



From Freedom to Independence

Stations of Israeli Culture along the Path from Pesach to Independence Day

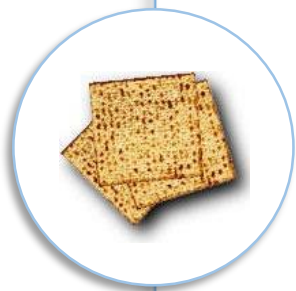
The annual cycle of Jewish holidays naturally does not follow a chronological order. The Jewish calendar places festivals and commemorative days that have their origins in the Bible, in post-Biblical history, and in modern times alongside each other.

The contrasts and combinations of the Jewish calendar can be exciting for young people learning about their heritage. It also provides an opportunity to deepen and expand our understanding of the meaning of each festival or special day by examining it alongside others being celebrated and commemorated in close proximity. The ancient Sages themselves took this approach when they chose four weekly Torah portions to be read from Purim through to Pesach.

Today, a similar opportunity is created by the proximity between Pesach and three modern commemorative days that follow the ancient festival: Holocaust Memorial Day, the Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers, and Independence Day. Based on the findings of a survey by Domim congregations in the Diaspora, we invite you here to embark on a **virtual journey from the Festival of Freedom (Pesach) through to Independence Day, marked by songs and readings from Jewish and Israeli culture.**



Shai Charka's cartoon "Nine Days" provides an accurate and witty description of the changing mood in Israel over the nine-day period that begins with Holocaust Memorial Day and ends with the Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers, and immediately after – Independence Day. Reform congregations in Israel refer to this period as "Revival Week" (Shvu'a Tkuma).



Pesach

פסח

Avadim Haiyinu

Traditional

עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ, הָיִינוּ,
עַתָּה בְּנֵי חוֹרִין, בְּנֵי חוֹרִין.
עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ,
עַתָּה, עַתָּה בְּנֵי חוֹרִין, בְּנֵי חוֹרִין

Avadim hayינו, hayינו
Ata bney chorin, bney chorin

We were slaves –
Now we are free people.

“...Who, then, is free? The creative man who is not carried away by the streams of necessity, who is not enchained by processes, who is not enslaved to circumstances. We are free at rare moments. Most of the time we are driven by a process; we submit to the power of inherited qualities of character or to the force of external circumstances. Freedom is not a continual state of man [...] We are all endowed with the potentiality of freedom. In actuality, however, we only act freely in rare creative moments.”

**Based on Abraham Joshua Heschel,
Between God and Man**

“The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets’ (Exodus 32:16). Do not read ‘engraved’ [charut] but rather ‘freedom’ [cherut], for anyone who engages in Torah is a free person to themselves.”

Avot d’Rabbi Nathan 2:3



Slaves / Berry Sakharof

By the river of aspirin we sat down
In familiar places
Not hearing, not seeing
As if we were air
The film will soon be over
Reality looms
The picture is blurred
And the sound not clear

Because we are all slaves
Even if we have 'sort of kind of'
Opening mouths wide
And waiting for the next pleasure.
We are all someone's addiction
That now asks you to feel
Open mouths wide
And wait for the next dose.

Shop windows are pretty here
Everything's for sale
We are also hung up
With exchange notes.
So what do we do with this anger?
What about the envy?
Everyone wants to be free -
But from what, Lord, from what?

Because we are all slaves...



עֶבְדִּים / ברי סחרוף

על נהר אַסְפִּירִין יִשְׁבְּנוּ
בְּמִקְוֹמוֹת הַמְּכֻרִים
לא שׁוֹמְעִים לא רֹאִים
כְּאִלּוּ אֲנַחְנוּ אֲוִיר
עוֹד מְעַט יִגְמַר הַסֵּרֵט
בְּקֶרֶב הַמְּצִיאוֹת
הַתְּמוֹנָה מְטֻשָּׁטֶשֶׁת
וְהַצִּלִּיל לֹא בְרוּר

כִּי כָלָנוּ עֶבְדִּים אֶפְלוּ
שְׁיֵשׁ לָנוּ 'כְּנֹה כְּאֵלֹה'
פּוֹתְחִים פֹּה גְדוֹל
וּמְחַכִּים לְעֵנֶג הַבָּא.
כָּלָנוּ מְכַוְרִים שָׁל מִיִּשְׁהוּ
שְׁמֻבְקֵשׁ עֵכָשׁ תְּרַגֵּישׁוּ
פּוֹתְחִים פֹּה גְדוֹל
וּמְחַכִּים לְמָנָה הַבָּאָה.

חֲלוֹנוֹת רְאִוּהָ יָפִים פֹּה
זֶה הַכֵּל לְמִכִּירָה
גַּם אֲנַחְנוּ תְּלוּיִים
עִם פְּתִיקֵי הַחֲלָפָה.
אֲזוּ מָה נַעֲשֶׂה עִם הַכֶּעַס הַזֶּה?
מָה יִהְיֶה עִם הַקִּנְיָאָה?
כֵּלָם רוֹצִים לְהִיּוֹת חֻפְשִׁים -
אֲבָל מִמָּה אֱלֹהִים, מִמָּה?

כָּלָנוּ עֶבְדִּים...

Berry Sakharof is an Israeli rock singer who was particularly popular during the 1990s. His song *Slaves* was released in 1998. Sakharof opens with a clear allusion to the ancient sources – “By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept,” creating an association with the period after the destruction of the Temple. However, he then goes on to connect the theme of slavery to the modern phenomenon of intensive consumerism, which he feels enslaves people in today’s world.

{ How would Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and the author
of Avot d'Rabbi Natan feel about Sakharof's song?
Is the fact that Sakharof engages in creative activity in itself
an example of release from slavery? }



Holocaust Memorial Day

יום הזיכרון לשואה ולגבורה

The Partisans' Song

Melody (and original Yiddish lyrics): Shimon Yisraeli
Hebrew Lyrics: Avraham Shlonsky



Never say - this is my final road,
Though leaden skies may cover over days of blue.
As the hour that we longed for is so near,
Our step beats out the message: we are here!

[...]

שיר הפרטיזנים

מילים (יידיש) ולחן : שמעון ישראל
תרגום עברי : אברהם שלונסקי

אַל נאָ תאמר – הנה דרכי האחרונה
את אור היום הסתירו שמי העננה
זה יום נכספנו לו עוד יעל ויבוא
ומצעדנו עוד ירעים: אנחנו פה

[...]

The debate concerning the date and content of Holocaust Memorial Day

In the early 1950s, soon after the establishment of the State of Israel, a **debate took place regarding the proper day to mark the Holocaust** and the heroism of Jews during this period.

Some people suggested that the commemoration of the Holocaust should be combined with one of the existing days of mourning in the Jewish calendar – the fast of the **10th of Tevet** (which had been established several years earlier as a “Day of General Kaddish” focusing in particular on those murdered in the Holocaust), or alternatively **Tisha B’Av**. Others sought to emphasize the ethos of the “fighting Jew” – as immortalized in the Partisans’ Song – and accordingly suggested that the memorial day should take place on the **anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising**. The debate reflected a deeper division between those who see Holocaust Memorial Day mainly as a commemoration of those murdered and those who prefer to focus on the heroism of the rebels.

The latter position won the day. However, it was decided that the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, which falls on the day before Pesach, would not be a suitable date. Accordingly, Holocaust and Heroism Memorial Day (to use the full Hebrew name) was set for the **27th of Nissan**, roughly one week after the end of Pesach and one week before the Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers and Independence Day. Thus Holocaust Memorial Day became part of a meaningful and important chain connecting the Festival of Freedom to Independence Day.



שרליה

מילים : חוה אלברשטיין

לחן : גדעון כפן

את הסיפור הזה מתחילים מהסוף
אנייה עם נוסעים הגיעה לחוף
אנשים עייפים בארץ חדשה
עומדים מול שער גדול ומסתכלים בו בשתיקה
אנשים מקצה הזמן, מקצה האור והחיים,
בבגדים עבים, בצעדים כבדים.
שום דבר לא היה כמו בהבטחות
הבטיחו ארץ חמה, היו רוחות וסערות,
הג עף בחורף, הרצפה מלאה סירים,
הכל ספוג במים, שמיות הפוך מפולין,
כולם מתייפחים אבל אני עוד ישנה
כמו נסיכה אמיתית – ישנה עם מטריה.

Sharliya

Lyrics: Chava Alberstein

Melody: Gidon Kefen



This story begins from the end
A ship full of passengers arrives on the beach
Tired people in a new land
Standing before a big gate, looking at it silently
People from the edge of time, from the edge of light and life
In thick clothes, with heavy steps.
Nothing was like the promises
They promised a hot country, but there was wind and storms
The roof blew off in winter, the floor was covered in pots
Everything soaked with water, the fleece blankets from Poland
Everyone's weeping but I'm still sleeping
Like a real princess – sleeping with an umbrella

מישהו אומר – "הגענו"
מישהו אומר – "אולי"
מישהו אומר – "מצאנו",
לוחשים לו – "הלוואי",
מישהו קורא – "בינתיים",
צועקים לו – "עד מתי?"
לעולם כבר לא נדע,
מי נכנס ומי יצא,
מי עבר ומי נשאר בשרליה,
שרליה...

Someone says – we got here.
Someone says – maybe.
Someone says – we've found it.
They whisper to him – we hope so.
Someone shouts "for now."
They shout back "until when?"
We'll never know
Who came in and who went out
Who moved on and who stayed in Sharliya,
Sharliya...

"קול ציון לגולה", כל שעה שפה אחרת,
הרדיו מנגן, יושבים כמו גולים במחצרת,
כמו ליד התנור, יושבים מתחממים,
מבינים כל מילה, שרים את השירים.
ובבוקר חוזרים אל השפה החדשה,
שוברת שיניים, אדישה וקשה.
כל התוכניות נהפכו לחלומות
מחליפים מקצוע, מחליפים את השמות,
מחליפים זיכרונות, מקשטים את העבר,
שם כולם נסיכים היו וזה מה שנשאר,
היה פסנתר בכל חדר, אורות סוטים בחצר
כל מילה היא אמת, אמת – פחות או יותר...
שרליה...

"The Voice of Zion to the Diaspora" –
a different language every hour
The radio plays, we sit like exiles in the underground
Next to a stove, sitting and warming ourselves
Understanding every word, singing the songs.
And in the morning we return to the new language
A language that breaks your teeth, unfeeling and tough.
All the plans have turned to dreams
People change professions and change names
Change their memories and embellish the past
Everyone was a prince there and this is all we have left
There was a piano in every room and a stable in the yard
Every word is true – true, more or less...

Sharliya, sharliya...

[...]

[...]



Sharliya (Sha'ar Aliyah) was written and sung by **Chava Alberstein**, one of the most famous and beloved Israeli singers. The song describes Alberstein's own childhood in Sha'ar Ha'alijah absorption camp. The camp was situated south of Haifa and populated almost entirely by Holocaust survivors. The newcomers found it difficult to get used to "the new language ... unfeeling and tough," and they referred to their home as "Sharliya."

The chorus offers an ironic summary of the experience of the refugees who arrived in Israel after the Holocaust. "We got here" – "maybe." "We found it" – "we hope so." "For now" – "until when?" There is no certainty here in redemption, freedom or independence, but rather a daily and sisyphic struggle with the emotional and physical trials of refugeehood.

Ashes and Dust

Lyrics: Yaacov Gilad
Melody: Yehuda Poliker



A spring day, the smell of lilac
Between the ruins of your city
A beautiful day to fish in the river
Inside me my heart is broken

There it was and it wasn't
Your childhood, a small woman
People that no-one knows
There isn't even a house that you'll remember

And if you're going, where are you going
Forever is just ashes and dust
Where are you going?
Where are you going?
Years and nothing is erased...
[...]

אפר ואבק

מילים : יעקב גלעד
לחן : יהודה פוליקר

יום אביב, ריחות לילך
בין חורבות העיר שלך
יום יפה לדוג בנהר
בתוכי הלב נשבר

שם הייתה ואינה
ילדותך, אישה קטנה
אנשים שאיש לא מכיר,
אין אפילו בית שיזכיר.

ואם את נוסעת, לאן את נוסעת?
הנצח הוא רק אפר ואבק.
לאן את נוסעת?
לאן את נוסעת?
שנים וכלום עוד לא נמחק.
[...]

Yehuda Poliker has been a prominent Israeli rock singer since the 1980s. In 1988 he released the album "Ashes and Dust". Most of the songs in the album relate to Poliker's experiences and feelings as the son of Holocaust survivors. The album raised public awareness of the concept of second-generation Holocaust survivors – the generation that grew up under the shadow of their parents' trauma. The song "**Ashes and Dust**" was written by Yaakov Gilad, Poliker's musical partner, and describes his mother's desire to visit the extermination camps in Poland.

{ How do your community and your surroundings relate to the concepts of the second and third generation of Holocaust survivors?
How can we preserve and process the memory of the Holocaust after the last first-generation survivors pass away? }



Memorial Day for Fallen IDF Soldiers and Victims of Terrorism

יום הזיכרון לחללי צה"ל ולנפגעי פעולות

האיבה

Spring is So Short Here

Lyrics: David Grossman

Melody: Yehuda Poliker



There is a brief moment between Adar and Nisan

When nature is heartily jubilant

It is flowing with life

Utterly drunk

How can beauty heal!

[...]

You and me who are in the know

It is terrible that only he is not

Life is so brief

The brief life that was given to him.

Generous, turbulent and painful

It is so brief...

The spring.

קצר פה כל כך האביב

מילים: דוד גרוסמן

לחן: יהודה פוליקר

יש רגע קצר בין אדר לניסן

שהטבע צוהל בכל פה

הוא שופע חיים

שיכור ומבושם –

איך שיופי יכול לרפא!

[...]

ואת ואני היודעים

ונורא הדבר שרק הוא לא –

עד כמה קצרים החיים,

החיים הקצרים שניתנו לו.

נדיב ונסער ומכאיב

קצר פה כל כך

האביב.

The poem “**Spring is So Short Here**” was written by the author **David Grossman** in memory of his son, Staff Sergeant Uri Grossman, who was killed in combat during the Second Lebanon War. The blossoming flowers of spring, associated with Pesach, here become a source of sorrow for the fallen son and symbolize the transience of his short life.

In the Israeli calendar, **the path from freedom to independence passes through memory**. At least part of this sequence is deliberate. The State of Israel made a conscious decision to mark Memorial Day immediately before Independence Day, in order to emphasize that it is thanks to the fallen that we celebrate independence, and in order to highlight the price of independence. We can find the same theme on the eve of the Passover Seder, when the passages “Tell your child” and “In every generation” remind us that memory of the past is the key to our freedom.

Regev Ben David

“As Independence Day comes to a close, we end three weeks when we have moved from one memory to another, ancient and new, across the whole length of Jewish history. From joy to sorrow and back again.”



Independence Day

יום העצמאות

”אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֵלֶב, וְדָבָשׁ.”
דְּבָרִים ו' ג'

“And land flowing with milk and honey.”

Deuteronomy 6:3

An examination of the songs written over the generations – from the period before the establishment of the state through the early decades and on to the present day – offers some insights into the complex nature of Hebrew and Israeli culture, and the changes it has undergone. Time after time, the Israeli songs of the past few generations lead us to think about the difference between dreams and longings, on the one hand, and their realization in a complex reality, on the other.

The songs of the pre-state period are dominated by joy, pioneering determination, endless love for the Land of Israel and its landscapes, and belief in the liberty and freedom that will come from life in the Land of Israel and the establishment of an independent state in the land. In 1932, **Natan Alterman** wrote in his “**Morning Song**” (1) “We love you, motherland / With joy, with song and with toil.”

By the 1970s and 1980s, after decades of traumatic and bloody wars, the songs have become more complex. Critical comments can be found concerning the nation’s formative ethos, alongside nostalgic longings for ‘the Good Old Land of Israel’ (to use the title of Arik Einstein’s album from 1973).

In **Ehud Manor**’s song “**To be Captivated by You**” (2) from 1973, the Biblical phrase “a land flowing with milk and honey” is transmuted into “a land flowing with milk, bitter herbs, and honey.” Manor’s song “**I Have No Other Homeland**” (3) from 1982, is more open in its criticism: “I will not remain quiet for the face of my land has changed / I won’t stop reminding her / singing in her ears / until she opens her eyes.”

In “**Land of the Sabra**” (4) from 1986, **Uzi Hitman** expresses his longings: “Whether it was or not / I still live with it / Bring it back to me / The Land of the Sabra.”

A later song that continues this theme is **Aviv Geffen**’s “**Wake Up**” (5) from 2000. Geffen, a rock musician identified with the “Candle Youth” generation after the assassination of Rabin, offers a complete contrast to Alterman’s song from 1932. Instead of “we love you motherland” Geffen asks his homeland to “Give a little love.” In place of Alterman’s vow “What shall we give you more for glory and plenty / What we haven’t given yet – we will,” Geffen pleads “Give me the strength to love you.”

Based on Dr. Talila Elram’s article “From ‘We Love You Homeland’ to ‘Wake Up’ – Changes in the Attitude to the Homeland in Songs of the Land of Israel.”

<http://www.zemereshet.co.il/article.asp?id=71>



(1) **Morning Song**

Lyrics: Natan Alterman
Melody: Daniel Sambursky



In the mountains the sun already flames,
And in the valley the dew sparkles still,
We love you, motherland
With joy, with song and with toil
[...]
What shall we give you more for glory and plenty
What we haven't given yet – we will!
[...]

שיר בוקר

מילים : נתן אלטרמן
לחן : דניאל סמבורסקי

בְּהָרִים כְּבֵר הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ מְלַהֶטֶת
וּבְעֵמֶק עוֹד נוֹצֵץ הַטֵּל
אָנּוּ אוֹהֲבִים אוֹתָךְ, מוֹלְדֶת
בְּשִׂמְחָה, בְּשִׁיר וּבְעֵמָל.
[...]
מָה נִתֵּן לָךְ עוֹד לְהוֹד וְשִׁבְעַ, מָה
עוֹד לֹא נִתְּנוּ וְנִתֵּן.
[...]

(2) **To Be Captivated by You**

Lyrics: Ehud Manor
Melody: Nurit Hirsh



To be born every morning anew
With every goodbye to die a little
And to bring another boy and girl into the world
In a land of milk, bitter, and honey.

To be captivated by you
To breathe the burning sun
To dream you under your sky
To pain for you and again to fall in love.
[...]

ללכת שבי אחריך

מילים : אהוד מנור
לחן : נורית הירש

להיוולד כל בוקר מחדש
עם כל מילת פרידה למות מעט
ולהביא אל העולם עוד בן ובת
בארץ של חלב, מרור ודבש...

ללכת שבי אחריך
לנשום את השמש הצורב
לחלום אותך מול שמיך
לכאוב אותך ושוב להתאהב.
[...]

(3) **I Have No Other Homeland**

Lyrics: Ehud Manor
Melody: Corinne Elal



I have no other homeland
Though my earth is aflame
Only a word in Hebrew pierces through
My veins and my soul -
With a painful body, with a hungry heart,
Here is my home.

I will not remain quiet for the face of my
land has changed
I won't stop reminding her
Singing in her ears
Until she opens her eyes.

אין לי ארץ אחרת

מילים : אהוד מנור
לחן : קורין אלאל

אֵין לִי אֶרֶץ אַחֶרֶת
גַּם אִם אֶדְמָתִי בּוֹעֶרֶת
רַק מִלָּה בְּעֵבְרִית חוֹדֶרֶת
אֶל עוֹרְקִי, אֶל נִשְׁמָתִי
בְּגוּף כּוֹאֵב, בְּלֵב רָעֵב
כָּאן הוּא בֵּיתִי.

לֹא אֶשְׁתַּקֵּה, כִּי אֶרְצִי שְׁנִתָּה
אֶת פְּנִיָּה
לֹא אֶוֹתֵר לָהּ, אֶזְכִּיר לָהּ
וְאֶשִׁיר כָּאן בְּאֶזְנוֹתֶיהָ
עַד שֶׁתִּפְקַח אֶת עֵינֶיהָ.

(4)

Land of the Sabra

Lyrics & melody: Uzi Hitman



Earth and sky, green and desert
By the water tower between the dirt tracks
That's where I was born, that's where my heart broke
The day they took the Land of the Sabra from me.

Whether it was or not
I still live with it
Bring it back to me
The Land of the Sabra.
[...]

ארץ הצבר

מילים ולחן : עוזי חיטמן

ארץ ושמיים ירק ומדבר
ליד מגדל של מים בין שבילי עפר
שם אני נולדתי, שם ליבי נשבר
ביום שבו לקחו לי את ארץ הצבר

היתה או לא היתה,
אני עוד חי איתה
תחזירו לי אותה –
את ארץ הצבר.
[...]

(5)

Wake Up

Lyrics & melody: Aviv Geffen



[...]
Wake up, wake up,
lovely homeland,
Once in life we are alive,
Give a little love.

Give me the strength
To love you
A little corner of joy
How hard it is to forgive you...

עורי עור

מילים ולחן : אביב גפן

[...]
עורי עור, עורי עור
מולדת אהובה
פעם בחיים אנו חיים
תתני קצת אהבה.

ותני לי תיכח
לאהוב אותך
מן פינה קטנה לשמוח
איך לפעמים קשה לסלוח לך...

For all the other countries and peoples, their day of freedom is also their independence day. But **we have two separate holidays, one for freedom and the other for independence**. Because the story of the Jewish people does not begin from its own land, where it grew and became a people and then set out to fight for its freedom, and that's all. Our story is the opposite: it begins by the exodus into freedom and the knowledge that freedom is a great holiday and an important message for the whole world. But it has no meaning by itself, but only as the first step on the long journey to the Land.

From this point forth, the history of the Jewish people – which unraveled both in its own Land and in exile – reveals the secret that **freedom and independence are not only not the same thing, but sometimes they clash** with each other... To a certain extent, indeed, independence hinders and restricts freedom. Independence means commitment and responsibility. Independence means putting the collective above the individual...

Uri Elizur

{ How can freedom and independence be opposed to each other? Is this insight important in the life of the individual, or does it only apply on the collective level? }