



Putting On a Robe of Glory: An Art and Music Reflection

Not only is it difficult to give an exact translation of the Hebrew word “*Tifarah*” — it could refer to splendor, grandeur, beauty or majesty — it is almost impossible to give a precise definition of the word most often used, “glory.”

Despite its somewhat nebulous nature, the word *Tifarah* appears repeatedly in Jewish literature. Biblical references are most often connected with visions of messianic days, when the suffering of Jews will end and their position become elevated. The Kabbalists described it as one of the *Sefirot* (attributes of the Divine) and defined it as a majestic blend of colors and energy, the combination of strength and compassion. It appears in the famous *L’cha Dodi* prayer that welcomes the Sabbath, imploring the downtrodden people of Israel to “Shake off your ashes of mourning and arise! Put on your glorious garments, my people!”

We are grateful to our partner
Makom for preparing this activity.



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In the 1940s, as modern Jewish people struggled with the unfolding tragedy of the Holocaust, the reference to *glory* was once more used, albeit in a new and unique manner. On a graphic poster encouraging young women living in British Mandate Palestine to join the anti-Nazi effort, a female soldier is shown holding a uniform. Quoting what would have been the familiar words of the *L'cha Dodi* prayer, women are called upon to "Wear your Garment of Glory."

This is a poster aimed at recruiting young women living in British Mandate Palestine to join the anti-Nazi effort. The main image is of a woman in an olive green uniform with a stern face, holding out an olive green jacket as if to offer it to someone else. There is English writing at the top that says, "It's your turn! Join the A.T.S." (ATS stands for Auxiliary Transport Service, the women's branch of the British army during the Second World War). There is also Hebrew writing at the bottom saying, "Wear your garment of glory."



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In 2010, artist Avi Rose reinterpreted and responded to this poster in a work entitled "Come in Peace." Rose saw the female soldier as representative of the Zionist goal, the creation of a safe space for Jews to experience and express the full range of their potential. Blending the original image with text from H.N. Bialik's famous "*Hachnisini*" poem (in which the writer implores an unknown female to serve as protector and keeper of his darkest secrets and emotions), the figure comes to reflect the artist's ideal of Israel as a place of comfort, refuge, and humanity. Following on from the Kabbalistic interpretation, the robe of glory is depicted as protective, compassionate, and maternal. Out of this synthesis of strength and mercy, safe in their autonomy, the Jewish people can move toward their ultimate goal of bringing peace and repairing the world.

This is a painting. The main image is of a woman in a pink military uniform jacket with a yellow shirt and purple tie, holding an olive green coat out as if to offer it to another person. No features are painted on her face, so we cannot see her expression. There is Hebrew writing on her face that reads, "Put on your robes of glory." There is also Hebrew text in the background of the image from the Friday evening prayer "Lecha Dodi," or "Come my Beloved," and within the coat itself appears part of the text of an H.N. Bialik poem that reads, "Hachnisini tachat knafech / Va'hayee lee em v'achot," or "Take me under your wing / And be for me as a mother and a sister." There is also Hebrew text along the bottom of the image that reads, "Bo'ee B'Shalom," or "Come in Peace."



Our people's narrative of glory continues to this day: Each year on the eve of Israel's Independence Day, celebrations are opened by honoring a group of twelve distinguished citizens who are invited to light torches at the foot of Theodore Herzl's grave (symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel). After lighting their torch and explaining the work they have done to better Israeli society, each honoree declares that they have done their work "for the glory of the State of Israel." In this way, they express gratitude for their homeland and for the opportunity to share the wealth of human kindness that they have experienced.

To further reflect on the idea of glory, we invite you to try the following:

Step 1: Prepare

- Open the two images discussed above in a separate computer window, or print them out in color if possible.
- Prepare a journal or piece of paper on which to write, draw, or otherwise express yourself.
- Prepare earphones or a speaker to hear the music linked below.

Step 2: Reflect

Take a look at the original 1940s poster, and consider the phrase (in Hebrew) "Put on your robes of glory." Think about your responses to the following, using your journal or piece of paper:

1. What does the word "glory" mean to you?
2. In what ways can a uniform be considered glorious? In what ways can volunteering for a cause bring personal and/or communal glory?
3. In what ways do you perceive the Jewish people as glorious?
4. How do you feel about seeing the female soldier's uniform described as a Jewish "robe of glory"?
5. What elements of glory are you grateful for in your life?



Step 2: Reflect (con't)

Now, look at the painting based on the poster. Notice the changes and additions that the artist made in terms of color and text.

1. How do these alter the image?
2. Do they add to the glory element? To the strength aspect? To something else?
3. What other kinds of energy is the artist trying to add or remove from the original?

As you compare the two images, consider the following:

1. What are the limits of Jewish glory? When have Jews demonstrated an overabundance of strength?
2. What other traits would you wish for Israel and the Jewish people in this moment?
3. What steps might you take to build a world that offers more glory and majesty to others?

Step 3: Listen

Finally, [listen to the song](#) that is referred to in the painting, "*Hachnisini*" ("Take Me Under Your Wing") by Israel's first poet laureate, Haim Nachman Bialik. You can also view a [Hebrew transliteration and English translation](#).

1. Think about the people in your life who are your refuge, the people you turn to for comfort, safety, and encouragement.
2. Jot down the names and attributes of these people, including what they add to your life.
3. Pen a brief note to one of these people, or create a picture for them (it can be just for you or for you to actually send), expressing your gratitude to that person for being your source of glory, comfort, and strength.

