"An ox and a camel may not be used together to pull a plough," so states an old Talmudic law; "A garment must not be woven from two different kinds of fabric," says another. In the light of this, the whole fabric of what we know as "Israeli culture" would appear to be highly illegal, according to Jewish tradition. For it is composed of elements that are anything but homogeneous in texture. In this, our twentieth century, Jewish life often emerged suffering from a lack of clear definition; while the religious aspects of it may still have been subject to some uniformity, the secularly cultural ones were not. With emancipation came influences and counter-influences; the German Jew in 1935 was certainly much more imbued with German culture than his grandfather. The French Jew was perhaps even more assimilated, and his assimilation started earlier. The same holds true for the English and Italian Jews, and though to a lesser degree, for the Eastern European communities. And then suddenly came the Holocaust, and in the wake of it a vast migration to Israel. Thus all manner of multifaceted cultural traits found their way into the spiritual and national life of that country. They all exerted their influence, subtly and sometimes even overtly, and all added seasoning to the brew. Consequently, today's Israeli artist, whether he be composer, poet, painter, sculptor or novelist, shows traits of deeply Russian sentimentality, of German meticulousness and pedantry, of Anglo-Saxon dry wit and laconicism, of heavily-scented Arabic languishing, of French sprightliness—all in addition to newer ingredients born of Israel's life alone.

Luckily, the cultural life of a nation need not be subject to laws of fairness and equality. While it seems quite improper for two animals of unequal strength to be harnessed together for the same task, it is only meet that the cultural ploughshare of a nation be pulled by anyone and anything possessed of enough strength to lend a helping hand; and such help is never calibrated or measured in terms of "fair share." The only important thing is the cutting of the furrow and the planting of the seed.

It is this multifaceted beauty of the Israeli culture—and especially the Israeli song—which has always fascinated me. As far back as my days in the kibbutz (communal settlement), I had marvelled at the many hues and colors, at the varied smells and rhythms which the Hebrew song alone seemed capable of expressing. It mattered little to me that the song in itself was, ethnically speaking, a man-made thing; that the process of calling it into being was not one that would stand up to the scrutiny of the serious folklorist demanding anonymity of source—to me, less trained as I was then in detecting these fine distinctions, it filled the ever-present need for expressing the mood and the tempo of the times and the country I lived in. And to be quite frank, even today I am not particularly bothered by the ethnic faux pas the whole body of Israeli song seems to be guilty of. To me these are folksongs, although the "folk-process" has moved in devious ways to bring them about; but then, so has the history of these, our turbulent times.

Over the years I have learned something very important—songs have a life of their own. The folklorist may dissect and debate, analyze and reject; the true proof of a song's viability lies in its own capability to survive. And this, to me, is as live a process as anyone has a right to expect. The first time I heard one of "my" songs sung by some youngsters in Washington Square Park I was filled with deep gratification, for I knew that the song had truly come to life. And if but one song from among the fifteen in this album will be given life in a similar fashion, then that will have been reason enough for me to have sung at all.
THEODORE BIKEL
A HARVEST OF ISRAELI FOLK SONGS

1. KEN YOVDU (The Bible — U. Giv’on) 1:40
2. SHIR HA’AVODA (C. N. Bialik — N. Nardi) 2:20
3. HAVU LANU YAYIN (M. Shelem) 1:43
4. TSE’I LACH (The Bible — D. Seltzer) 3:10
5. SHUVA ELAY (A. Ettinger — J. Hadar) 2:25
6. EREV BA (O. Avissar — A. Levanon) 2:41
7. MIGDALOR (D. Almagor — M. Wilensky) 2:35
8. EMEK (N. Alterman — D. Sambursky) 2:55

© ELEKTRA RECORDS

MADE IN ISRAEL
THEODORE BIKEL

A HARVEST OF ISRAELI FOLK SONGS

1. PIYUS (A. Neeman) 2:29
2. ARAVA HO ARAVA (Y. Orland — M. Olari-Nozyk) 3:10
3. LAYLA AL HAKFAR (A. Neeman) 2:30
4. SIMCHU NA (M. Shelem) 1:28
5. SHABAT SHALOM (Folk — D. Seltzer) 2:35
6. AVIGAYIL (N. Alterman — D. Zeira) 3:30
7. HAR VAKAR (Folk — Z. Chavatzelet) 2:03

© ELEKTRA RECORDS

MADE IN ISRAEL