

The educational value of Israel's songs

Aviva Stanislawski

Hebrew songs have tremendous educational potential. Among other aspects, they provide an experiential way of teaching about the history of the Jewish State, since both the lyrics and the musical characteristics reflect the period in which they were written. A song is a unique art form resulting from the fusion of words and music into a new and more powerful combination that offers both an intellectual and emotional experience, enabling an intuitive absorption of the messages and meanings of the song. Music plays a central role in awakening intuitive and emotional sensibility. The significance of the lyrics is enhanced by the music that expresses them and envelops them with an atmosphere and a mood. This paper examines the musical means by which this effect is achieved—mainly in the areas of rhythm, melody and performance media—and demonstrates how these elements interpret the text, and sometimes even go beyond the literal meaning of the text. In addition, it considers the “chain of interpretation” leading from lyricist to composer, to arranger and to performer, each contributing to the final product that reaches the listener.

The main objective of the article is to enhance educators' awareness of the potential of Israel's songs to provide an experience on many different levels, and to offer a creative and multi-faceted approach for the important task of inculcating values and understanding the essence of the Jewish people and the State of Israel. Four songs that share the common theme of hope are analyzed in the article; the changing perspectives on the subject that come to the fore in them are considered in relation to their historical contexts (*Hen Efshar*, *Machar*, *Lu Yihi*, and *Shir Leshalom*).

In the last part of the article a provocative question is explored: to what extent do songs about hope reflect the realities from which they emerged, and to what extent do they direct us towards new realities? To what extent do these songs influence people—consciously or sub-consciously—and to what extent do they perhaps arouse the enthusiasm for an idea and identification with a cause that may eventually effect changes in Israeli society and culture?