

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Hey, it's Mishy. Before we begin, I just wanted to ask you something. As you know, we're quickly approaching the end of our season. In fact, there are only two more episodes left. Then we'll be going off air for a few months, during which we'll collect brand new stories, and come back - sometime in the Fall - with a whole new season of Israel Story. But before we part for the summer, we wanted to touch base with you. You know, when we began this show, at the very beginning, there were so few listeners that we basically knew them all. I mean in order to get feedback about a story, I'd more or less just have to call my parents. But things have changed quite a bit since then, and now, with tens of thousands of listeners to each episode, we feel like we want to know a bit more about you. So we've prepared a short survey, to help us understand who you are. You can find it on our site, [israelstory.org](http://israelstory.org) or else on [surveynerd.com/israelstory](http://surveynerd.com/israelstory), that's [surveynerd.com/israelstory](http://surveynerd.com/israelstory). The survey shouldn't take more than five minutes to complete, and it will really help us get a sense of who you are, what you like, what you don't like, what you want to hear more of. Things like that. So thank you all so much. OK, now let's begin today's episode.

**Izi Mann:** The first broadcast of 'Voice of Israel,' Israeli radio, was at one minute before four o'clock in the afternoon, on May 14, 1948, just one minute before David Ben-Gurion began to declare the State of Israel.

**Mishy Harman:** How did the radio begin? What did they say?

**Izi Mann:** The announcers... There were two announcers. They said, "Listen to 'Voice of Israel.'"

**Mordechai Zlotnik-Avida:** *[In Hebrew] Ha'azinu Le'Kol Yisrael, Ha'azinu Le'Kol Yisrael. [HaTikvah starts playing, goes under]*

**Izi Mann:** And the two announcers were at the same place where the ceremony of the Declaration of the State of Israel was held. This was in Museum of Tel Aviv.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Izi Mann, a veteran 'Voice of Israel' broadcaster, and the country's chief radio historian, is describing what would have normally been the highlight of any broadcasting career. But reality, it turns out, was a bit less... glamorous.

**Izi Mann:** They were sitting in the toilet cabins of the museum, because there was not enough place for them to sit.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** That's right, the live Declaration of the State of Israel... brought to you from... the bathroom.

**Izi Mann:** It was a very small hall. Only the signatories of the State of Israel and the Rabbi that was there and a few other people were in the main hall. From time to time during the ceremony, two journalists came from the main hall to the area of the toilet and gave them notes saying what is happening now or what will happen later so they could say something.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Everything about the ceremony, and the broadcast, was last minute. That night, at midnight, the British Mandate over Palestine was scheduled to end.

**Izi Mann:** It was a Friday afternoon. And it was held very secretly, because they were afraid that if people know where it would happen, Egyptian airplanes would come and bomb the place.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** A small team of radio engineers had been working around the clock to get this live broadcast up and running.

*[enter music]*

**Izi Mann:** They took from from the main studios of 'Voice of Jerusalem' - the formal radio station of the British Mandate - each time they took some technical equipment with them. In one case, they took it in a convoy that went from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. And one woman pretended that she was pregnant, and under her dress she hid some pieces of equipment. And in Tel Aviv they gathered all these pieces together to build a kind of transmitter. They finished all the

installations, luckily, half-an-hour before. And, of course, they were still afraid because the transmitter was not that strong these times.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** So as Ben Gurion read the declaration.

**David Ben Gurion:** *[In Hebrew] Le'Ficach Nitkanasnu, Anu Chavrei Moe'etzet Ha'Am... [goes to under]*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Many of the citizens of the new State couldn't actually hear him.

**Izi Mann:** Some people say that they heard it even in the Galilee, although the transmitter was very very weak.

**David Ben Gurion:** *[In Hebrew] U'Ve'Tokef Zchuteinu Ha'Tiv'it Ve'Ha'Historit. [goes under...].*

**Izi Mann:** Ehhh... Some people say that in Jerusalem they couldn't hear it, but still people heard about it.

**David Ben Gurion:** *[In Hebrew] Anu Mchrizim Ba'Zot Al Hakamat Medina Yehudit Be'Eretz Yisrael, Hi Medinat Yisrael [applause].*

*[enter music, singing in the clear for a beat - היום - אחות היא מלחמתנו, לכן רחוק אני מכאן]*

**Mishy Harman:** I imagine it was crucial for Ben Gurion and for the government that the citizens actually hear the Declaration of Independence on the radio.

**Izi Mann:** Of course, this is the meaning of declaration, I mean if you declare something you want that people know about it.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** And in a time well before TV or the Internet, the way people knew about things was from the radio.

*[music comes up in the clear for a few beats - האמיני  
ביום'בוא]*

**Izi Mann:** The radio in these times was really a piece of furniture in the middle of the living room.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** And that's how...

*[enter music]*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Very quickly, everyone heard the news.

**Izi Mann:** The rumor began to spread somehow, and of course everybody spoke about it. People were dancing.

*[hora music singing comes, goes under throughout the following narration]*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Hey, I'm Mishy Harman, and this is Israel Story. Israel Story is brought to you by PRX and is produced together with Tablet Magazine. Our episode today, is part one of a two part series, called “**68 and Counting.**” It's based on a live show that we just finished touring the States with. Basically these two episodes are a journey through the story of Israel. Over the last few months, we've spent endless hours in all kinds of archives, learning everything we could about Israel's Independence Day, *Yom Ha'Atzmaut*. We were looking for little stories, bite-size ones, that took place on *Yom Ha'Atzmaut* itself, in ten year intervals, and that somehow reflected their era. So we're going to march together in extravagant military parades, hopefully hit some fade-away jump shots, try not to topple governments over sexy lingerie, and much much more. Part one will take us from 1948 to 1978, and part two - our season finale - will bring us up to date.

Alright, here we go. Ten years after that first radio broadcast, things were kind of rough in Israel. But even though there were rations on food and gas, and people were lining up for bread, the government decided to throw a huge party on Independence Day: *Chagigat Ha'Asor*. There was a big exhibit – kind of like a state fair – in Jerusalem. The Dead Sea Scrolls were on display there, as was the original copy of the Declaration of Independence. There were also all kinds of other Israeli innovations: Solar panels, sprinklers, Uzi guns.

Israel's President, Yitzhak Ben Zvi, opened the exhibit with what was supposed to be some sort of spectacular light show. He ceremoniously proclaimed "Let There Be Light," pressed the button... and the whole electrical circuit crashed...

That very same day, a slightly embarrassed Ben Zvi went home and received a delegation of Persian Jews in his *tzrif*, his hut, which was the President's official residence.

The delegation came bearing a gift, all the way from Iran - a giant Persian rug. The next day it was even written up in a tiny announcement in the newspapers. Now once we stumbled upon that little article, we became obsessed with finding that carpet. And we did!

All the gifts that President Ben Zvi received back in the 50s and 60s are stashed away in the basement of the Ben Zvi Institute in Jerusalem - including that carpet. But one of the researchers there had some bad news for us.

**Tamar Fuks:** Ahhh... We can't take out the carpet, but I can show you a picture, and we can speak about it.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** The carpet, she insisted, was way too big and heavy to schlep out of storage. We *did* get a glimpse of it, rolled up, in the corner. And Tamar, that's the researcher, explained how more than 30,000 Persian Jews came to Israel in the 50s, almost 6000 of them in 1958. Many, like those delegates, brought their carpets to the Holy Land. In the next story, Daniel Estrin tells us that that's not all they brought. And what they did or didn't bring, often had far reaching consequences. This is a story of two men, a sewing machine, a bicycle, and - of course - carpets.

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** Esther Shekalim was one of the "*Olim Chadashim*", the new immigrants, from Iran who came to Israel in 1958. She was four.

*[enter music]*

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** And the story she told us, is the story of two very important men in her life.

*[enter music]*

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** Her father and her uncle.

*[enter music]*

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** Her father went from rags to riches. Her uncle, from riches to rags. And it was one small thing that made all the difference. Our story starts far away, in Isfahan, in Iran.

**Esther Shekalim:** The family of my father was very poor. They were thirteen children, with father and mother in one room. Of course all of them sleep on one carpet. And they liked it.

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** Esther's father, Peretz, was eight-years-old when he started going to work with his dad. That meant hopping on a donkey and trekking to the surrounding mountain villages to sell fabrics and women's knickknacks. A few years later, Peretz' father saved up enough money to open up a shop. Peretz worked there. And Esther says he was a ladies' man.

*[enter music]*

**Esther Shekalim:** The women liked very much to buy from him. Because very very very handsome man. Very very handsome. And, yes. And he could speak very very nicely to them. And some of them also wanted to go with him but he was very afraid. He did not take the chance. If he want I don't know. I think so. Hahaha! Maybe he want, he was a young man.

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** One of Peretz's older sisters was married to a successful tailor in Tehran. Mousa. Mousa made suits for the officials who worked for the Shah.

**Esther Shekalim:** I mean he earned very good money, he had money.

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** But in the early 50s, Mousa the tailor, decided to give it all up, and immigrate to Israel. He packed his most prized possession – his sewing machine - and met up with the folks from the Jewish Agency.

**Esther Shekalim:** He arrived to the airplane in Tehran and he had his sewing machine. And then, they told him you can't take it in the same plane. Because there are many people here, and the plane will be too heavy. And so they asked him to leave it, it will come with another plane. I don't know who exactly, but Jewish people told him. Jewish people of Jewish Agency.

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** So he handed over his sewing machine. When he landed in Israel, it was nowhere to be found.

**Esther Shekalim:** They told him, the plane was burned. We don't have it anymore. They told him that the plane exploded in the air, yes! We are very, very, very, very sorry.

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** This wasn't, Esther has discovered, an isolated case.

**Esther Shekalim:** The people who cheated were bad men that took advantage that the other people were very innocent. They did not believe that Jewish people will cheat them.

*[enter music]*

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** Without his sewing machine, Mousa the tailor couldn't be Mousa the tailor anymore. He didn't have the money to buy a new one, and spent the rest of his life doing menial jobs.

**Esther Shekalim:** And he died very young, very very young he died.

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** In the summer of 1958, following his brother-in-law, Peretz also came to Israel, with his pregnant wife and three kids. But none of his stuff was "lost" in transit. Esther thinks that by then immigrants could no longer be fooled so easily. When the family arrived in Israel, they were sent to a 'development town' - built especially for immigrants called *Hatzor Ha'Glilit*, just above the Sea of Galilee.

**Esther Shekalim:** Which was a very little hole in Israel [*Esther laughs*]. It was no where!

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** Their neighbors were immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East, living in shacks, some in tents. Many of them were skilled merchants and craftsmen, but in Israel they found themselves out of jobs, and out of step with the dominant Ashkenazi culture.

*[enter music]*

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** The Shekalim family was also struggling: The Iranian cash Peretz had brought with him was worth nothing in Israel. This wasn't the life he dreamt of when he left Iran. But here he was, and he needed to support his family. So he began selling some of the Persian carpets he had schlepped to Israel. There was *one thing* he brought from Iran, however, that he did *not* sell. And that soon - proved to be a game changer:

*[enter music]*

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** His bicycle. Peretz worked out a scheme: Every morning he'd hire a taxi, tie his bicycle to the roof of the taxi, fill the back seat with rugs, and ask the driver to drop him off somewhere. Anywhere. Jerusalem, Be'er Sheva, Haifa.

**Peretz Shekalim:** [*In Hebrew*] Hadera. Gadera.

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** When he got there, he'd mount all the carpets on his bicycle and start pedaling around.

**Esther Shekalim:** He drived around Haifa and called "*shatachim, shatachim,*" carpets carpets. And everybody come. And buy.

**Peretz Shekalim:** [*In Hebrew*] *I went in the morning with the carpets.*

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** "I went in the morning with the carpets," Peretz says...

**Peretz Shekalim:** *In the evening I would come back without carpets.*

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** “And in the evening I would come back without carpets.”

During the day, as he was riding around more established neighborhoods, people would laugh at him. They’d call him “*Parsi Medune*.”

**Esther Shekalim:** *Parsi Medune?* It’s mean, “You know Persian?” And this why they called him *Parsi Medune!* Like the people from Iraq they’d call him *Iraqi Pajama* because their suits were like pajama. And there were many nicknames. The Ashkenazi they call “*vusvus*,” if they talk to somebody that don’t know Yiddish, they asked him “Vus? Vus? What? What? Everybody in Israel called them *vusvus!* [*Esther laughs*].

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** One day, during a carpet-selling trip to *Kibbutz Sde Boker* in the Negev, Peretz met a very important *vusvus*...

[*enter music*]

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** The white-haired *vusvus* in question? It was none other than Israel’s first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion.

**Esther Shekalim:** He told me that Ben Gurion asked him how it is in Israel. And my father told him that it is very difficult for the Iranian people here, but we like our country, Jewish country, like this. And he tried to sell to him a carpet. But he did not succeed. Hahaha.

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** Peretz Shekalim did this every day, for years. He’d wake up at 5am, leave with his carpets and his bicycle, and return home at midnight. Growing up, little Esther only saw him on Shabbat.

[*enter music*]

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** When she went to sleep at night, it was a pile of carpets she slept on.

**Esther Shekalim:** My bed was his stock. When the bed was very high, I knew that he had to get all the carpets and to sell them. And when my bed was very low, I knew he sold the carpets and now he has to go buy other carpets.

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** Fifty-eight years later, Peretz still gets up early every day and goes to work. Except now it's without the bicycle. He doesn't need it anymore. Today he's known as "מלך השטיחים", the King of Carpets.

**Esther Shekalim:** When people hear the Peretz Shekalim, they, "Ah! You are from the carpets!" He's known in Israel as a carpet man. He's known as *the* carpet man.

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** His store, the Peretz Shekalim International Center of Carpets is in *Gan Hair*, a flashy shopping center in downtown Tel Aviv. There are Turkish carpets, Afghani carpets, Persian carpets – all stacked in piles, or hanging from the walls. Signs dangle from strings - advertising major sales. There's this one sign near the ceiling, informing customers that, quote, "This Place has the Best and Prettiest Carpets in the World!" Exclamation mark! Esther, who is a poet, thinks about her father's journey a lot.

**Esther Shekalim:** He began, he was very little. And he worked very very very hard. Till it was really a big empire. The husband of my aunt could not bring here his sewing machine. He did not succeed here. And he died young. And *Baruch Ha'Shem*, my father could bring here his bicycle and all the world was really different for him and for all the family. It's amazing how one little thing can change one's life.

**Esther Shekalim:** *[In Hebrew] Tov Abba'le... Ani Be'ezrat Hashem Ani Avo Be'Shabbat. Beseder?*

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** Esther had to run, so she kissed her father goodbye.

**Peretz Shekalim:** *[In Hebrew] Be'ezrat Hashem.*

**Esther Shekalim:** *[In Hebrew] Yalla, Kol Tuv Abba.*

*[sound of a kiss]*

**Peretz Shekalim:** *[In Hebrew] Kol Tuv.*

**Esther Shekalim:** *[In Hebrew] Sh'Elohim Yishmor Otach.*

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** A few minutes later it was time for the daily *minyan*.

*[enter ambi of people praying]*

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** Ten men who work in the *Gan Hair* shopping center came to the store for afternoon prayers.

*[enter ambi of people praying and saying:*

*!אמן! יהיה שמו מבורך לעולם ולעולמי עולמיא יתברך]*

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** Then, when they left, eighty-four-year-old Peretz Shekalim did what his daughter Esther did when she was little:

*[enter music]*

**Daniel Estrin (narration):** He plopped himself onto a pile of carpets... and fell asleep.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Daniel Estrin's a Jerusalem-based print and radio journalist. He produced this story together with Maya Kosover. OK, so a lot changed in Israel during those years that Peretz was trying to sell his carpets. Perhaps most dramatically of all, its size: The country tripled its territory during the Six Day War in 1967. But one thing remained constant: *The* main event of every single one of Israel's first twenty Independence Day celebrations was a full-blown military parade: Air Force fighter jets, tanks, jeeps, missiles, infantry formations, you name it.

The parade rotated among Israel's main cities, and in 1968 it came to Jerusalem, a *newly unified* Jerusalem. It was less than a year after the huge victory of the Six Day War, and the parade was billed to be the greatest one to date. Six hundred thousand people attended, a fifth of Israel's population at the time. And as if that wasn't ceremonious enough, the 1968 parade was the very first event televised on the brand new Israeli TV channel. Shai Satran tells the story of that day.

**Shai Satran (narration):** So... I hate to rain on the parade, but it ended up being not only the biggest parade in Israel's history but also... its last. But we'll get to that later. For now, I want to introduce you to someone.

**Shimon Giller:** I am Shimon Giller.

**Shai Satran (narration):** Shimon was one of thousands of soldiers who took part in that parade. He was born in 1950, in Poland.

**Shimon Giller:** I have only good memories from Poland. But at school, the kids and the teachers, they were not Anti-Semitic, but eh... there was a difference of being a Jew among un-Jewish children. Many times I was called a bloody Jew or a dirty Jew, but it was just you know between kids.

*[enter music]*

**Shai Satran (narration):** Shimon's nuclear family emigrated from Poland in 1958, when he was a kid. They didn't have many other relatives.

**Shimon Giller:** My father's and mother's families both were in the Holocaust and were almost totally eliminated.

**Shai Satran (narration):** His father, a sewing machine mechanic, struggled to find a job in Israel.

**Shimon Giller:** Our standard of living dropped down very sharply.

**Shai Satran (narration):** But, all in all, they were very happy with their decision, and Shimon has fond memories of his childhood in their new home in Tel Aviv. He remembers, for example, going to see the Independence Day military parade with his parents. His favorite part?

**Shimon Giller:** Tanks, the tanks were. The tanks were making a lot of noise, they were huge. When you are small the tank looks like a mountain.

**Shai Satran (narration):** When the Six Day War broke out, Shimon was a senior in high school. He looked on as his friends, just a year or two older than him, tripled Israel's size. It was a resounding victory, and a swift one.

**Shimon Giller:** The war was cheap. Really cheap for us. Casualties yes, but not very much. Yeah, I was at hospitals, I saw one of my friend was shot and died at the beginning of the war. But the price was cheap

really. There was a euphoria, everybody thought that it was a sign from God.

**Shai Satran (narration):** Shimon was eager to join the army himself.

**Shimon Giller:** I enlisted to the Israeli army at August '67, three months after the Six Days War. I enlisted to *Golani* Division, to the *Sayeret Golani*.

**Shai Satran (narration):** When I asked him about his training, Shimon summed it up like this.

**Shimon Giller:** To kill, to kill, to kill, yeah. We were trained to kill.

**Shai Satran (narration):** But their very first mission after training was a relatively peaceful one... Basically, it was to kill *time*. They were sent to take part in the 1968 military parade. The days before were devoted to rehearsing.

**Shimon Giller:** We sat...

*[enter music]*

**Shimon Giller:** Like puppets! Not moving! The infantry was marching all the way, three times a day, and we were driving a jeep, yeah, it was very convenient. At evenings, even though it wasn't allowed, I jumped to home to see my family.

**Shai Satran (narration):** More than anything, it was a much-appreciated break for Shimon and his teammates. And there was one other, unexpected, perk: Shimon got to be on TV.

**Shimon Giller:** I didn't know at the time, but I was filmed with a focus on me. They focused on me and all my friends were very excited to see it because television was not at all homes then.

**Shai Satran (narration):** Sure, not all homes had TVs, but those that did were watching. It was the first broadcast of the only Israeli channel. Let's just say that ratings were through the roof. Still, there was at least one home, in Jerusalem, that decided not to tune in.

**Ali Qleibo:** Now would you imagine that I would watch it on TV? Now really, *[Ali laughs]*, course not.

**Shai Satran (narration):** That’s Ali Qleibo, he was fourteen at the time.

**Ali Qleibo:** No no no. No, I had no patience. We did not want to see them. It is like seeing a monster in the monster movie. And these were the instruments of the monster. You don't understand how we see you. You think you are wonderful and sweet.

**Shai Satran (narration):** Ali’s a Palestinian anthropologist, and a painter. He was born in Jerusalem, as were his parents, and *their* parents before them.

*[enter music]*

**Shai Satran (narration):** We asked if he could tell us about his family’s connection to Jerusalem. He looked at us, grinned, and asked, “how far back do you want to go?”

**Ali Qleibo:** You should always bear in mind that my family and Jerusalem are one history. On my mother's side we're 1,300 years in the city. And my great grandfather is buried at the Dome of the Rock.

**Shai Satran (narration):** Growing up in the Old City, which was Jordan before the 67 War, Ali had never spoken with, or even seen, Jews. That changed, of course, the day the IDF soldiers entered the Old City.

**Ali Qleibo:** In the beginning people thought the Jews were Iraqis because they did not look like us, they were dark and they looked like what we imagined Iraqis to be like. So we thought the Iraqis have come to save us.

**Shai Satran (narration):** A year later, the military would parade through the now-unified Jerusalem. By then, Ali no longer thought they were Iraqis. The occupation had begun.

*[enter music]*

**Shai Satran (narration):** For Ali and his family, the idea of a “unified Jerusalem” meant that their home was no longer really their home.

**Ali Qleibo:** So you can imagine when the parade came in Jerusalem in '68 for us it was highly highly highly highly traumatizing, it was rubbing salt into a wound.

**Shai Satran (narration):** The situation was volatile. Tense. The police wanted to minimize any potential for violence, so they asked the Arabs of East Jerusalem to stay in their homes throughout the day. A bunch of newspapers declared it the Arabs' "Pajama Day." That humor is lost on Ali.

**Ali Qleibo:** Unfortunately in a macho society it becomes clever and witty and people say, ah, how nice. But for me I found it very offensive.

**Shai Satran (narration):** I wondered if Ali's feelings weren't those of an older, more politically aware, adult. I mean, as a boy, hadn't he been a tiny bit excited - just like Shimon - by the whole commotion: The tanks, and the planes, and the missiles? Apparently not.

**Ali Qleibo:** No I'm not macho. That's your game. It's you cannot assume that all men want to play football, all men want to play tanks. This is another stereotype.

**Shai Satran (narration):** Each of these parades ended up costing tens of millions of *Lirot*. And *Lirot* weren't something the government had in abundance. So, there's the obvious question: Why do it? Ali, of course, has his answer.

**Ali Qleibo:** It is to glorify the war, the glorify their victory, to show, it was an exhibition, they were exhibiting their power. We have the power to make what we want in the world. We are the strongest military power in the Middle East. And we're here to stay in Jerusalem.

**Shai Satran (narration):** Shimon's explanation is different:

**Shimon Giller:** It meant a lot to the Holocaust victims. After being helpless, and without any ability to defend yourself, it was very assuring to see Israeli soldiers with an Israeli flag and Israeli tanks. And it was calming the fear of the Holocaust victims.

**Shai Satran (narration):** Whatever the reasons were for holding the extravagant parade, they were quickly reconsidered after that year's military showcasing. There was a growing sense that the parades were no longer really necessary. That Israel, now a major regional power, didn't have to display its might so publicly anymore. The very next year, 1969, for the first time in the young country's history, there was no military parade on Independence Day.

**Ali Qleibo:** The point was made in that parade.

*[enter music]*

**Ali Qleibo:** They did not have to redo it. It would have been an overstatement.

**Shimon Giller:** People began to look at it as childish. The army also was not as popular as before.

**Shai Satran (narration):** For many Israelis, Shimon is one of them, the post-Six Day War euphoria was short-lived. Once it wore off, the war's legacy was a mixed one. A sobering one. We had this tremendous victory. And now what?

Just six years later, all those shiny tanks and jets and missiles from the parade, were put to a different use. And many of Shimon's teammates, those guys smiling from their jeeps on TV, were killed in the *Yom Kippur War*.

*[music comes up, and exits]*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Shai Satran is a senior producer on our show. He reported this story together with Katie Pulverman. In 1973 there was a small scale attempt to revive the parade. It didn't go anywhere, and was canceled for good the following year.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** When I was about ten, my older brother Oren gave me a little plastic basketball hoop as a birthday gift. It had these orange suction cups and you could attach it to the wall, and basically transform your bedroom into Madison Square Garden.

Now I'd spend hours, all by myself, reenacting famous basketball games with a tennis ball. I'd always insert myself, of course, into the roster (you know, "Harman with the ball," "Harman going up for a three pointer") but all the other "players"... they were real: There was the Magic-Bird rivalry during the 1986 Celtics-Lakers NBA Finals and there was the heartbreaking game seven between Patrick Ewing's Knicks and Hakeem Olajuwon's Rockets. But the game I used to recreate more than any other was one that took place six years *before* I was born - the 1977 game in which Maccabi Tel Aviv faced off against the mighty Red Army team of CSKA Moscow.

This was all before the internet, and I had never actually seen any of the moves of the players I was impersonating. But still, I'd have...

*[enter music]*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Fake Aulcie Perry block shots, fake Jim Boatwright sink jumpers, fake Motti Aroesti find fake Miki Berkovich for an easy lay up.

And each game would end with the exact same play: Real Mishy Harman would dribble the ball between his legs as time wound down. With three seconds left on the imaginary clock, and the entire crowd on its feet, he'd pass the ball to the wall.

Fake Tal Brody, the team captain, would catch it, turn around, and - with one second on the shot clock - he'd release a fade-away from downtown as he - that is, I - fell backwards on my bed.

Now I played out this scenario quite a bit, so I got pretty good at sinking that desperation shot. (Tal Brody won the game for Maccabi like ninety percent of the time). And when that happened I'd yell with ecstasy and throw victorious fists into the air. I'd make believe that all the other players - Lou Silver, Bob Griffin, even coach Ralph Klein - they'd all pile up on Brody. And then Brody would shake them off, face the imaginary microphone and deliver his most famous one-liner:

*[Tal Brody clip of saying Anachnu Al HaMapa]*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** "We're on the map," he said, "and we're staying on the map, not just in sports but in everything." Now, working on Israel Story, let's just say that sometimes childhood dreams come true.

**Mishy Harman:** Hey Tal, Hi! How you doing?

**Tal Brody:** OK.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Yup, I got to meet my childhood hero. And what does any of this have to do with Yom Ha'Atzmaut? Well, on Israel's thirtieth Independence Day, in May 1978, there was a small article tucked away in the upper left corner of page twelve of *Ma'ariv*. Its headline was a quote by an American immigrant, who had become the closest thing to an Israeli god. "I'm saying goodbye to the ball," Tal Brody declared, "but not to basketball."

**Mishy Harman:** Was retiring bittersweet?

**Tal Brody:** Retiring was at the time that I wanted to retire, you know? You can't play basketball all your life.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** But that wasn't what he had thought growing up in Trenton, New Jersey. He started bouncing around the ball at the local JCC, when he was eight. Later he became the star of his high-school team, and led them to an undefeated season, before he was recruited to be the starting point guard for the University of Illinois. When he graduated college, in '65, his dream was within reach.

**Tal Brody:** All my direction was to become an NBA ball player, and then... let's say I was twelfth or thirteenth in the draft. Baltimore Bullets.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** That's when Tal got an offer that changed the rest of his life.

**Tal Brody:** US Maccabi sent me a letter to join the seventh Maccabiah games with the US team.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** The Maccabiah is sort of like the Jewish Olympics. Tal accepted the offer, and you probably won't be too shocked to hear that the Americans went home with the gold. Tal, however, decided to stay.

**Tal Brody:** Nobody could understand why I would go to Israel and give up a career in the NBA. My plans were to come to Israel for a year, not to make *Aliyah*, but to try and take basketball to another level.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** It was 1966, the year before the Six Day War. Israel was small, fairly poor. And that meant that there were many adjustments as far as Tal was concerned.

**Tal Brody:** You know, coming in from University of Illinois: 16,618 people at a ball game, private plane, the best conditions in the locker room. And coming into Israel and having to go up to Haifa and get our games rained out, or playing in a dust storm in Kibbutz Nir David Beit Alpha or playing outdoors in the winter. And I always say the same thing, that I went to Israel to play basketball but I stayed there because what I saw the basketball was doing for the country.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Tal became a national star. When the *Yom Kippur War* broke out, in 1973, he was abroad...

*[enter music]*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Playing with the Israeli national team in Spain.

**Tal Brody:** We were able to get back on an El-Al flight to Israel. And all of us had orders waiting where to go for reserve.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** The shock of the war, and the high number of casualties, threw Israel into despair.

**Tal Brody:** We lost a lot of soldiers injured and killed during that period of time, and... You know, so in a small country like Israel it affects everybody. It hit quite a few families. Up to 1977, during that historical year of basketball, actually the country was basically in mourning. But that basketball season really pulled everybody out of that mourning and put smiles back onto the people's faces when our team beat the Russian team.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Now, if there's one moment that Tal revisits again and again, it's that moment - February 17, 1977 - the semi-finals of the European Championship. It was the height of the Cold War: The Israeli raid on Entebbe was still a fresh memory, and the USSR had long ago broken off diplomatic ties with Israel. CSKA Moscow, who had won the previous four European titles, refused to play in Israel, so the game - in which Maccabi was supposed to be absolutely annihilated - took place in a small Belgian town called Virton.

*[enter music]*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Every rebound symbolized the struggle between Western Capitalism and Soviet Communism, every made free throw felt like David hurling a stone from his sling at the mighty Goliath, sorry... the mighty Sergei Belov. In the end, there was total euphoria. Tal will probably never forget the final score.

**Tal Brody:** 91-79.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** An entire country was in a state of total ecstasy.

*[enter sound of celebrations after the victory over CSKA]*

**Tal Brody:** Right after the game all the fans that were piled into this small gymnasium in Virton in Belgium just ran onto the floor, singing, dancing the *Horah*, singing *Am Yisrael Chai* and *Hevenu Shalom Aleichem* and picked us up the players and and when they put us down and as I was going to the locker room with all this excitement on the floor, that's when Alex Giladi caught me and it just came right out of my heart. I mean, something that you can't plan... an event like this, you can't plan an Israeli team beating the Soviet Union, you know, at that period of time. It was like really fulfilling a dream and a miracle.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Tal's amazingly simple sentence quickly became the most iconic soundbyte in Israeli history, our equivalent of "One Small Step for Man." There was just one minor issue. It was wrong.

Quick grammar lesson: *Al HaMapa* means "On the Map." But *Ba'Mapa*, that's what Tal said, well... That means *in* the map. So yeah... We were *in* the map.

**Mishy Harman:** Do you laugh when people point out that your most famous sentence ever is actually grammatically incorrect in Hebrew?

**Tal Brody:** My Hebrew is not the best. I mean if I knew that I was going to be here fifty years in Israel, I would have went to the Ulpan and studied Hebrew. In my Hebrew it was correct, you know, as far as you know... So if it's *Ba'Mapa* or *Al Mapa* you know Israelis they like to judge, and they're like *Yekes*, you know. So some look at it that way, some look at it that way, but the meaning of it everybody knew.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** He's right. Everyone in Israel knew that Tal and his buddies had put the country "*in*" the map. And it was about more than just basketball. For many it was a better-late-than-never victory over the cossacks who had beaten and killed their grandparents in Russia. Maccabi - הקבוצה של המדינה, the team of the country - was, in some very real way, Israel.

**Tal Brody:** In the beginning you only had one television station, and a Thursday night you didn't have any Knesset meetings or Bar Mitzvahs or weddings, everybody knew that if Maccabi Tel Aviv on a Thursday night at 8:30 is playing, everybody was home or at the stadium watching the game. The streets were empty, yeah.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** After that huge win, there was one last hurdle - the Finals - which were to be played six weeks later in Yugoslavia, against the talented Italian team of Mobilgirgi Varese.

**Tal Brody:** We had about five thousand fans that came from Israel to that game to cheer us on.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Maccabi won the title. By a single point. More than 200,000 people celebrated in the streets of Tel Aviv. It was a national holiday.

**Tal Brody:** Prime Minister Rabin received us in his premises and he told us, you know, how the season, you know, like the basketball really... how important it was for the Israeli public, you know, to give the spirit back to the public that we can do it.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Tal retired the following *Yom Ha'Atzmaut*, 1978. But that game remains a classic. Even today it airs on TV from time to time.

Exactly a year later, on *Yom Ha'Atzmaut* 1979, Tal was awarded the Israel Prize.

**Tal Brody:** I received a lot of trophies in my life, but this is something really special. It's not a trophy, but it's like saying 'thank you.' And it was very meaningful for me, as a new immigrant to Israel, *Oleh Chadash*.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** In the years since he ran an importing business.

**Tal Brody:** Sporting goods, sporting shoes, sporting wear.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** He sold life insurance and pension plans.

**Tal Brody:** Never imagined myself as an insurance salesman.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** And then, in 2008, Bibi asked Tal to run in the *Likkud* primaries.

**Tal Brody:** Basically, one of the ideas was that I would become the Minister of Sport.

**Mishy Harman:** I remember that you said at the time that...

*[enter music]*

**Mishy Harman:** You were looking forward to playing some one-on-one with Obama.

**Tal Brody:** Definitely, yes.

**Mishy Harman:** You think you would win?

**Tal Brody:** I would say I would, yeah. *[Tal laughs]*. I saw him shoot, so I think I would have an advantage. *[Mishy and Tal laugh]*. No... I... He knows how to play basketball, definitely. He was a Senator in Illinois, legislature, he should know how to play basketball.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Tal lost in the primaries, and didn't get a seat in the Knesset. But instead he was appointed as a Goodwill Ambassador, who goes around the world, talking about Israel. He's become very diplomatic, but at heart, he's still a true athlete. And... I guess you can never really shed athlete talk.

**Tal Brody:** The sky is the limit, you know.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Or:

**Tal Brody:** How much you put into it, that's what you're gonna get out of it.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** And...

**Tal Brody:** You had to take one step backward in order to take two steps forward.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** And, my favorite...

**Tal Brody:** If you keep a balanced life, I think you can go the distance.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** But when all's said and done, for such an unlikely national hero, who has made an Americanism into quintessential Israeliness, and who - though he doesn't know it - scored more pretend game winning shots in my childhood bedroom than anyone else, cliches actually do work.

**Tal Brody:** You know, to take that ride with Maccabi Tel Aviv together. It's been a beautiful journey for me.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** If you want to hear more about Tal Brody, and the dramatic tale of that legendary 1977 Maccabi team, look out for a fabulous new documentary film - called "On The Map." It is written and directed by Dani Menkin and produced by Nancy Spielberg, Roberta Grossman and Hey Jude Productions. It comes out this fall, in theaters around the US.

And that's our episode. Part one of "**68 and Counting.**" Next week, in our season finale, we will pick up our journey with Yom Ha'Atzmaut 1988.

So we try to end each episode with a podcast recommendation, and today I want to introduce you to a new show, HerMoney with Jean Chatzky. It was created to empower women to live better by focusing on their finances, and it's just really really good. The show features interviews with inspiring women from Gretchen Rubin to Arianna Huffington. It's the place to learn about earning more, saving more, investing wisely and building the financial life you want. God knows I should implement some of the advice they give... You can find HerMoney on iTunes, Stitcher or [jeanchatzky.com](http://jeanchatzky.com).

All those places, minus [jeanchatzky.com](http://jeanchatzky.com) that is, is where you can catch all of *our* episodes. You can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, all under Israel Story. And I'm reminding you, one more time, to go to our site, [israelstory.org](http://israelstory.org), and donate to our ongoing listener drive. Thank you so much to all our listeners who already contributed. You make our show possible.

And, speaking of which, how could we possibly end an episode without my usual spiel about looking for a sponsor? Yup, that's still happening... So to all you potential sponsors out there, all I can say is this: We've got a phenomenal audience, people just like you, who are all interested in and engaged with Israel. So if you want to support our show, and reach what has become a lot a lot of people, email us at [sponsor@prx.org](mailto:sponsor@prx.org).

We just finished our live show tour in the States. It couldn't have happened without the amazing vision of the folks at the JCC Manhattan, and especially Megan Whitman, and the generous support from Faye and Hartley Koschitzky (Co-Shit-Ski), the Charles H. Revson Foundation, Zabars and Zabars.com. Thanks to Ronit Jacobs and Neta Shacham at the Oshman Family JCC in Palo Alto, to Liba Kornfeld and Leslie Fischman at the JCC New Orleans and to Adene Sacks, Dawne Bear Novicoff and Rena Fischer. Lastly, a huge thanks to our friends in Chicago: To Anne Lanski and the iCenter team, to Lori and Benjie Sagarin, Rabbi Michael Weinberg, Bruce Crane and Beth Sair at Temple Beth Israel, and of course, to Binnie and Mark Swislow and Laura, Leon and Bracha Finkel, who became our families, literally, during our stay in Chicago.

Both the episode and the live show were created together with the one and only Adrienne Mathiowetz, who spent a whole Independence-Day-infused month with us in Israel.

Israel Story is brought to you by PRX - the Public Radio Exchange, and is produced in partnership with Tablet Magazine. Go to [tabletmag dot com slash Israel Story](http://tabletmag.com/slash/Israel%20Story) to hear all our previous episodes. Our staff includes Yochai Mital, Shai Satran, Roe Gilron, Maya Kosover, Shoshi Shmulovitz and Rachel Fisher. Itay Hyman, Amir Factor and Katie Pulverman are our incredible production interns. Adam Rose is our music intern and wrote original music for this episode. Julie Subrin's our Executive Producer. I'm Mishy Harman, and we'll be back next time with part two of '**68 and Counting.**' Till then, *yalla bye* and don't forget to fill out our listener survey.

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