

The origin of the Israeli hymn Hatikva

The melody for *Hatikvah* derives from [La Mantovana](#), a 16th-century Italian song, composed by Giuseppe Cenci (Guisseppino del Biado) ca. 1600 with the text "Fuggi, fuggi, fuggi da questo cielo". Its earliest known appearance in print was in the del Biado's collection of madrigals. It was later known in early 17th-century Italy as *Ballo di Mantova*.

This melody gained wide currency in Renaissance Europe, under various titles, such as the *Pod Krakowem* (folk song) (in Polish), *Cucuruz cu frunza-n sus* [*Maize with up-standing leaves*] (in Romanian) and the *Kateryna Kucheryava* (in Ukrainian). This melody was also famously used by the Czech composer Bedrich [Smetana](#) in his symphonic poem celebrating Bohemia, *Má vlast*, as *Vltava* (Die Moldau).

The adaptation of the music for *Hatikvah* was done by [Samuel Cohen in 1888](#). Cohen himself recalled many years later that he had hummed *Hatikvah* based on the melody from the song he had heard in [Romania](#), *Carul cu boi* [*The Ox Driven Cart*].

The harmony of *Hatikvah* follows a minor scale, which is often perceived as mournful in tone and is rarely encountered in national anthems. There is a modulating shift to Major key as the words *Tikvatenu* and *Hatikva* appear, both mingled with a romantic octave leap which gives new dramatic energy to the melodic line. As the title "The Hope" and the words suggest, the import of the song is optimistic and the overall spirit uplifting.

De la Kurti Plohn