



Educator's Guide

History of HaTikvah, Israel's National Anthem

This video dives into the history of Israel's iconic national anthem, HaTikvah. While some students may be familiar with these words, do they know their meaning, or the anthem's complex backstory? Originally a nine-stanza poem, HaTikvah's melody may have been lifted from an earlier Italian or Czech song. Today, HaTikvah both inspires and irritates. It is an aspirational anthem, which connects Jews around the world, and it also alienates others who do not connect to the themes. This episode begs the important question: What's more important in a national anthem- that it include all of its citizens or that it embody the spirit upon which the country was founded and that it strives to maintain?

Video:

<https://unpacked.education/video/history-of-israels-national-anthem-does-hatikvah-mean-hope-for-all/>

Further Reading

1. Dr. James Loeffler, "How 'Hatikvah' (The Hope) Became Israel's National Anthem"
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/hatikvah/>
2. Edwin Seroussi, "Hatikvah: Conceptions, Receptions and Reflections"
<http://www.jewish-music.huji.ac.il/content/hatikvah-conceptions-receptions-and-reflections>
3. Ilan Ben Zion, "How an unwieldy romantic poem and a Romanian folk song combined to produce 'Hatikva'"
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/how-an-unwieldy-romantic-poem-and-a-romanian-folk-song-combined-to-produce-hatikva/>
4. Benjamin Kerstein, "'Hatikvah' Keeps its Edge, Despite Everything"
<http://www.thetower.org/article/hatikva-keeps-its-edge-despite-everything/>



5. Dr. Rafael Medoff, “‘Hatikvah’ in the Holocaust”
<http://www.jewishledger.com/2013/04/hatikvah-in-the-holocaust/>

Review - Did the students understand the material?

1. What are the main themes of “Hatikvah”?
2. What role did “Hatikvah” play for many Jews in the Holocaust?
3. Who wrote the original poem “Tikvatenu” in 1877?
 - a. Theodor Herzl
 - b. Samuel Cohen
 - c. Ze’ev Jabotinsky
 - d. Naftali Hertz Imber (correct answer)
4. Which religious Zionist leader wrote the more religious counter-anthem, “Shir Ha’emunah” or “Song of Faith”?
 - a. President Chaim Weizmann
 - b. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (correct answer)
 - c. Rabbi Isaac HaLevi Herzog
 - d. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik
5. “Hatikvah” is unique among national anthems in that it does not mention:
 - a. Its country’s name
 - b. Militarism (correct answer)
 - c. Hope
 - d. The country’s flag

Discussion Questions

1. Why do Arabs and other minorities in Israel not identify with “Hatikvah”? Why do some Jews not identify with it?
2. What’s more important in a national anthem: that it includes all of its citizens, or that it embodies the spirit upon which the country was founded and that it strives to maintain?



3. Colin Kaepernick drew a lot of attention from his decision to kneel for the national anthem. Years earlier, NBA star Mahmoud Abdul Rauf chose not to participate in the singing of “Star Spangled Banner” as well. Do you think their opposition to participating in the anthem is similar to or different than when Arabs living in Israel protest “HaTikvah”?
4. Imagine that you are the president of a new country and are seeking the perfect national anthem to fit it. What elements, ideas and sentiments do you include?

Reflection Questions

1. In reflecting more on the words of “HaTikvah” and thinking more deeply about the way the anthem has penetrated the hearts and souls of Jewish people for over a century, in what ways do you identify with and internalize the lyrics and meaning of the anthem?
2. As a Jew living outside of Israel, does “Hatikvah” have particular significance to you even though you do not live in Israel? If so, how?
3. When seeing that some people have a problem with “Hatikvah,” do you feel empathy for them or feel frustrated by them, and why?