

Bursting the Bubble: The Eurovision Song Context Is Finally Accessible to Deaf People

By: Nena Bar*

By Nena Bar the very fact that I - a deaf woman, who speaks Israeli sign language - am writing about the Eurovision, is not a given (although it should be). Full disclosure: I'm not a Eurovision fan, but the issue of accessibility builds a life of choice. A life in which we decide if the event is intriguing or dull, exciting or embarrassing. That is the essence of equality - because right until this last Eurovision, I was forced to get up from the family couch or flip through the broadcast, and not out of any true choice.

I've had the opportunity to witness two significant events in the annals of Eurovision, twenty years apart, though they weren't made accessible - Dana International and Netta Barzilai, each a jarring phenomenon in her own way. These are the "pantheonic" moments I wished to see adapted into sign language in real time. So, when Netta Barzilai sang "Nana Banana" and was being translated by a talented deaf performer, it was a real festive moment of *Tikkun*, at the center of the screen instead of an insulting little bubble at the bottom corner.

While all of this did not gloss over the disgrace of the lack of accessibility in the Independence Day ceremony (only a week prior), it shows that here we have it, a revolutionary model that allows us to tell broadcasters: Burst the bubble and learn this new, egalitarian vision presented by Kan. As someone who's experienced the invalidation of sign language because of an archaic perception of deafness, I felt elevated and complete at the sight of a screen speaking in sign language. The body gives into the vibrant movements of the language in space, and for a moment I felt like I had room in it. In these moments I wanted to reach out and touch the hand of the girl I was, who never watched TV, and say to her - here, it's happening.

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