

# Hatikvah - Hope [High School, Staff]



## Brief

The goal of this program is to share personal Israel-related experiences and stories. Suggestions to encourage sharing and listening in a respectful and non-judgmental environment appear at the end.

### Age Group

- Elementary
- Middle School
- High School
- Staff

### Topics

- Community
- Culture
- Politics
- Zionism

### Shabbat

- Shabbat Appropriate
- Not Shabbat Appropriate
- Adaptable for Shabbat

## Equipment:

- Copies of the lyrics of "Hatikvah" in both Hebrew and English.
- Jonathan Sacks quote
- Paper and art supplies.
- Speakers to play Hatikva

## Activity length: 60 minutes

- Understanding Hatikva (25-30 mins)
- Hatikva debate (10 mins)
- Create a Hope Poster (20 mins)

## Adaptable for Shabbat

The program is not ideal for Shabbat because it requires playing Hatikva and using art supplies.

## ➔ Goals & Overview

1. Understanding the words, meaning and background of the Israeli anthem.
2. Grappling with the debate surrounding the anthem and the different attitudes held by Israelis towards it.
3. Discussing the concept of hope in Israeli and Jewish society and its place during times of hardship.

### Thought Questions / שאלות למחשבה

1. What significance does an anthem have in building a national identity?
2. What feelings does singing Hatikva invoke within you?
3. Does the anthem need to represent all the citizens of Israel?
4. If you were tasked with writing a new anthem what would its message be?
5. What is hope? Why is it important to the individual, to the citizen, to the nation?
6. What gives you hope in times of darkness and despair?
7. In what way does hope embody the Israeli spirit?
8. What is the difference between optimism and hope?

### For the facilitator

Hatikvah, the Hebrew word for "The Hope," is the national anthem of Israel. It was taken from a longer poem titled "Tikvatenu" (our hope), written in the late 1800's by Naftali Herz Imber, a little-known Polish Jewish poet. In 1888, Samuel Cohen, a young Jew living in the land of Israel, found himself humming a melody based on an old Moldavian-Romanian folk song. This tune was soon embraced with enthusiasm. It is in a minor key, which is usually not used for national anthems because it has a somber sound. However, the words stand in stark contrast to this melancholy tone, conveying the 2,000-year-old hope of the Jewish people to return to their homeland as a free nation. The poem resonated with Zionist pioneers and became an unofficial anthem for the movement, eventually gaining official recognition at the First Zionist Congress in 1897. Interestingly, Hatikvah was only formally adopted as Israel's national anthem in 2004, over 50 years after the country's founding. Despite its widespread use, Hatikvah has faced criticism over the years. Some religious Jews feel it lacks explicit religious references, while broader concerns focus on non-Jewish citizens, who struggle to connect with an anthem solely focused on Jewish aspirations. This lack of connection has led some non-Jewish officials to decline singing the anthem. Some argue that Hatikvah reflects the yearning of a diaspora Jew (Ashkenazi Jews to be precise), longing for a return to a historical homeland. Critics argue that this perspective doesn't fully represent the experience of many Israelis, who identify as Israeli first and foremost. Despite the controversy, Hatikvah remains a powerful symbol of hope and longing for the Jewish people, sung at official events both in Israel and by Jewish communities around the world.

## ➔ Program [High School, Staff]

1. **Understanding Hatikva** (25-30 mins)
  - a. Listen to the audio recording of Hatikva
    - i. Ask chanichim to share what emotions arise when hearing Hatikva.
  - b. Watch the video recording of Hatikva on the light rail.
    - i. Ask chanichim if they see or feel something different from looking at the faces and reactions of the people on the light rail.
  - c. Read the English of Hatikva.
    - i. Ask chanichim why Israel's anthem is called "Hatikva."
      1. What is the hope expressed in the anthem?
      2. Why have Jews always considered Israel to be our "home."
      3. Has the "hope" been realized?
      4. What have the Jewish people done to realize our "hope" of living in our homeland?
      5. Is the mood of Hatikva the same as the other anthems?
  - d. Distribute the quote from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. Ask chanichim:
    - i. How do you understand the difference between hope and optimism?
    - ii. What kind of activism does hope require?
    - iii. How does the State of Israel embody hope rather than optimism?
2. **The debate surrounding Hatikva** (10 mins)
  - a. Read aloud background information about Hatikva.
  - b. Introduce key criticism of Hatikva using the prompted questions:
    - i. What does the word 'Hatikvah' mean?
    - ii. Why is this the name for Israel's national anthem?
    - iii. Do you think the hope has now been fulfilled?
    - iv. Is the song out of date?
    - v. Are there words in the anthem that might be controversial? Which ones and for whom?
  - c. Why do ultra-orthodox Jew not identify with the Israeli Anthem?
    - i. Ultra-Orthodox Jews, also known as Haredi, often don't sing Hatikvah.
      1. It lacks explicit religious references.
      2. Singing Hatikva means publicly endorsing a secular state, which might contradict their beliefs.
      3. They oppose the sentence "To be a free people in our land," which they claim is not their belief but the desire of secular Israelis.
      4. Hareidim make up 13% of Israeli society.
  - d. Why do Arabs and other minorities in Israel not identify with Hatikvah?
    - i. Non-Jewish minorities in Israel struggle to connect with the anthem which is solely focused on Jewish aspirations ("As long as the Jewish spirit is yearning deep in the heart"). This sentence excludes Arab identity and the history of Arabs who have lived in the land for generations.
      1. The Arab minority makes up nearly 20% of Israel's population.
  - e. Over a third of all Israelis may feel alienated by their own national anthem.

- f. Ask chanichim:
  - i. Is it more important that a national anthem includes all of its citizens, or that it embodies the spirit upon which the country was founded and that it strives to maintain?
  - ii. When seeing that some people feel alienated from Hatikvah, do you feel empathy for them or feel frustrated by them?
  - iii. As a Jew living outside of Israel, does “HaTikvah” have particular significance to you even though you do not live in Israel?
- 3. **Create a Hope Poster** (20 mins)
  - a. Use “Posters of Hope” as inspiration.
    - i. The team at "Asoofa," an Israeli design store, initiated the "Posters of Hope" project. It drew inspiration from historical war posters that motivated soldiers. Their goal was to create posters with positive messages of hope and unity. The posters were designed by Israeli illustrators and feature lines from Israeli songs. The posters were initially displayed in public spaces in Tel Aviv, and they have since been sold online and in stores. The proceeds from the sale of the posters are donated to the families of Israeli soldiers who were captured or killed in action. The project received a positive public reaction, seen as a beautiful and inspiring reminder of the nation's strength and resilience.
    - ii. Allocate time to create individual “Posters of Hope.”