

שיר תקווה



SONG OF HOPE

ESTER RADA

BECAUSE OF MY BROTHERS AND FRIENDS ♦ למען אחיי ורעיי

Introduction

Israeli Music, Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut

Music has long held a place in Israel's public sphere, from the songs of the Levi'ites on the Temple steps in ancient Jerusalem to the Zionist songs of the early pioneers who sang and danced together on the Kibbutz and in the Moshav. Since the War of Independence, each successive era has added new tunes to the national songbook.

Music plays a central role in setting the tone for the Israeli national holidays. As we commemorate Yom HaZikaron each year, we are familiar with the national soundtrack of somber and meaningful songs that has developed over the decades. As the day transitions into Yom HaAtzmaut, the music changes to reflect the celebratory mood. Old Israeli folk music has made a comeback and is joined by the latest trends in pop and hip hop, as Israel's most famous singers and bands perform at special concerts across the country.

This year, in the aftermath of October 7th, music has taken on a significant role in our nation's ongoing response to its trauma. Some new songs express sadness, loss and pain, while others try to motivate the nation in hopes of better days. Old songs are revisited as we look back nostalgically toward simpler times. Thus, we are forming a new playlist which will be forever associated with this war.

The Role of the Musician

At first, musicians were challenged by how to respond to the atrocities. Was there even a place for music in a post-October 7th world? Out of our shock, we discovered that when we run out of words, we often turn to sounds – to the songs that can move us and speak on our behalf at times when it is most necessary. Singers and bands lifted the national mood by traveling across the country to perform for soldiers at army bases and evacuated families at hotels and held intimate concerts for the general public. As time went by, more and more musicians began to express their feelings, writing songs that have embedded themselves in Israeli culture and contributing to the healing process, which is still ongoing. Inadvertently, Israeli musicians have found new influence as symbols of something beyond their art or fame.

In Beit Avi Chai's new online series, Shir Tikvah, which means "Song of Hope", Israeli composers and musicians are invited to share their performance of songs that have become part of their personal soundtrack, providing them with inspiration during these difficult days of war and

trauma. Each episode includes an acoustic performance and an intimate discussion about the comfort and hope that music can offer. The artists were asked to perform covers; to choose songs that were not originally their own. Each video can act as a trigger for engaging with our own feelings and thoughts.

As we approach Israel's national holidays this year, we strive to create meaningful spaces for our students and for ourselves, to explore our new reality. This educator's guide is intended as a resource for teachers to help their students process this new reality in ways that are relatable and meaningful.

The activity guide aims to accomplish this through thoughtful consideration of the role of music during this time, with the understanding that:

- Music can help shape and reflect our identity
- Music can bring people together

Goals

- Appreciate the power of music as something that both shapes and reflects our identity.
- Consider how music can unite people.
- Understand the role of music as part of the healing process in the wake of October 7th.

Materials

- Computer with projector or screen.
- Journals, notebook, or paper and writing implement.
- Printed posters of the quotes in Appendix A, placed in different parts of the room.
- Printed poster of the quote in Appendix B (optional).
- Sticky notes for each student.

Note to Facilitator:

Scripts for facilitators are suggestions only. Please make sure to adjust any language or content for the needs of your class.

Additional themes and activity suggestions can be found at the end of this outline.

The recommended time for this activity is 50-60 minutes.

LESSON OUTLINE

Opening (5 minutes)

This year, as we prepare for Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut, we can't help but notice the very different atmosphere that surrounds us. We have witnessed how our world can be forever altered in the blink of an eye. Though everything is fresh and the pain and memories are still raw, we pray that the situation will quickly change for the better.

This activity is built around one of the videos created for Beit Avichai's project "Shir Tikvah", which invited Israeli musicians to share songs that provided them with inspiration during these difficult days of war and trauma. We are going to watch an interview with Ester Rada, a well-known Israeli artist, as she discusses her feelings and thoughts since the war broke out.

The title of the song we are about to hear is "L'Ma'an Achai v'Re'ai", which means "For All My Brothers and Friends". Ester Rada chose this song for a number of reasons, about which we will learn more as we watch her interview. The title clearly draws our attention to the idea of family and friendship.

What ideas and feelings do you associate with the words "family" and "friends"?

- ❓ When Ester Rada talks about "family" and the war in Israel, what are the different "families" you think she refers to?
- ❓ In what ways do you think families in Israel have been affected by the war?

Video - Ester Rada sings “L'Ma'an Achai v'Re'ai” by Shlomo Carlebach



Play the [interview and performance](#) (8 mins)

Exploration - Think-Pair-Share (15 mins)

Before we begin, I'd love to hear your initial thoughts about the video.

- ? What touched you about this video?
- ? How did Ester Rada's performance of the song make you feel?
- ? Was there anything that Ester shared that surprised you?

[Allow a few minutes for students to share with the class]

Ester Rada's first words in the interview are: “Suddenly we are a united people.”

It is important to understand that up until October 7th, Israeli society was fragmented and divided by arguments and disagreements over politics and power.

In the immediate aftermath of the Hamas attack, the slogan “Yachad N'Natse'ach” - together we will win - became the key message in the media, in the streets, the army, and even among politicians. Israeli society came together in so many ways, as ideologies and politics were pushed aside. Hundreds of thousands of people were called up to fight in the IDF with a clear and shared goal. Many people galvanized to help provide resources, food, equipment, and support for those displaced from the South or the Northern border, as well as for soldiers, bereaved families, and families of the hostages.

Let's explore this concept of unity. I will present you with three questions [also write them on the board]. Take two minutes to think quietly about each of these questions; you may wish to jot your thoughts down in your notebook. When I give you the signal, turn to the person next to you and share your thoughts with each other.

- ? In what ways has your community come together since October 7th?
- ? What have you discovered about Jewish unity around the world and in Israel?
- ? Ester Rada chose a song that is based on two verses from the Tanakh. Do you think the Tanakh is a symbol of Jewish unity? Why or why not?

Activity and Discussion - Jewish Identity (22 mins)

Ester Rada's interview leaves us with a lot to think about. Before we begin, take a minute to jot down the first five words that come to mind when I ask you:

- **Who are you?** [Allow one minute for students to write their responses.]

Throughout this part of the lesson, we will explore how Ester Rada relates to her own identity. I have posted two quotes from this interview [Appendix A]. Read each quote, and then stand next to the quote you would like to discuss. We will break into small groups of 3-4 people for a small group discussion.

[Alternatively, the facilitator may assign the students into groups and assign each group one of the quotes to discuss. Hand each group a copy of the quote and the discussion questions. Allow 8-10 minutes for discussion, and then regroup as a class and have them share a few ideas.]

[Introduce class discussion] We are going to focus on one interesting part of Ester Rada's interview where she talks about choosing to be Jewish.

- ❓ **To what extent is our Jewishness something that we define for ourselves?**
- ❓ **Has your Jewish identity changed since October 7th? If so, in what ways?**

Conclusion (10 mins)

Facilitator: Ester Rada begins her concerts abroad with this message:

[Share the quotation in Appendix B]

“The first thing I always did on stage was to say: I came here from Israel and I came here to bring you love.”

- What do you think of the way Ester Rada begins her concerts? How does this message make you feel? Type your answer in our class [mentimeter](#).

This quote is a powerful expression of personal identity and unity. Ester Rada uses her music to bring love to people, bridging gaps and bringing people together. Like Ester Rada, we each have many aspects to our own identities, as you wrote at the very beginning of our lesson today.

? In what ways can music impact our identities?

? In what ways can music contribute to bringing unity or hope to the world?

You have each been given a sticky note. In light of these questions, write a sentence that begins with the words "Music can..." on your sticky note and place it on the wall in the classroom. After you have posted your note, take a walk around and look at your classmates' notes. Choose one note that resonates with you and stand next to it.

[Allow some students to share their selection and why they chose it.]

Let us end this activity by reflecting on the lyrics of the song that are taken from the book of Tehilim (Psalms). The context of the song takes us back thousands of years, to the time when the Temple still existed and Jews from Israel and around the world would make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem on high holidays. As the Jews would leave Jerusalem to return to their homes around the world, they would bless the people of Israel. Their prayer represents the fundamental connection among Jews.

Take a minute to write down a blessing you wish to send out to a fellow 'brother' or 'sister' from near or far.

APPENDIX A

“After October 7 something became very clear to me that I am first and foremost a Jew. There is nowhere to escape. This is who I am”

Ester Rada

Key Questions:

- Ester Rada considered herself a “citizen of the world” more than a Jew. Now she feels her Jewishness comes first. What do you think caused this shift?
- Why does she use the word “escape”? What images does it conjure?
- How do you feel about Ester's quote?

“Abroad no one knew that I was Jewish. No one could guess. My looks are quite deceiving. They did know I was Israeli. There were demonstrations against me. More than a few times they tried to ban my performances”

Ester Rada

Key Questions:

- People at her concerts seemed to draw a line between her Jewishness and her Israeli-ness. What do you think is the relationship between the two?
- What impact do you think these experiences abroad may have had on how Ester perceived her identity?

APPENDIX B

“The first thing I always did on stage was to say: I came here from Israel and I came here to bring you love”

Ester Rada

APPENDIX C

Additional Activity Suggestions

1. Identity Webs

Materials: Paper, Markers/Pens [Option: Use the website [mindmeister](https://www.mindmeister.com)]

Ask each person in the group to write their name in a box in the middle of their paper.

Brainstorm together, or separately, different aspects of identity. Write their associations on their web.

Some suggested categories could be: Jewish identity, role in the family, hobbies, personality traits, physical descriptions, background, beliefs, etc.

Option: Students can contribute positive adjectives to their friends' identity webs.

2. Text Study Activity

We can continue engaging with the song chosen by Ester Rada by looking at the lyrics in translation. The lyrics are the last two verses from Psalms chapter 122. A copy of this chapter can be found below.

Educators may choose to study the text as a group or in Chevruta pairings and analyze its meaning with some guided questions, for example:

- This psalm portrays a specific time and place in Jewish history. Describe what the scene might look and feel like in your own words.
- What do you think is the main theme of the psalm?
- Why do you think the last two verses were chosen to be set to music? What makes these verses stand out?
- In what ways does music elevate or otherwise impact these verses?

Alternatively, students can be asked to think of an additional “verse” to add to the psalm that reflects the themes in their own words.

APPENDIX D

TEHILLIM CHAPTER 122

1. A song of ascents. Of David. I rejoiced when they said to me, "We are going to the House of the LORD."
 2. Our feet stood inside your gates, O Jerusalem,
 3. Jerusalem built up, a city knit together,
 4. to which tribes would make pilgrimage, —as was enjoined upon Israel— the tribes of the LORD.
 5. to praise the name of the LORD. There the thrones of judgment stood, thrones of the house of David.
 6. Pray for the well-being of Jerusalem;
 7. "May those who love you be at peace. May there be well-being within your ramparts, peace in your citadels."
 8. For the sake of my kin and friends, I pray for your well-being;
 9. for the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I seek your good.
- א. שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד שְׂמַחְתִּי בְּאִמְרֵי לִי
בֵּית יְהוָה נִלְךְ
- ב. עַמְדוֹת הָיוּ רַגְלֵינוּ בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ יְרוּשָׁלַם
- ג. יְרוּשָׁלַם הַבְּנוּיָה כְּעִיר שְׂחַבְרָה לָהּ יַחְדָּו
- ד. שָׁשִׂים עָלוּ שַׁבְּטִים שַׁבְּטֵי יְהוָה עֲדוֹת
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַדוֹת לְשֵׁם יְהוָה
- ה. כִּי שָׁמָּה יָשְׁבוּ כְּסֵאוֹת לְמִשְׁפַּט כְּסֵאוֹת
לְבֵּית דָּוִד
- ו. שְׁאַלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם וְשְׁלִיֹו אֶהְבִּיךָ
- ז. יְהִי שְׁלוֹם בְּחִילְךָ שְׁלוֹה בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיךָ
- ח. לְמַעַן אַחִי וְרַעִי אֲדַבְּרָה נָא שְׁלוֹם בְּךָ
- ט. לְמַעַן בֵּית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲבַקֶּשׂה טוֹב לְךָ: