a people expressing their mourning through Israeli Folksongs.

Characterization of Israeli Folksongs by their writers and performers

Many, including some of those interviewed by the writer of this entry, consider Naomi Shemer's songs to be the archetypal Israeli Folksongs. Amitai Ne'aman, for example, sees Shemer's songs as so because "she refers to the landscapes that she was absorbed in." Eliahu Hacohen says that:

> "Israeli Folksongs are, in my opinion, the songs of the military bands and the songs of Naomi Shemer. Shemer's songs, with their Rahel like language and use of Israeli imagery, strike a chord with the listeners. She connects all of the different historical ages, from the Mishna and Bible to Benjamin of Tudela (in her song *Simanei Derekh*), to current topics."

[3] Translators note: the square where he was assassinated, has since been renamed Rabin Square.

Hanokh Hasson also explains that Naomi Shemer's songs are the archetypical Israeli Folksongs:

> "Naomi Shemer brings forth the scent of the land in a way that we, the inhabitants, smell it. In her texts she writes about nature and one can really feel it. She has written songs that are historical stories, or follow history, or are a response to history, and a response to what happens in Israel, the daily life, she has sketched real situations in a literary manner. This is the scent of the land and these are its folksongs."

An important attribute about Shemer's songs should be noted. That is that she has many songs that are not considered as Israeli Folksongs, as she herself has noted in the interview:

> "I do not think that I have written only within the framework of 'Israeli Folksongs,' and I certainly do not feel comfortable being in this framework… I have an entire section of satirical songs that that I wrote for Rivakaleh (Mikhaeli)' or songs like those of Moshe Beker… I admit, about half of my output falls into the category of Israeli Folksongs, and I am happy about that since that was my initial job, at least as I saw it: to create Folksongs. When I was six I was already accompanying communal singing events on the piano at Kineret. We had a big pile of folksongs and I learned how to accompany them all, so it was natural for me to add new songs to the stockpile, to write folksongs."

Bearing that in mind, the characterization of Israeli Folksongs according to their writers is not limited to Shemer. They are also recognized with the early composers who helped the genre take shape. This includes: David Zehavi, Nahum Nardi, Mordekhai Ze'ira, Yedidyah Admon, Daniel Samborski, Emmanuel Zamir and Mattityahu Shelem. It also includes composers who came later, such as: Moshe Vilenski, Sasha Argov, Yair Rozenblum, Sheike Paikov, Nurit Hirsh, and Nahum Heiman. When it comes to lyrics, Israeli Folksongs are characterized by poets such as Natan Alterman, Ya'akov Orland, Rahel, Yehiel Moher, and the songwriters, among them, Ehud Manor, Dudu Barak and Yoram Tohar-Lev.

In addition, the genre is also associated with its performers, and in a way this association is part of its characterization. It is common, for instance, to associate these

songs with the military music troupes (especially during their first period, from the 1950s until the 1970s). These songs are also associated with the singer Arik Einstein. He was both a famous rock singer and, at the same time, recorded many unique songs that are considered to be Israeli Folksongs. He also released a series of important albums titled *Eretz Yisrael Hayeshana Vehatova* [The Good Old Land-of-Israel], which added to his association with the genre. Other performers that are associated with Israeli Folksongs include Shoshana Damari,and the groups HaDudaim, HaParvarim, and HaGiva'tron.

Musical Definitions of the Genre

During the course of interviews conducted by the writer of this entry, musicians and interviewees with musical backgrounds were asked if they thought that the Israeli Folksong had specific musical traits, and if so, what were they. None of them could either give an unequivocal answer, or list defining musical traits. Most of the answers were given as broad and general statements. Gil Aldema is of the opinion that they are songs that are melodically easy to sing, are fitting for singing communally, have simple harmony, and are musically sing-able. Effi Netzer (a communal singing instructor, the originator of projecting the songs' lyrics on a screen, and composer of Israeli Folksongs, in an interview, 2.2.1994) claims that the songs sung at communal singing events, which he defines as Israeli Folksongs, are easy and not complicated to sing He mentions Moshe Vilensky's songs as an example. Amitai Ne'aman (a composer of Israeli Folksongs and a former musical director on *Kol Israel*) states that: "Israeli Folksongs, which are sung communally, are easy to sing, and differ from contemporary songs (of the end of the twentieth century) in that they are not rhythmically or harmonically complicated" (8.2.1994). Ehud Manor, in a similar manner, spoke of a "melodic flowing that comforts the soul." (28.3.1994) Nurit Hirsh expands a bit more on the essence of Israeli Folksongs:

> "The rhythms and syncopations, in my opinion, are what make it Israeli. In American music, for example, the melody is created over two chords that repeat themselves. The harmony in American music is not very fast. In typical Israeli music, on the other hand, the chords are constantly changing; there are harmonic changes, a progression. Sasha Argov's songs are an example of this.

Naomi Shemer characterized Israeli Folksongs as those that are played in the minor scale. In her opinion, "whatever is in a minor scale is ours, and whatever is in a major scale is not." However, in her song *Ahavat Poalei Binyan* (a song that is part of the communal singing repertoire, and hence, part of the Israeli Folksong repertoire), there are, as she say, parts in major and with a 'major feel,' but, she mentions, it was written during a time when that sound had a new and unique feel to it. Another song of Shemer's that is both considered an Israeli Folksong, and is in a major scale, is *Zemer Noded*. Gil Aldema claims that this song is an innovation, since it is considered to be the first Israeli song composed on a major scale. Shimo'n Cohen (composer, arranger and conductor) attempts to define the genre through negation when he talks about the music of Israel's young generation as an antithesis to the music of the Israeli Folksong: "The young generation's music has superficial harmonies. Complete songs are built on three or four chords. They circle around the same place and do not know how to develop chords. The music's melodic development is also superficial. The melodies of composers such as Zeirah [one of the Israeli Folksong's founding fathers, T.A.], on the other hand, develop, build, and calm down- they do not jump at once" (7.4.1994).

Yitzhak Edel, Michal Smoira, Herzl Shmueli, Menashe Ravina, and Bathja Bayer, the first Israeli musicologists to research the genre of Israeli Folksongs, attempted, during the 1960s and 1970s (Edel had already published on the subject in 1942), to define it. One attribute that stood out in their research was the musical scales of the songs. All of the researchers agree that in addition to the common scales of western music (major and minor) many of these songs are written in modal scales.

Prof. Herzl Shmueli, in his important and comprehensive research *HaZemer Hayisraeli* [The Israeli Song] (1971), connects between the contemporary Israeli song and the Torah cantillation. In his opinion, the songs that he researched are based on melodic patterns that are connected to cantellations of the Ashkenazi Nusah, such as Zarqa, Zarqa Hafukha, Merkha, Pashta, and Etnah. These patterns create a resemblance between the songs and a singular musical template that might be termed 'Israeli'. Other musical characteristics of the songs, that the aforementioned musicologists researched, are the double meter (either two or four quarter notes a measure) and the syncopations. Shmueli (1971) explained this through the vast

number of melodies that are a part of the Israeli song that either have a dancelike character, or were meant for dances.

As part of a research conducted by the author of this entry (Eliram, 2006), (the research was based on a representative sample of 170 songs), it was found that there are a number of shared musical characteristics that are held by songs considered to be Israeli Folksongs. The most conspicuous being the large percentage of songs composed in the minor scale. Additionally, a large number of melodic intonations were found that could constitute a basis for a database of the genre's typical intonations, and could connect between many songs. Shared rhythmic intonations were also found in many of the songs. Additionally, analyses of the songs' texts showed textual characteristics that connect between the songs. These shared characteristics, each time between a few of the songs, create a network of connections and similarities that put the songs into one family (according the terminology of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1953). It is possible to point to a 'family resemblance' inside the 'Israeli Folksongs family.'

In order to clarify the previous paragraph, the song *Korim Lanu Lalekhet* (words by Yossi Gamzu and music by Effi Netzer) will be used as an example, which according to this research, can be seen as the 'typical' Israeli song. The strophic unit of the song consists of ten lines, six for the verse, and four for the chorus. The rhyme scheme of the song is 1-3-5, 2-4-6 for the verse, and 1-3, 2-4 for the chorus. These textual characteristics are among the most common in the Israeli Folksong. The strophic unit contains eight different melodic lines, that is to say, almost every line of text has a different melodic line. The song is written in common time, and the music is march-like and with an energetic character, given to it by the syncopated rhythmic intonation that appears at the beginning of most of the melodic lines. The text deals with many common Israeli themes, such as the scenery- valleys, mountain ranges, the desert, roads, wild flowers; the gang of friends passing on the roads; the exclaiming "how wonderful my country is, to measure its beauty with the steps that I take across it." The melding of a relatively simple structure, which recollects a European folk song, with melodic and rhythmic intonations from the musical stockpile of the local culture, makes this song a shining example of the Israeli Folksong.

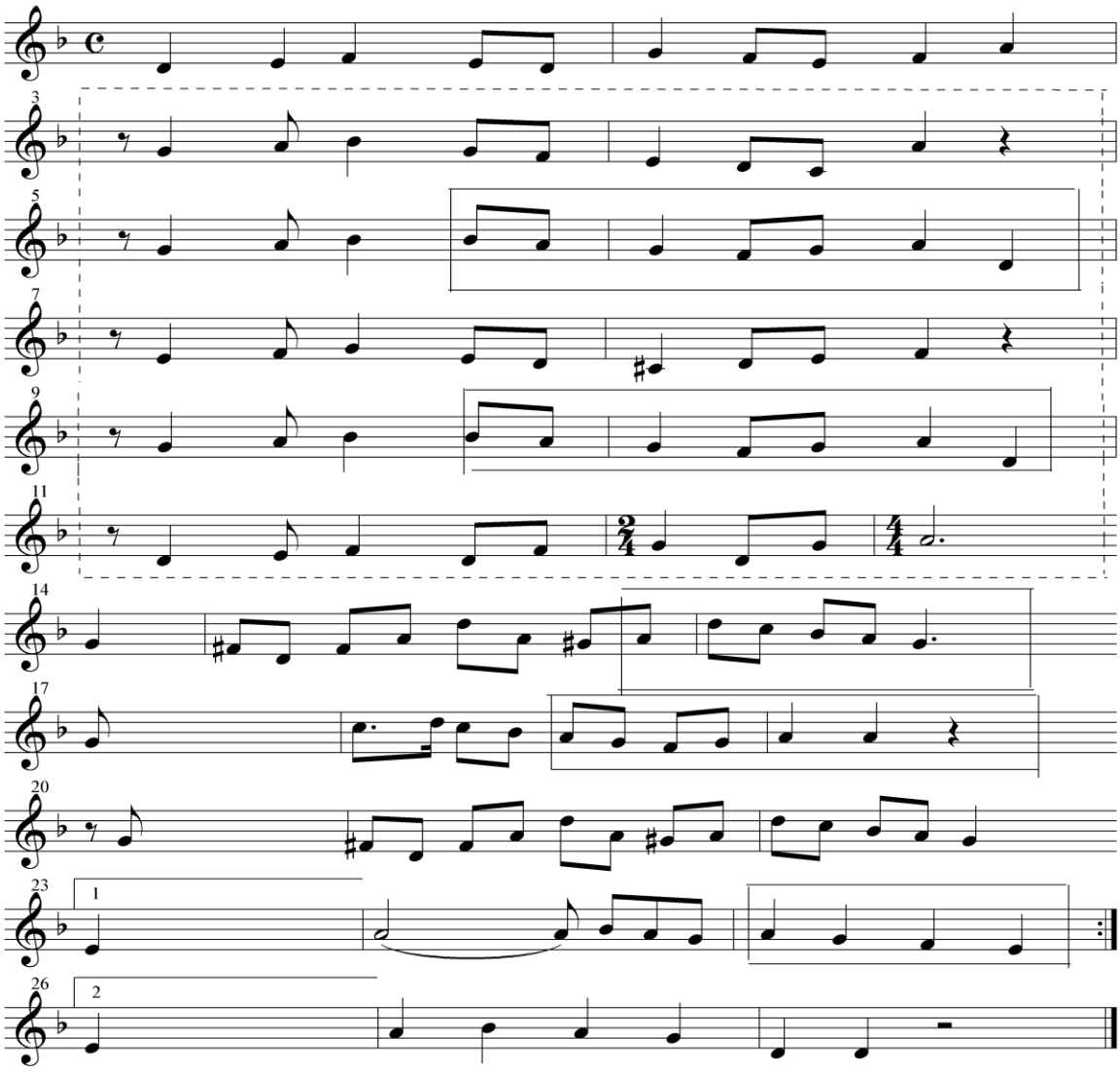
The song is presented on the next page. The typical melodic intonations of the Israeli Folksong are outlined with a solid line, and the repeated rhythmic intonation which is typical of the genre, is outlined with a broken line.

Korim Lanu Lalekhet

Words: Yossi Gamzu, Music: Effi Netzer

Pefrormance by: Shlishiyat Pikud Tzafon

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaUCKYG2q20



n	Transliteration	Original Hebrew version
marching trembles the roads ckpack increases its jolts. valley spreads before us ountain above it. is he who marched with us me them both- with his feet!	Shuv ro'em bakvishim mitz'adeinu Umagbir hatarmil tiltulav Shuv ha'emek nifras letzideinu Veharekhes nissah me'alav Akh ashrei shetza'ad 'imadenu Veyakhol lishneihem bereglav	שוב רועם בכבישים מצעדנו ומגביר התרמיל טלטוליו. שוב העמק נפרש לצידנו והרכס - נישא מעליו. אך אשרי שצעד עמדנו ויכול לשניהם – ברגליו!
e laughter of the wild flowers olling down the slopes tumn and the rains have fled. sand songs, in our water-bottles and in our , they are calling us to march!!!	*Chorus* Ki tzhok pirhei habar Kvar mitgalgel bamidronot Venassu hagshamim vehashalekhet Veelef mizmorim bameimiot ubagronot Korim, korim lanu lalekhet	פ.ח. כי צחוק פרחי-הבר כבר מתגלגל במדרונות ונסו הגשמים והשלכת. ואלף מזמורים, במימיות ובגרונות, קוראים, קוראים לנו ללכת!!!
efore, we drink the wonderful water corners. as before, the valleys' grass es with beauty. y country is seven times prettier measures its beauty with his footsteps!	*Verse* Shuv keaz kabirim hem hamayim Hagmu'im besitrei hanaiot Shuv kaaz meshag'im et ha'ain Hadshaim be'imkei geaiot Ki pi sheva artzi niflaah hi Lamoded et iofiah bifssiot	שוב, כאז, כבירים הם המים הגמועים בסתרי חניות שוב כאז, משגעים את העין הדשאים בעומקי-גאיות. כי פי-שבע ארצי נפלאה היא למודד את יופיה – בפסיעות! פ.ח. כי צחוק פרחי הבר...
lowery spring armies Negev and the Galilee. ky's innocence has turned blue *vreh* are passing through the roads gain and again the song- arch, and march and march!	*Verse* Shuv gam negba partzu gam galila Kol tzivot haaviv pirhahim Shuv tmimut hraki'a hikhila Vehahevre 'ovrim badrakhim Vehozrim 'al hazemer halila Veholkhim, veholkhim, veholkhim	שוב גם נגבה פרצו גם גלילה; כל צבאות-האביב, פרחחים! שוב תמימות-הרקיע הכחילה וה'חברה' עוברים בדרכים חוזרים על הזמר חלילה – והולכים,והולכים, הולכים! פ.ח. כי צחוק פרחי הבר...

Israeli Folksongs – Folk music or Popular Music?

One question that remains is: what is the place of Israeli Folksongs within the Israeli musical culture? Are they considered folksongs or popular songs? The accepted definition of a folksong is a song that was passed down orally through generations, whose composer is anonymous, whose context usually lies within a rural society, and was not composed for profit. Folksongs have usually been adopted by the people as an integral part of their folk tradition (Tagg 1982 ; Cohen & Katz 1977). Popular music, on the other hand, is defined as music that was composed by professionals whose identity is known, and is meant for mass consumption. It is usually printed, either on pages or in booklets, in the form of sheet music, or as recorded music (audio or video), with the purpose of marketing and profits. This kind of music is only possible in an industrial society, where music is commoditized, passed on through a merchant, and is subject to the laws of free trade (Hamm 1979; Tagg 1982). Motti Regev, a researcher of popular music, writes: "The songs exist and are known, first and foremost, as studio products. The acquaintance with them, the love for them, has to do with the general tone textures, the hue of the instruments, the uniqueness of the singer's voices, and the feelings that all of these broadcast." (Regev 1998, 1)

This definition of popular music places before us a dilemma, as most of the songs that are included in the genre of Israeli Folksongs, at least the later ones, were recorded in a studio, and are associated with a specific writer (like in the case of Naomi Shemer), or performer (like Arik Einstein). However, in many cases, especially with the earlier songs, they are not associated with a specific singer. Additionally, although they are associated with a specific sound (accordion, flute, guitar), it is not the sound that is characteristic of popular music: electric instruments, rhythmic bass, and a sometimes deafening intensity.

Edwin Seroussi (1991), attempts to settle the dilemma by stating that the genre of Israeli Folksongs lies on the border between folk and popular music. The songs that are considered in Israel to be folksongs, such as those that express the collective experience of creating a new Israeli society, with its important aspects of agriculture and security, are usually composed pieces whose composer is known. In contrast to that, the folksong is a song that rose up out of the people, whose composer's identity

is unknown, and has been passed on orally in different variants, whereas the Israeli songs that are recognized as folksongs have been printed years ago in different songbooks, some as far back as the early twentieth century. These songbooks are, in fact, a kind of sheet music, that is to say, music that is distributed through print - a characteristic of Anglo-American popular music from the first half of the twentieth century. However, despite the fact that these songs are printed, a substantial amount of Israeli Folksongs have been, and continue to be, passed on orally through communal singing. Therefore, the distribution methods of the Israeli Folksong have a characteristic of folksongs. Furthermore, many 'real' folksongs, whose composers are unknown, were printed in the same songbooks of the 'composed' songs, songs that were passed on orally, both before and after they were printed.

One of the difficulties in defining Israeli Folksongs as folksongs rises from the aforementioned fact that their composers are not anonymous. Bayer refers to this issue:

> "We have become accustomed to examine the Israeli song through one criterion, that being its supposed unconventional birth (that is to say its birth was *too* conventional for a folksong). This approach created feelings of inferiority and self denial […] We won't judge the song by its birth but rather by the way it acts in life. If, during its life, it acts like a folksong in older cultures, there should be no reason to deny it its title as folksong." (Bayer 1968, 74)

Smoira-Cohen (1968) also addresses this issue and thinks that a folksong does not have to come from unknown origins, as it is usually defined, but rather it has to express the thoughts and feelings of the people as an entirety. She bases this on Hans Moser (1935) who, in his musical lexicon, defines the folksong as a song that the people, or at least most of them, see as part of their pastime, and that "every person from the people, regardless of their class or education, can see in these songs a reflection of his emotions and of himself. The question of 'origins' is secondary when defining a folksong."

Titon (1992) treats the issue of defining a folksong during the modern period and is of the opinion that an important aspect of the folksong is not only the text and the melody but also the manner in which it is performed. In other words, the meaning of a folksong derives from the performance context and what it transmits when

performed. In Titon's opinion, memory plays an important role in folksongs, because it connects certain music with people, events, emotions, symbols, and ceremonies from the past.

During the modern era the defining of a song as a folksong is therefore not necessarily dependant on the anonymousness of the writer, but rather on different criteria, such as its contents, whether or not it reflects the feelings of the people, and the context of its performance. We will now expand on the Israeli Folksongs in accordance with these criteria.

The feelings of the people and their experiences

In the Israeli Folksong, one can find expressions of love towards the land, descriptions of the land's scenery, and references towards the working of the land, building it and protecting it. These are the songs that are sometimes called Homeland Songs (see, for example the names of the first three sections of Effi Netzer's book *Singing With Effi Netzer*). In these songs, especially the earlier ones, we find themes that reflect the people and their emotions. In many cases they express love towards the land, such as with the line, "We love you, oh homeland" (by Alterman, and Sambursky, from the song *Shir Boker*) or in the song *Lalekhet Shevi Acharayich* (by Manor and Hirsh). Many songs of landscapes and rural life can be found, such as *Kfari* (which begins with the line "On the shoulder of a blooming mountain, lies my small village," written by Bass and Sambursky) or Naomi Shemer's song *Hakol Patuah*, where places and landscapes of the Land-of-Israel are mentioned.

As was previously mentioned, some of the people interviewed by the writer of this entry attempted to describe the Israeli Folksongs by referring to Naomi Shemer's songs, because it is generally agreed that her songs can be seen as the archetype of the genre. Their explanations lie in the fact that the themes of her songs express the experience of the Land-of-Israel, and its history.

Some of the important criteria that characterize the Israeli Folksong, according to the interviewees, are the songs' connection to the history of the Jewish people, and that they reflect the current events and the feelings of the people. Vilenski discusses songs that are connected to events that occurred in the Land-of-Israel. As an example he brings forth the song *Shir Eres Negbi* (with his own melody, and with words by

Yehiel Moher), which was written in the 1950s, during the period in which there were confrontations with Palestinian Fedayeen. He thinks that the song's dealing with contemporary issues is what helped with its success and survival. Amitai Ne'eman mentions that the Israeli Folksongs reflect the geography of the country, and the history of the Yishuv and the state. Eliahu HaCohen says that most of the Israeli Folksongs are songs that mention events in the history of the people and of the state, and that they express the heartbeats of the public in regards to events and topics that preoccupied them.

An example can be found in songs that express both the pining for peace and the complexity in connection to security. These include Naomi Shemer's *Lu Yehi*, which was written during the height of the Yom Kippur War, and expresses the hope in the granting of the simple wishes of each person in the Land-of-Israel (an example is the line from the song: "If the harbinger stands in the doorway, may he bring good news").

As an example of Israeli Folksongs Gil'ad Ben-Shah mentions "songs that carry a burden with them, like *Giva'at Ha'tahmoshet*, *Hare'ut,* and *Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*" (27.2.1994).

NatanYonatan, the poet and the composer of numerous and noted Israeli Folksongs, describes them in this manner: "It is the abundant soul of our being here in this land. It is a mirror of time, of the soul, of our lives' story as people and as a nation." (From Heyman 1998, 4)

The Performance Context

The communal singing event, which is where the Israeli Folksongs were generally performed, is considered to be an important part of the definition of the genre. It began in Kibbutz dining halls, youth group activities, and Palmah Kumzitzes (campfires), and continues through the present in different frameworks, such as in singing clubs. The communal singing event is characterized by the collective performance of songs that are known to everyone, and the occasional learning of new songs that are taught orally. The singing instructor sits on the stage and musically accompanies the songs, but this is not a 'performance' of a solo artist, and there is no distinction between the instructor and the audience. The collective performance

creates a feeling of oral delivery of the songs, and therefore provides the genre its folk aspect.

We will finish the discussion on defining the genre of Israeli Folksongs as a folk genre with Motti Regev's statement:

> "The fact that the composers of the Israeli Folksongs are not anonymous, that there is vast amount of information in regards to the context of their performances, and that they are artifacts of contemporary history, created the initial debate regarding whether the songs were in fact folksongs or not. However, with the changes that occurred in Israeli music during the later decades, their position as folksongs became firmer, and almost unarguable. Along with the structure of the communal singing event, that afforded them a sense of an oral tradition, and with the fostering of them by the different cultural institutions, the songs became the holy repository of original 'Israeli Music', epitomizing the primeval Israeliness and Hebrewness" (Regev 2001, 845).

Israeli Folksongs as an 'Invented Tradition'

How is it that Bayer and Smoira-Cohen searched to define the Israeli Folksong as folk music, but base it on criteria that differ from the accepted criteria, such as the song's origin, and the anonymousness of the writer? Why can't this genre be treated with the regular and accepted standards that all other folk cultures are treated with? The answer can be found in the unique circumstances in which Israeli culture was formed.

Many nations' folk cultures were created over the course of hundreds of years, in a process that began when literacy was the privilege of the few - such as royalty and the clergy. For that reason, the culture that was created by the people had to be transferred orally and their creators were either anonymous or were forgotten as the years passed by. Israeli culture, on the other hand, developed in a completely different way. It was almost entirely created within the past century (and in essence still continues to be created), during a time when the modern techniques of preservation, such as recording and printing, were already in use and were accessible to all.

Furthermore, most of the consumers of culture were literate, so it could not be expected that it would only be transferred orally.

Additionally, many Israeli Folksongs were distributed by their creators, who would teach them at communal singing events. Some of the songs' creators are either still alive today or were until recently, and many of their songs were written under commission for specific events and occasions. Many songs were written by some of Hebrew culture's greatest artists, making the criterion of 'anonymous writers' quite hard to meet. In these aspects the Israeli Folksong widely differs from the folk cultures of other nations. The Israeli musical culture developed under the circumstances of a modern nation state in which there was an urgent need to develop a new culture that could unify a society of immigrants. In the case of Israel, this was an accelerated process with the goal of creating a canonical folk culture, which is defined by Philip Bohlman as: "… repertoires and forms of musical behavior constantly shaped by a community to express its cultural particularity and the characteristics that distinguish it as a social entity." (Bohlman 1988, 104)

The need of the Halutzim (early Zionist settlers) and the immigrants who came before the establishment of the state, for cultural particularity, and to be a social entity, was clear to them from the moment they arrived in Palestine. With every new wave of immigrants came new cultures, and, although, as Jews, they shared a religion and an ancient history, there was not enough common ground to form the basis of a new society. Because of that, there was a need for a new unifying culture that could help amalgamate them into one society.

Ibn Zohar commented on the subject:

> "In the case of the Aliyot, the decision to either fully or partially abandon their culture of origin, could not have led to the decision to adopt the culture of their country of destination because that culture did not have the status that could have made it a possible alternative, although there might have been some readiness to adopt certain components of it. In order to present an alternative to the culture of origin, in this case that of the Jews of Western Europe, it was therefore necessary to 'invent one." (Ibn-Zohar 1980, 171)

Hobsbaum's (1974) term 'invented tradition' is used to describe the creating of a canonized culture by way of revising history and without any continuity with the past. Such is the case with Israeli culture. Israel is a land of immigrants that arrived from different cultures starting from the end of the nineteenth century, and especially during the twentieth century. The immigration to Palestine, for the Eastern and Central European Jews, who arrived there at the beginning of the previous century, was an opportunity to conduct changes in their ways of life, by rejecting the image of the Diaspora Jew (the merchant, the idler, and the lazy scholar) they attempted to create the image of a 'new Jew' a 'Hebrew Jew'.

Music was an important, if the not the main, medium for the distribution of the 'Hebrew' ideology, as can be seen, for example, in the lullaby that begins with the line "*Numi Perah, Bni Mahmadi,"* (sleep now my darling flower) whose words were written by A.D. Lifshitz (the composer is unknown) at the beginning of the twentieth century:

First let me tell you, my darling	ראשית אגיד לך, מחמדי
That you are a Hebrew,	עברי כי הנך
Your name will make you recognized as a child of Israel	שמך יגיד לך ישראל
The origin of your race	גזע מחצבתך
Be what you may be	שמה תהיה מה שתהי
I will know that when you rest	אדע כי תנוח
It will be as a vine-grower, a farmer, or a shepherd	כורם, יוגב, רועה, איכר
But not as an idler.	אך לא רועה רוח.

This image of the 'New Hebrew" was based on the idea that connected the Halutzim with the Hebrews that resided in the Land of Cana'an during biblical times and worked the land as farmers and shepherds. Yael Zerubavel explains this: "The ancient times were looked at as the nation's golden age, the age that the Zionists wished to return to and discover the nation's lost roots: the spirit of the people, the

Hebrew identity and language, the homeland and the social, economic, and political structures of an independent nation." (Zerubavel 1995, 22-23)

The new ideas were expressed through the use of the Hebrew language (a 'new' language that is also the ancient language of their forefathers) with a Sephardic pronunciation (instead of the Yiddish language and the Ashkenazi pronunciation, which resembled the Judaism of the Diaspora), changing their traditional Jewish attire with other clothes, and changing their last names to sound more Hebrew. Ben-Gurion, for example, demanded people to change their last names, specifically those who represented the state. (Ibn-Zohar 1980)

The invention of a new musical culture (and dance culture, whose correspondence with Israeli Folksongs can be seen in the Communal Singing entry was one of the most important tasks that the creators of the new Hebrew culture took upon themselves, specifically those from the first waves of immigration. That is why, for example, they aimed to provide new and secular meanings for the Jewish holidays that were stripped of their religiousness, a meaning that will express the new Hebrew ideals. The new Israeli songs and dances were created for the celebrations of specific holidays on the Kibbutzim, and then were distributed throughout the land, among the different agricultural communities who were ready to receive the new cultural innovations. (Friedhaber 1984; Kadman 1960; Ashkenazi 1992)

It should be noted that the first Hebrew songs, which were written during the first waves of immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century, are part of the aforementioned 'imported' songs, that is to say, songs that were a synthesis of Hebrew texts with foreign melodies that the Halutzim brought with them from their countries of origin (Russia, the Ukraine, Poland, Germany, Romania, and Hungary). They also used melodies from other traditions such as Arabic and Cherkessian, to name a few. These melodies, some taken from family traditions of the Jewish immigrants, while some borrowed from their new surroundings, are part of the musical culture of Israeli Folksongs to this day.

A few reasons for the borrowing of melodies during the early immigrations can be given:

- At the beginning, there were no professional composers among the Halutzim, or even amateurs with enough knowledge to compose a song, so they were forced to 'borrow' songs.
- Hearing the well known melodies while in a strange and foreign land, gave them a feeling of solace that helped them overcome the troubles of adapting to the conditions of their new homeland.
- It is impossible to create something out of nothing. Because they could not find a culture in the Land-of-Israel that could be fully adopted, they were forced to take elements from the old culture in order to build the new one.

In order to explain their process of adaptation to the new land, we will use terms borrowed from the psychologist Jean Piaget. The terms, that Piaget used to explain the process of cognitive development, are assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation means the merging of a new object into an existing scheme while accommodation is the tendency of the individual to adapt to a new object by way of changing existing action schemes in order for them to match the new object. While adapting to the new land and ideologies, the Halutzim assimilated new words, new meanings (the new Hebrew language), and new themes, to existing melodies (or to existing traditional holidays). At the same time they created a new ideology and accommodated themselves to their new situation, by creating melodies and new holidays.

An example of this adaptation process can be found in the way in which the holiday of Passover was celebrated in settlements such as the Kibbutzim. The holiday, which is generally a religious holiday, took on a new meaning so that it came to represent the freedom from the Diaspora. Additionally, it became a holiday that represents the beginning of spring, and even acquired the nick-name, the Spring Holiday (this meaning appears in the bible but was never accentuated until this point). This other name reflects the connection between the 'New Hebrew' and nature. New songs and dances with themes of freedom, liberty, and spring were written. In some Kibbutzim special Passover Haggadot were written, which were similar to standard

Haggadot (the use of an existing scheme), but with new contents that reflect the new lifestyle of the Halutzim (fitting an existing scheme to a new situation).

Hirshberg explains the creation of the Hebrew folksong:

> "The Hebrew folksong in the Land-of-Israel is a clear example of a process of turning songs into a folk culture, and its important place in the lives of the nation and the state. It is a mixture - or synthesis - of different influences and reflects the Israeli culture as Kibbutz Galuyot (the gathering of the Diaspora), and as a structure for different and sometimes contradicting tendencies. On the one hand, Russian folk and Hassidic melodies, and on the other hand, melodies of the Sephardic Jews and the fitting of texts to Arabic tunes, and finally, songs that were a synthesis of styles [that laid the base to the original Land-of-Israel songs]" (Hirshberg 1981, 557)

During a lecture on the Israeli Folksongs (July 1994) Hirshberg explains the reasons behind the genre's eclecticism:

> "There was no local folk music in the Land-of-Israel, so a new one had to be created. Folk music had to be created quickly, and it needed to be shaped in a way that it will perform a certain ideological mission. The immigrants brought their folk songs, and as immigrants who were traumatized, the music acted as a means to soften the blow of immigration. It was convenient to sing Russian and Yiddish songs, in order to reminisce the past, and the goal of the leaders was to deal with that heritage. One way was to translate the Russian songs into Hebrew. To this songs that were created in Israel were added that intentionally tried not to be Russian, but rather, looked for an oriental connection, to create a local style. This goal was partially achieved. For example, on the one hand, there was Yedidya Admon's song *Shir Hagamal* or *Gamal Gamali* that the composer A.U. Boscovich described as the epitome of the original Israeli song, and on the other hand, Russian romance songs like Zeirah's *Hayu Leilot* were written during that period, so that it was impossible to escape the Russian influence, even until the present day. The work songs were Arabic, but love songs were always Russian."

Bohlman uses Claude Levi-Strauss' term bricolage in order to describe the phenomenon of the creation of Israeli culture. Bricolage means a collection of things that only when put together create a whole. In his opinion, a bricolage can be well planned out, or it can fit together in a more or less random manner. The body of music known as the Israeli Folksong is a collection of songs that originate in different countries where the immigrants came from, from Middle Eastern traditions that existed in Palestine, and from songs that were composed in the Land-of-Israel. This mixture of sources is what creates the unique body of Israeli Folksongs (Bohlman 1988).

In conclusion, Israeli Folksongs can be seen as a unique model of an 'invented tradition'; Folksongs of the twentieth century. This model matches the tendencies of the modern nationalistic movements to create their traditions, which constitute a basis for a national identity.

To summarize this discussion on the definitions of Israeli Folksongs, I would like to provide the words of Dudu Barak, a poet and lyricist of Israeli Folksongs, and who used to be a musical editor of *Kol Israel* (in an interview, 9.2.1994). His attempt to define the genre summarizes all of the above in a unique manner:

> "When we, the editors on the radio, say Israeli Folksongs, we mean what I would call folk or country [the English words appear in the original quotation, translator] music, our very own songs of the earth, songs that we could sing on days of mourning, holidays, the Sabbath, classroom assemblies, parties, with Saraleh Sharon and Effi Netzer, songs of togetherness, songs that usually deal with the collective and not the individual… patriotic songs, our war songs, those are the songs of our land. It is our anthems, like Naomi Shemer's *Mahar, Lu Yehi, Al Kol Ele*, Ehud Manor's *Lalekhet Shevi Aharav*, and *BaShana Habaa*, Yoram Tohar-Lev's *Giv'at Hathmoshet, Shir LaShalom* by Ya'akov Rotblit, the songs *Prahim Bakaneh, Eretz Yisrael Yaffa, Shalom 'Al Yisrael*. These are songs of glorification, a kind of heroism, a feeling of elevation and height that stems from standing before a flag and a symbol. Israeli Folksongs are songs that are sung on holidays and commemorative occasions that express the collective. They are songs that make one

rejoice, and are easy to sing and to connect to when many are singing, that connects to everyone, and has something collective about it. The images that represent Israeli Folksongs are usually songs of the earth, songs that are connected to the roots, to something that unites people."

Revival of Israeli Folksongs and Changes in the Genre's Content

The Israeli Folksongs are a subcategory within the system of popular music. The songs are dynamic and develop over time because of changes that are constantly occurring around them. That is to say, the corpus of songs changes over time and songs are entered into it, and taken out of it by the trendsetters of Israeli society. On the one hand there are songs that were part of the corpus thirty and forty years ago (like the song *Eretz Israel* by David Shimoni and Pua Greenshpon), which are barely known today and are only played on special nostalgia broadcasts (like those of Nahum Heiman's current show on *Reshet Gimmel* or that of the late Netivah Ben-Yehuda). On the other hand, there are songs that have been entered into the genre whose origin is in a different subcategory of popular music, such as Middle Eastern and Mediterranean songs. Some examples of those are Avihu Medina's *HaPerah BeGani*, and Ya'akov Gil'ad and Yehuda Poliker's *Halon Layam HaTikhon*. Another example is the song *Shabehi Yerushalayim* by Avihu Medina that is most commonly recognized with the songs of the Middle Eastern-Mediterranean genre. It was picked up into the Israeli Folksongs because of its biblical text that mentions Jerusalem, an important issue even in the secular Israeli Folksongs.

The dynamism of the Israeli Folksong's corpus derives from a variety of influences whose origins lie in the changes that occurred in the social networks that supported it, and in the powers that decided its style. Up until the creation of the State of Israel and into the first years of its existence, there were two kinds of social dynamics that influenced the shaping of the Israeli Folksongs: 'dictated,' or 'initiated,' or 'conscripted' dynamics, compared to 'natural' dynamics. Dictated dynamics was the process of songs being entered into the corpus because of edicts handed down by institutional factors, such as the army (songs of the military bands) or the Histadrut workers union (who ordered and paid for songs from the best composers). The repertoire of dictated songs was created by the trendsetters of the developing culture in Israeli society, with the goal of creating a new folk culture as quickly as possible.

Before us lies a musical and cultural system that goes through constant changes. Some of its foundations are permanent while others are flexible. Parallel to the songs that were 'artificially entered' into the corpus, there was also a natural dynamism of songs that changed within the corpus; songs that entered without the initiative of institutional factors. The process occurred by individuals such as singing teachers, communal singing instructors, community cultural coordinators, youth group counselors, singing enthusiasts who translated and Hebraised songs, and composers who taught their songs at communal singing workshops. At the same time, there were songs that naturally left the corpus, songs that had become outdated, or were not supported by the consumers. In the present day, the factors that decide the corpus of Israeli Folksongs are the media and the communal singing along with the folk-dancing instructors, who use Israeli Folksongs as they need them, and add new songs when needed. The genre continues to change, always in a slow change. The new songs that enter the corpus are usually the ones that resemble existing ones, songs that do not create a cognitive dissonance between them and the songs that are already in the corpus of Israeli Folksongs.

Conclusion

The genre of Israeli Folksongs amalgamates within it songs whose themes are about the land, its scenery and security; mostly songs that do not center on the individual. Israeli Folksongs deal mostly with themes that the majority of the Jewish population of Israel (not including the Ultra-Orthodox, who usually have less of a connection to the land), can identify with, and their themes are usually unique to the Land-of-Israel. The typical performance setting of this genre is at the communal singing event that is held in auditoriums. The audience is generally comprised of adults who were born in the Land-of-Israel, many of whom were active in ideological youth movements. This audience feels a sense of nostalgia towards their youth movements and Kumzitz days (Kumzitz- a communal campfire where participants sit around and sing and tell stories), a sense of nostalgia towards the "togetherness" of the early days of the country, and a wish to feel that "togetherness" again, during the present time. The genre of Israeli Folksongs helps fulfill that feeling. Recently, a phenomenon of alternative communal singing events, whose main audience is comprised of youth have sprouted, conducted in more suitable spaces for young people, usually around tables.

In the media, these songs are generally used when there is a need for songs that portray a consensus, on national holidays such as Memorial Days, and during times of conflict and national disasters. These songs hold a few different functions, including, enforcing a feeling of "togetherness" and mutual strengthening, nostalgia, fondly remembering the past, a replacement for prayers, and a feeling of connectedness to the Land-of-Israel and its history. In other words, its main function can be seen as a kind of secular prayer that creates a connection to the Israeli ethos.

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