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Only echoes remain of Egypt's songs of peace

Cairo recruited poets and songwriters in support of the 1979 accord, but most of their works have been forgotten

Ofir Winter / Mar. 12, 2019

There are many poems and songs that evoke Israel's memories of its peace agreement with Egypt, signed four decades ago this month. One of the Hebrew songs most associated with the event is "Yihiye Tov" ("Things Will Get Better"), composed and sung by David Broza, with lyrics by Yehonatan Gefen, who was inspired by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977. The song expressed the longing of many Israelis at the time for a reconciliation with the country's southern neighbor (with words like, "And we said, 'Let's make up and live as brothers'"), but even then noted the Palestinian problem that remained unresolved, clouded bilateral relations and contributed over the years to making the peace a "cold" one ("And then he said, 'Let's do it, just get out of the territories").

The realms of Egyptian poetry and music back then also paid tribute to the historic moment: Between 1977 and 1982, from Sadat's visit until Israel withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula, Egyptian radio and television stations produced dozens of songs extolling the virtues of peace. Moreover, at the end of 1977 the association of Egyptian poets issued a special collection entitled, "The Most Honest Words About the Peace Journey," which included 23 "folk poems," some penned by senior Egyptian officials. The Egyptian national anthem was also adapted to reflect the new atmosphere of peace, with the belligerent 1960 version ("It has been a long time, oh my weapon!") replaced in 1979 with an anthem centered on the Egyptian homeland, ("My homeland, my homeland, my homeland, you have my love and my heart").

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