



Israeli paratroopers after capturing the Western Wall during the Six-Day War, 1967. Songwriter Naomi Shemer added a new chorus of “Yerushalayim Shel Zahav” (“Jerusalem of Gold”) in honor of this event.

soldiers’ sense of purpose: “Ya Mishlati,/My outpost,/it is mine, without any walls,/Ya, my kitchen with stars for lights/It’s true that there’s not much luxury/And the only heating/is the heat of the heart and the fire of the battle upon my outpost,/Mishlati.”

In another song performed by *Lahaqat HaNachal*, “*Mul Har Sinai*” (“At Mount Sinai”) [Track 4], Yehiel Mohar (lyricist) and Moshe Vilensky (composer) juxtaposed biblical images of the Jewish people receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai with images of Israeli troops battling Egyptian forces in the 1956 Sinai campaign: “It is no legend, my friend/And not a fleeting dream./Here in front of Mount Sinai/The bush is burning still./And it is glowing in song/In the mouths of our young soldiers...”

### “Yerushalayim Shel Zahav” (“Jerusalem of Gold”) is the most famous song associated with the Six-Day War of 1967. Is it as popular among Israelis as it is among Diaspora Jews?

Yes. But “*Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*” [Track 5], composed by the prolific Israeli songwriter Naomi Shemer, was actually written and performed before the Six-Day War. Teddy Kollek, then mayor of Jerusalem, had commissioned it for that year’s Israel Song Festival, which always took place on Independence Day. “*Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*” touched a nerve among Israelis, especially since its first performance was during the three-week *tkufat hahamtana* (period of waiting) prior to the war, when Arab armies were amassing on Israel’s borders. The song gave

comfort during a very stressful time; everyone knew that war was imminent, but no one could predict when it would start or who would “blink” first. Later, Israeli paratroopers sang it after they captured the Old City of Jerusalem. When the Six-Day War ended, the map of Israel had changed, and Naomi Shemer added a chorus to the song describing the new reality: “We returned to the wells/to the market and the town square/A shofar calls from the Temple Mount in the Old City/From the rocky caves/A thousand suns are burning/And we shall go down to the Dead Sea by way of Jericho again.” Shemer performed the updated version for a group of paratroopers, and responding to their applause, she said: “I should thank you. It is easier to change a song than to change a city!”

### Was Israeli music influenced by rock music?

Yes, but not until the late 1960s. Before then rock music was essentially viewed as “foreign” and “un-Israeli.” In fact, in 1965 government officials barred the Beatles from entering Israel, fearing the band would “corrupt the minds of Israeli youth.” Rock music wasn’t accepted into the Israeli mainstream until Israelis began recording rock tunes in Hebrew. And it helped that its first singers/songwriters, Arik Einstein and Shalom Hanoach, were graduates of the army’s *Lehaqot Tzvaiyot*; had roots in the kibbutz movement; and continued to sing patriotic songs. In 1967 Arik Einstein collaborated with Shmulik Kraus and Josie Katz to create an ensemble called *HaChalonot HaGvohim* (The High Windows); its album of the same name is considered by many to be the first authentic Israeli rock album. Their Mamas and the Papas harmonization and Beatles-influenced rhythm section combined with lyrics in Hebrew incorporating poetic texts and biblical topics appealed to Israeli musical taste of the time. In their