LESSON PLAN BY YEHUDA YORK AND TAMMIE RAPPS

"The Song That Moves a Nation"

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This article introduces readers to an Israeli song, "*Ballada Laḥovesh*," that powerfully stirs the nation's emotions every year on Yom Hazikaron (Israel's Memorial Day, celebrated on 4 Iyar). The song recounts the heroic story of a medic who sacrifices his own life for the life of a wounded soldier. In this lesson, students will explore the unique power of songs to evoke memories and rouse emotions by analyzing the lyrics to "*Ballada Laḥovesh*" and planning for ways to memorialize Israel's fallen soldiers within their own class or school.

OBJECTIVES

- **Students will express their individual thoughts on how music moves peoples' emotions and evokes memories.**
- **Students will compare Yom Hazikaron to Memorial Day.**
- **Students will analyze the lyrics to "*Ballada Laḥovesh*."**
- **Students will plan ways to commemorate Yom Hazikaron in their school.**

VOCABULARY

חַיָּל	soldier
חוֹבֵשׁ	medic
צוֹפָּר	siren
שְׁתִיקָה	silence

QUOTES & QUESTIONS

"'This ultimate act of friendship between two young soldiers speaks to everyone.'"

Why do stories of friendship have the ability to "speak to everyone"?

"'In fact,' he continues, 'many families in Israel are convinced that this song was written about their own sons.'"

Why do so many families believe that the song was written about their own sons?

In the War of Independence in 1948, a medic who ran back and forth across the Jordan River to save wounded soldiers was killed during one of his missions. In the Six Day War in 1967, a medic threw his body as a shield over a wounded soldier. When the wounded soldier awoke, he learned that the medic who had saved his life had been killed. Upon the birth of his first son after the war, the soldier named the child after the medic. How are both of these stories related to the song? How could either of these stories have been the inspiration for the song?

"'The blow of losing someone who served in the army is universal in Israel. We knew these people. Their loss is very direct and very painful. It affects every *moshav*, every kibbutz, and every neighborhood.'"

What does the word "universal" mean? [widespread, collective] **How can a death feel universal?** [It touches everyone.]

Can you think of any other losses that could be labeled "universal"? [Possible answers include: the astronauts on the Space Shuttle *Columbia*, victims of 9/11, deaths of political leaders such as John F. Kennedy and Yitzchak Rabin, etc.]

Do the deaths of American soldiers in Afghanistan or Iraq feel universal to us in the United States? Why or why not?

Do the deaths of Israeli soldiers or civilians in terrorist attacks in Israel feel universal to you? Why or why not? Should they?

What do you think Almagor means when he says, "We knew these people"?

How do the deaths of soldiers in Israel affect every community?

"At precisely 11:00 a.m., civil defense sirens throughout the country wail for two, seemingly unending, minutes. All activity stops—no one works, no one plays, and no one drives a car. Wherever they are, people stand in silent respect for the fallen."

Why do you think that Israel commemorates its fallen soldiers with a period of silence?

ISRAEL GPO

"As the sun sets, Yom Hazikaron ends and Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel Independence Day) begins.... Israelis recall the fruits of their sacrifices—the victories that have ensured that the events of May 14, 1948, will endure."

How does this quotation help explain why Yom Hazikaron is celebrated the day immediately before Yom Ha'atzmaut?

Do you think it is difficult for Israelis to "switch gears" from mourning their lost soldiers to celebrating independence? Why or why not?

How can the commemoration of Yom Hazikaron influence the way a family, school, community, or even country celebrates Yom Ha'atzmaut?

ACTIVITY: MOURNFUL MELODIES AND FALLEN HEROES

1. At the beginning of class, post the following journal prompt on the board and instruct students to spend a few minutes writing silently in response:

Is there a song that reminds you of someone important to you? What is the song? Why does it remind you of the person? How do you feel when you hear it, even if the person is not around?

Invite students to share their responses with the class. Ask:

Why do you think songs remind us of others?

Why do songs have the ability to trigger memories for us?

How can a song help express emotion better than simply speaking?

Which do you think evokes more memories: lyrics or melodies? Why?

2. Explain that you will now read about a song that evokes memories for an entire nation. Begin by reading the translation of "*Ballada Laḥovesh*" in the sidebar on page 18 of BabagaNewz. Divide the class into three groups. One group will, in unison, read the lines of the medic. The second will read the lines of the wounded soldier. The third will read the narrative portions of the song. Discuss:

What is your reaction to the story told in the song? Why do you feel that way?

What line in the song do you find the most interesting or effective?

Why do you think that the song opens with the image of rustling papyrus and repeats the image in the middle and end?

Why does the song end with the chorus, "My brother! My brother! My brother!"? Who is the speaker of these lines?

What values do you think motivated the medic's actions? Why? [Encourage students to think broadly about this question. Possible answers include: courage—*ometz lev*, heroism—*gevurah*, mutual responsibility—*arevut*, friendship—*re'ut*, love of Zion—*ḥibat Tziyon*, etc.]

Continue reading the article. Ask:

What is Yom Hazikaron? How do we celebrate Memorial Day in the United States? Why do you think that our Memorial Day is so different from Israel's Yom Hazikaron?

What impact does the fact that the song is only played once a year have on listeners?

Why do you think the song focuses on only one pair of soldiers rather than a whole battalion? How does this song represent other Israeli soldiers who have been killed?

3. Study the Jewish texts below.

4. As a class, brainstorm ways that you in your school can commemorate the losses memorialized on Yom Hazikaron.

How can we remember those who fought and sacrificed their lives for the sake of the State of Israel?

How can we convey the importance of remembering these individuals for Jews living outside of Israel?

This article is available in Hebrew at www.babaganewz.com and in your teacher's pack!

JEWISH TEXTS

CHAIM WEIZMANN, FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

No state is given to a people on a silver platter.

What does it mean to be given something on a silver platter?

What do you think compelled Weizmann to make this statement?

How does this line relate to the song "*Ballada Laḥovesh*"?

This line is the inspiration for a classic Israeli poem by Natan Alterman. See www.babaganewz.com/teachers for a link to the poem, which would serve as an appropriate reading for Yom Hazikaron.

YIZKOR SERVICE FOR MARTYRS OF THE ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES

May God remember the souls of the fighters of the Israel Defense Forces who gave their lives for the sanctification of God's name, the people, and the Land, who died a heroic death in missions of liberation, defense, and security. They were quicker than eagles and stronger than lions as they volunteered to assist the people and, with their pure blood, soaked the clods of our holy earth. The memory of their self-sacrifice and heroic deeds will never perish from us. May their souls be bound in the Bond of Life together with the souls of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, and with the souls of the other Jewish heroes and martyrs who are in the Garden of Eden. Amen.

Be sure that your students are familiar with the particulars of when the *Yizkor* service is recited. See www.babaganewz.com/teachers for information.

Why do you think that communities throughout the world recite this prayer as part of their *Yizkor* service?

How do Israeli soldiers who have died sanctify God's name? What do you think that means?

How can we ensure that "the memory of their self-sacrifice and heroic deeds will never perish from us"?