

## Israeli Music and Irrepressible Hope

Daniel Hartman, head of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Israel, wrote recently:

“As Israelis we live in a macabre reality. Together with our well-deserved sense of strength, prosperity, and success, we know that danger and instability constantly threaten us. Be it Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Iranians in Syria, or lone wolf Palestinian terrorists, we live with the ever-present sense that somebody wants to kill us. Someone sees our destruction as their principal mission. I don’t know of any other Western democracy whose citizens have to live with this consciousness.”

And nonetheless, under this gruesome pressure, Israel thrives. The music of a country speaks mountains about its current state and future aspirations. If we look at famous Israeli songs over the past decades, we see the yearning for good times, the never giving up on hope. All seventy years of Israel’s existence has been challenged, if not by Palestinians, then by the surrounding countries. But the hope and belief in something better has never faded from them.

*BaShana Ha’Ba’ah* is a song from 1970.

Next year we will sit on the porch and count migrating birds.

Children on vacation will play catch between the house and the fields.

You will yet see, you will yet see, how good it will be in the year just ahead.

Red grapes will ripen till the evening, and will be served chilled to the table.

And languid winds will carry to the crossroads old newspapers and a cloud.

You will yet see, you will yet see, how good it will be next year.

Next year we will spread out our hands towards the radiant light.

A white heron like a light will spread her wings and within them the sun will rise.

You will yet see, you will yet see, how good it will be in the year just ahead.

The Eurovision Song of Year in 1979 was an Israeli song by Gali Atari & Milk and Honey, *Hallelujah*

Hallelujah, sing a song  
Hallelujah, we'll follow along  
With a simple word, a single word  
We bless the sky, the tree, the bird  
And we fill our heart with joy, Hallelujah

Hallelujah, sounds of love  
Hallelujah, the sunshine above  
Hallelujah, the bells will go ringin'  
And dingin' from dawn till night, Hallelujah

Hallelujah, day by day  
Hallelujah, don't throw it away  
Fly and spread your wings, have a try  
Be free again like a butterfly  
Come along and sing with us, Hallelujah

*Chai* became a popular song in 1983 when it was sung by Ofra Haza:

Listen, my brothers, I'm still alive  
And my two eyes are still raised to the light  
Many are my thorns, but also my flowers  
And ahead of me are years too numerous to count  
I ask and I pray  
It's good that hope was not yet lost

A psalm passes from generation to generation  
Like a spring from long ago, and on to eternity  
I ask and I pray  
It's good that hope was not yet lost

Chorus:  
Alive, alive, alive - Yes, I'm still alive!

This is the song which grandfather  
Sang yesterday to father  
And today I [sing]  
I'm still alive, alive, alive  
The people of Israel live  
This is the song which grandfather  
Sang yesterday to father  
And today I [sing]!

Israeli Rock Band Ethnix ~2008: *Yihyeh Lanu Tov*

We'll be doing well  
we'll be doing well  
if we only raise  
a small prayer  
to the sky

Now that it is difficult for me  
it's easier to become distant  
the joy is arriving to all of us  
and if you play for me  
maybe the sorrow will depart  
love is our path

We'll be doing well...

The infallible belief in a better day persists in the Israeli spirit. Perhaps this hope is in our DNA, enabling our people to overcome the greatest difficulties. It's our greatest wish that things will get better for all the people, Jews, Arabs, Christians and others living in Israel and the territories; with all the setbacks, the light of hope still burns.