

Listening Log – Religion

Peter Rauscher

"I pledge my honor that I have abided by the Stevens Honor System."

Intro

The track I listened to this week was Leonard Cohen's "The Story of Isaac", a song he recorded and included on his 1967 album "Songs of Leonard Cohen." The song draws its inspiration from the biblical account of Abraham and Isaac, in which God required Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice as a test of his faith.

Description

As I listened to the song, I became aware of the guitar chords' slow, solemn pace, which gave the song a depressing vibe. The music had a low, steady waveform with a constant amplitude and frequency, which emphasized the song's reflective atmosphere. With lines like "You who build the altars now / To sacrifice these children / You must not do it anymore," the lyrics were poetic and symbolically rich. The song considers sacrifice, faith, and morality from a religious standpoint. The message in Cohen's lyrics is that blindly adhering to religious customs and traditions can cause harm and ruin. He suggests that it goes against our inborn human instincts of love and protection, raising ethical concerns about the practice of sacrificing one's own child as an act of faith. A contemplative atmosphere for listeners to consider their own relationship with religion and spirituality is created by the song's use of poetic lyrics and a slow, melancholy melody.

Experience

This track spoke to me personally, because I was raised in a Roman Catholic household. I was impressed by Cohen's use of music to make a strong point about the perils of blindly adhering to religious customs without questioning their morality. As a kid, I was constantly reflecting on my own beliefs and the place of religion in my life, as some of the stories I heard depicted in the Bible described horrific, often deadly events and extreme consequences for even minor transgressions. Overall, "The Story of Isaac" is a strong and challenging song that does a good job of questioning conventional religious beliefs and practices.