

Mishy Harman: OK, so it's Tuesday morning, 8am. We're here together in the German Colony. A lot of traffic, people going to work, people going to school. And can you introduce yourself?

Fleur Hassan-Nahoum: Sure. My name is Fleur Hassan-Nahoum. I am a city councilwoman in Jerusalem, and I'm also the leader of the *Yerushalmim* party. Our party is a party that believes in a pluralistic Jerusalem and we fight for it every day.

Mishy Harman: And where, where are we Fleur?

Fleur Hassan-Nahoum: We're on the corner of Ruth Street intersecting with Rachel Imenu Street. So we have Rachel our mother, and Ruth. So two of our heroes from our heritage.

Mishy Harman (narration): Ruth Street is named for Ruth the Moabite, the heroine and namesake of the biblical Book of Ruth.

Fleur Hassan-Nahoum: It's actually very very topical that we're here today because this is what we're gonna read next Sunday.

Mishy Harman (narration): Fleur's talking about the upcoming holiday of Shavuot, when we read the Book of Ruth. And Shavuot, let me tell you, is my *absolute* favorite Jewish holiday of the year. In my mind it will always be linked to my Aunt Ilana's lasagnas and creamy cheesecakes, to folks in Jerusalem all dressed in white squirting water at each other and - perhaps most significantly - to kissing Ganit Gray outside our eleventh-grade-all-night-youth-movement-Torah-study activity in 1999. But really, Shavuot is just the best. It's all about strong women, about receiving the Torah, about the wheat and barley harvest. I mean, what else could you possibly want from a Jewish holiday?

And here we were, Fleur and I, standing underneath a shiny new street sign with the name of this wondrous holiday's central figure. Ruth.

Fleur Hassan-Nahoum: And we have here the sign that says *Rehov Ruth*. Why is this significant? It's because at the moment the sign says [*in Hebrew*] "*Giborat Megilat Ruth, Em-Savo Shel David Ha'Melech*," which means 'the hero of the Book of Ruth and the great-grandmother of King David.'

Mishy Harman (narration): So, that all sounds great. A nice public recognition of a G-d-fearing woman, who - as you might recall - was the Bible's quintessential convert to Judaism.

After her Israelite husband, Mahlon, passed away, Ruth refused to part with her mother-in-law, Naomi. “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you,” she famously told her. “Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your G-d my G-d. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried.”

Ruth followed Naomi back to Bethlehem, where she met a man, Boaz. They got married, had a son, and started quite the illustrious lineage, which supposedly included David, Solomon and Jesus.

Ruth herself has become a feminist icon, a symbol of acceptance, of loyalty, of faith.

But you might have noticed that I said that the Jerusalem street sign bearing her name was new. You see, the biographical description in the previous sign only mentioned that she was the wife of Boaz and the great-grandmother of King David.

Fleur Hassan-Nahoum: In other words the whole identity of Ruth was only based on the fact that she was the wife of somebody and the great-grandmother of somebody. And her whole heroic story was completely ignored.

Mishy Harman (narration): A conscientious resident by the name of Roni Hazon Weiss pointed out this absurdity, and reached out to the councilmen and women of *Yerushalmim*.

Fleur Hassan-Nahoum: We are very much a party that preserves and enhances and strengthens the rights of women in the city especially in the public space. And so we went to the Committee on Naming Streets, and we changed the sign to ‘hero of the Book of Ruth and great-grandmother of King David.’ But the reason why this is significant is because since then, we’ve decided to take this actually quite seriously, less than seven percent of street signs in the whole of Jerusalem are named after women. Out of a thousand and something we have only seventy.

Mishy Harman (narration): And, like a true politician, Fleur has a message for the nation.

Fleur Hassan-Nahoum: I call to the public, now, today, please, if you have ideas and biographies of impressive women, who have contributed greatly to

our people, sent them in to us, and we will make sure that we put them in front of the Committee for Naming Streets.

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.

You haven't heard from us for a while, mainly because we've been busy crisscrossing North America with our latest live show, "Mixtape." Thanks to everyone who made this tour possible, and to the thousands and thousands of amazing fans who came to see our shows in Norfolk, Virginia, Toronto, Seattle, New York, Tenafly, Palm Beach, Princeton and Amherst. We're already planning our return with 'Mixtape,' in the Fall, so if you'd like us to come perform in your community, contact us at livetour@israelstory.org.

OK, so we are now back, for the final stretch of the season. And today we bring you our Shavout special - **Whither Thou Goest**. (That's the King James version of Ruth's altruistic saying, by the way).

We've got three fantastic modern-day Ruth stories for you in this episode. Stories of determined women, who go the ends of the earth, following their hearts and looking for love, for family, for companionship. These stories will take us as far as Thailand, Nepal and Macedonia, but will always, of course, bring us back home to Israel.

Act One - Tying a Knot. This is a story which has, for the last several years, been a big part of my life. Much like the biblical tale of Ruth and Naomi, it's about motherhood, about going far away to stand by someone, to be there for them. And it's the story of one of the most sensitive and soulful women I know. My sister. Danna Harman.

Manisha Gurung: One day I walking around the dance class and I meeting Danna and walking around.

Danna Harman: OK, so first we met, right?

Manisha Gurung: Yeah.

Danna Harman: At the dance place. What did you say?

Manisha Gurung: 'Hi.'

Danna Harman: What did I say?

Manisha Gurung: You say, 'hi.' That time is your last day in Nepal.

Danna Harman: And then I went home to Israel.

Manisha Gurung: Yeah.

Danna Harman (narration): That’s my favorite fourteen-year-old in the world, Manisha, Manisha Gurung. We met in Nepal three years ago, outside a Zumba class in a Kathmandu slum.

And if that sounds random, well, a lot of things about this story I am about to tell are.

It was early April, and I’d been in the country for a month, working on a story for my newspaper. The story was done, and I was leaving for Tel Aviv early that morning. But then, my flight was delayed by six hours. And just like that, I had a whole, extra, morning free - and no plans at all.

I decided to go for a walk, and headed to my favorite place in the dusty capital: The so-called Monkey Temple, perched high up on a hill. I’d come here often before, circling the temple’s base and spinning the prayer wheels. That particular morning though, instead of huffing up the steep steps to the Buddhist shrines, I wandered off into a nearby crowded neighborhood. Around me was a hum of activity: People selling mobile phone covers and bunches of parsley, incense, prayer candles, old people brushing their teeth on the sides of the road, monkeys rummaging through the trash, and flea-ridden dogs lying around in the middle of the path. That’s when I heard the Salsa music. I followed the beat, and discovered a crowded basement filled with sweaty Nepalis in spandex doing salsa moves. And, standing next to me, also peering in, were three little girls. Their obvious ringleader was this pint-sized kid in raggedy polkadot pants and no shoes. Her name was Manisha, she said.

I had vaguely been planning on going to the other side of the monkey temple, to an outdoor swimming pool I knew there. So after a few minutes at the underground Zumba class, I made some breaststroke pantomime motions to the little girls by way of explanation, and then pressed my hands together in prayer - that was goodbye; Namaste. But the girls followed me.

They were sisters, they said (or I thought they said) as we walked away. Eleven-year-old Manisha, ten-year-old Obica and nine-year-old Obica. Wait, you have the same name and you are sisters? I asked. Yes, they nodded. And they laughed. And I laughed.

Anyway, with Obica and Obica on either side of me reaching up to hold my hands, we walked along. The girls seemed excited, as kids with nothing to do can be, when suddenly walking alongside a foreigner - a white one no less. Other children with heavy book bags on their backs – who seemed to be on their way to school - yelled out, "hey, where are you going?" To which Manisha answered back: "We’re with her!"

I swam laps while the three sat, upright, on a nearby bench, watching me go back and forth and yelling out numbers. One lap. Two. Three. By ten, they had exhausted their knowledge of English. "Eleven!" they yelled out in Nepali.

Afterwards, Manisha, Obica and Obica walked me back to my guest house, a few windy dirt lanes away. I gave them some stuff I didn't need: Flip flops, a water bottle, a duffle bag, which had been a gift from a trekking company. Manisha asked me if I had any money to give her. Or maybe she didn't ask me for money, I'm not sure. I half-pretended I didn't understand. Then, when I asked her where her mom was, she said "gone." Or maybe she didn't say that at all. But at the time I thought she did.

Just as we were saying goodbye, I gave Manisha a slightly frayed business card, the last one in my wallet. It was a strange thing to do. I was living in Israel and I write for an Israeli newspaper, so my card is in Hebrew, which she obviously couldn't read. (She didn't read English either. I'm not sure she actually read too well at all). But there was a phone number on the card and an email address too, and I told Manisha that if, by chance, she and the others ever found themselves in the cyber café, they could ask someone to show them how to send an email, and they could get in touch if they wanted to. My new little friend thanked me, and tucked the card away solemnly. We both felt, I think, a little sad to part.

I snapped a photo of the three girls before I left, and on the flight home, I turned that photo into the screen saver on my mobile. That too was a strange thing to do.

After all, I barely knew them.

That trip to Nepal trip had come at the end of a tough year for me. I had done several rounds of IVF, all of which were unsuccessful. I was feeling OK on the one hand, and then again deeply sad on the other: Regretful of roads I had not taken, paralyzed when it came to choices I still felt I had to make, and worried I would always feel, and be regarded as, incomplete if I didn't have children.

I had hoped that month in Nepal, which coincided with my forty-fifth birthday, would be a time to get some energy back. I was craving space to come to terms with the fact that I was not going to be a biological mother.

Over my actual birthday weekend, I left Kathmandu to join a yoga and meditation retreat at a monastery. Could I get more cliché? The vegan food was good and the little monks playing soccer on the grounds were definitely cute. But my body hurt from sitting cross-legged for hours. And the old Tibetan monk teacher going on and on about the self, bored me somehow. One evening I snuck away from the meditation session and spent a pretty blissful hour surfing Facebook while hiding in the bathroom – on the mobile phone I was supposed to have handed in – happily 'like'ing everyone's birthday wishes to me.

A five-day trek in the rainy Annapurna mountains at the end of the Nepal trip didn't get me anywhere either. Unlike most trekkers, who wax poetic about their Sherpa guides, mine drove me crazy. He had all these silly gag jokes, like he kept pretending to tumble over the side of the cliff. And he asked me if I could schlep *his* sleeping bag, because he

had no more room in his rucksack. I would say that I spent most of my hiking hours calculating how long it had been since I had last looked at my watch.

Back in Tel Aviv after it was all over, sipping a *cafe hafuch* in my neighborhood café, it was clear to me, that despite the weeks I'd been away, the loop of questions going round and round in my head about motherhood and happiness hadn't gone anywhere at all. Was it time to give up on being a mother?

Exactly a week to the day after I met Manisha and her two Obica sidekicks and returned home, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake shook Nepal. Whole villages were wiped out, thousands of schools and hospitals were destroyed, millions were left homeless and over eight thousand people were killed.

And that's when she started calling. I remember the first time I saw the Nepal country code flash up on my mobile and heard this tiny faraway voice on the other end of the line. It didn't seem real. But it was. The local phone companies had given everyone in Nepal unlimited free calls in the weeks following the earthquake, in the somewhat futile hope that if someone was buried in the rubble but didn't have any phone credit, they might yet be able to save themselves with a free call for help. Manisha took advantage and - using a neighbor's mobile one time, and a relative's another - would ring me. She always seemed to want to stay on the line and chat, but we couldn't communicate much. I understood that Gorkha, her family village in the countryside, had been at the epicenter of the quake and was "broken," as she put it. The rented room she'd been shackled up in with her cousins in Kathmandu, was also "broken."

I would ask her if it was raining (it always was), if school was open (it wasn't) and if she was even registered at school (unclear). Then, when we ran out of things to say, I would tell her not to be scared, and that everything would be OK. I also told her that I would help — though of course I had no idea how I could actually do that.

The daydreams started hazily, drifting in and out of my head. Then they began to take on a shape and intensity of their own. Maybe it was fate, I thought to myself. Maybe I was meant to connect with Manisha and her sisters. They needed me right now. And I needed them.

My imagination started running wild. What if? What if I could adopt all three and bring them back to Israel? I could turn my extra room into a kid's room, enroll them in the day school up the road where my friend Einat sends her kids. I would take them to the same swimming class as my sister-in-law takes my niece, over at the Gordon Pool. I would drive them back to my parents for Friday night dinners, and I would read them books before they went to sleep.

I didn't tell anyone what was going on in my head. I was embarrassed. Of course, I knew better than to think that one can just go to a poor foreign country hit by natural disaster and simply scoop up a needy kid. I'd been a journalist for over twenty years and had

travelled the world - Africa, South America and wars in Afghanistan, Iraq. I had seen a lot of kids in need over the years: Orphaned kids, starving kids, lost kids. Sometimes I would write an article about them. And sometimes I would snap a photo. My heart would always ache a little, or a lot, but either way, I would always say goodbye.

But this time, something felt different. My dreams about Manisha just wouldn't go away.

Nepal is far away, and there was no easy or inexpensive way for me to get back there. My editors had already sent someone else to cover the aftermath of the earthquake and had assignments for me in Israel. And I had been planning to move to London, to live with my boyfriend Josh. So, there was all that, as well as the more mundane to-do list involving already-paid-for pilates classes, dinner plans, car stuff, health stuff. A life, in brief.

So, it was not surprising that a lot of people raised their eyebrows when I announced that I was taking time off and flying back to Kathmandu. I felt the need to explain myself, which was hard to do. My mom couldn't fathom why I would want to go to a country just as all the foreigners were trying to flee and aftershocks were ongoing. That, and she could also probably sense that I had built up unspoken expectations about Manisha. Maybe she didn't want me to get hurt. My dad pointed out that there were hundreds of thousands of children who needed help in Nepal, and that NGOs and UN bodies –who supposedly know what to do in this kind of crisis - were already on the ground. What exactly did I think I was going to be able to do, he asked, gently.

All this I heard – and set off.

Back in battered Kathmandu, a mere two-and-a-half weeks after I had left it, neither the city, nor the story I had written up in my head about the girls, ended up being as expected. It was like some dystopian movie, where buildings and temples you know should be on this block or that corner are just gone, reduced to heaps of concrete and metal. There were bedraggled families wandering the roads, still looking for friends and relatives, trying to find shelter. The rain was pouring non-stop and all those once-sleepy dogs were howling, endlessly.

And the girls? The two younger ones, the suspiciously identically-named Obica and Obica – were not in the capital anymore, having fled back to their ancestral villages in the countryside. And it turns out they were not sisters, just neighbors. I should've known. Manisha, though, she was right there. And she actually did have a sister, but an older one - Monika, a stranger to me.

My ideas about Manisha and who she was, and what I could be to her, needed to be further readjusted when it turned out that not only did she have a sister, but she had parents too. There was dad – an ex-soldier who seemed jovial to me, and who was the one who had brought the girls to the city when he came there looking for work. And mom – a small young woman, years younger than her husband, who tended the family

plot of land in Gorkha and who had given birth to Monika and Manisha when she herself was a mere child.

The whole family, together with hundreds of others in the slum who had lost their homes, were camped out, in the pouring rain, on a basketball court, amidst the rubble of a collapsed school. Manisha seemed far more subdued when I saw her after the quake, her eyes bloodshot from lack of sleep, and her jet black shiny hair was matted. All the family's meager possessions were buried under rubble, and the winds had blown away a makeshift tent they had received from an aid organization. There was no electricity, no running water, and little to eat. Traumatized by the earthquake, kids would start screaming when they felt even the slightest aftershock.

Maybe I had misunderstood when Manisha told me her mother was "gone." Or maybe Manisha wanted something from me - be it money or love - as much as I'd wanted something from her, and so had created that misunderstanding on purpose. Whatever the case, if anything was now clear, it was that this little girl I'd been secretly day-dreaming of adopting, didn't need a mom. What she needed was a new tent, and maybe some rice and beans and a camping stove. 'OK,' I thought, 'I could help with that.'

I stayed in Kathmandu for a month that time, playing a role that fell somewhere between camp counselor, cash machine and a one-woman-non-governmental-emergency-aid-organization. Or rather, that's probably how it looked from the outside. To me, and, I want to think, to Manisha and her sister too, it felt like a version of falling in love.

We spent a lot of every day together, having mini-adventures in the collapsed city, and finding more and more to make us happy despite the tragedy.

We climbed around the city's temples, many of them destroyed by the quake, so that the girls could light candles and make pujas, or prayers, for the earth to stop shaking. We stood in line for a new tent for them to sleep under, and then, when that one blew away too, set out to get another one.

We went to a bookstore and chose some books. And, as schools began reopening, I began to push for them to find somewhere to study. Manisha spent days preparing for the entrance exam for one school, which she then failed, miserably. I wanted to let her down gently, but Monika told her straight out that she only got seven points out of a hundred, leading to a torrent of tears. On a Skype call from London, Josh's then-nine-year-old son Noah, tried to cheer her up: "Math is impossible," he insisted. He too was terrible at geography, he added.

We looked into another school, where the headmaster ran away with our deposit and then, finally, after some of my Nepali friends who knew what they were doing got

involved, we found the right place. I bought Manisha glasses so she could see the blackboard.

Soon, with their mom's blessing, the girls started staying over on the spare bed in my hostel. At night, after playing on my laptop, they would put on the free eye-masks I'd gotten from Turkish Airlines and fall immediately into a deep sleep. Nothing seemed to rouse them, not dogs barking, roosters making a racket, thunder and lightning. Nothing. In the mornings, I made them brush their teeth and then would take them out, together with their mom sometimes, or a friend, for breakfast: Fried bread and milky sweet tea, boiled vegetables and a steaming plate of buffalo momos, or dumplings, which they slurped down with wildly hot sauce.

Every day we walked over to the mall to see if the movie theater on its second floor had reopened yet. When it finally did, we got tickets to see the only film playing – it was 'The Avengers' in 3D. None of us could understand the first thing about the plot, and the girls, over-excited by the combination of their first time in the theater, the superheroes flying straight at them and, an overdose of cotton candy, fell fast asleep within minutes.

When the local swimming pool reopened, I bought the girls a membership and tried to teach them the breaststroke. And then we whiled away many afternoons splashing around the shallow end with a group of young Tibetan nuns-in-training. That's probably the most lasting image I have from that trip: Manisha, holding hands with a pint-size girl with a shaved head, both of them wearing ill-fitted bathing suits, goggles askew – laughing so hard I worried they might drown.

Danna Harman: What's the name of your school?

Manisha Gurung: Kathmandu Valley High Secondary School, in Chakrapath.

Danna Harman: Very good.

Manisha Gurung: Yeah.

Danna Harman: And how is that school, it's a good one?

Manisha Gurung: Yes. That school is so good. Big ground, basketball also. Swimming pool also, yeah.

Danna Harman: And what is your good subjects? What are you good at at school?

Manisha Gurung: Oh... Dancing. Dancing a lot, I love dancing. I first in dance.

Danna Harman: You're number one in dancing? No way!

Manisha Gurung: Yes, yes, yeah.

Danna Harman: Really?

Manisha Gurung: Yeah. First.

Danna Harman: What kind of dancing? Traditional dancing? Disco dancing?

Manisha Gurung: Yeah, traditional. Traditional.

Danna Harman (narration): It's now three years later, and my birthday again – forty-eight this time – and I'm back in Nepal. It's my fourth trip back here. It's not that I love being in Kathmandu so much, to be honest. It can be hard going: The pot-holed roads are clogged with honking cars and motorcycles, all of them leaving clouds of black exhaust in their wake. It's hot, dust swirls in the air. And it's rare to see blue sky at this time of the year. Even the novelty of the monkeys who roam wild has long worn off.

But there's a girl here I love. And I'm here because of her.

This year, I came to visit with Josh and his son, and the whole group of us went rafting down the Trishuli River, together with Susma, the girls' mother. That was a big hit.

To celebrate my birthday, we drove out to Ghorka, which is finally showing signs of bouncing back after the quake. We threw a makeshift party with Manisha's extended family. We actually picked them up – aunts, uncles, cousins, all twenty-one of them – in our minivan to get to the venue. It was like a circus trick. We spent the evening eating *dal bhat*, or rice with beans, with our hands, as is customary, and toasting each other with homemade alcohol, provided by their grandma. Manisha was in charge of the DJ-ing.

Meanwhile, at the Kathmandu Valley Boarding School, where the girls now study and live, Monika has just graduated tenth grade. She was given the "best athlete award," in the end-of-the-year ceremony. Manisha, after repeating year seven, is struggling along. Academics have proved a little hard for her.

This year, she came in at the bottom of her class again. So Josh, the girls' mom, and I gathered together, in the principal's room on parent-teacher day to discuss a plan of action. There was Susma, wearing her best dress and clutching the little handbag I had given her. And me wearing a little string necklace, with a bean laced through it, that Susma had given me. All of us, trying to figure out what to do.

"No big deal," Josh and I try and tell Manisha, who's slumped down on a stool holding back tears. I feel Susma might cry too. "Look at the bright side," I suggest. "Manisha is not bad in math, she's a star on the school's dance team, and she has sweet friends. She's eating properly at school, and has gained weight since I met her. She looks pretty and healthy." Josh is all about finding a tutor to help with some private classes. Susma is worried we'll stop paying for school if Manisha can't keep up. We assure her that won't happen. "It will work out," we say. And so it will.

For a while I thought about getting Manisha and Monika to come visit me in Israel. I managed to organize passports for them...

Danna Harman: Did you have a passport?

Manisha Gurung: Yes. I have passport.
Danna Harman: And when can you come visit me?
Manisha Gurung: Hm... after... no idea.
Danna Harman: Me, no idea either.
Manisha Gurung: Yes.
Danna Harman: Yeah.

Danna Harman (narration): But then got stumped by the visa process.

Danna Harman: Yeah.
Manisha Gurung: Yeah.
Danna Harman: We need to get a visa.
Manisha Gurung: Visa, yeah. So difficult, no?
Danna Harman: Very difficult.
Manisha Gurung: That's why.
Danna Harman: But I hope someday you're gonna come visit me.
Manisha Gurung: Yes.
Danna Harman: That would be very nice, huh?
Manisha Gurung: Yes, very nice.
Danna Harman: Very nice.
Manisha Gurung: That is.
Danna Harman: Meantime, though, I can come visit you here.
Manisha Gurung: Yeah.

Danna Harman (narration): Manisha's dad left Nepal soon after the earthquake, setting off to Malaysia to find work as a laborer. He doesn't send any money back home, which is hard, and unusual. Susma left the village and moved to Kathmandu, where she found a job cutting chicken in a small market stall. She can now afford to rent a small room which she shares with a rotating cast of relatives, and even has a little money to spare.

I don't want, and can't afford, for Manisha's family to think of me as a bank. But the little Josh and I do send seems to go such a long way, it never fails to astonish me. We wire about four thousand dollars a year to the boarding school and then provide the girls with some extra cash to cover things like school uniforms and books, underwear, tooth brushes, sheets, pillows. That's it.

I try to get the girls to write me letters but they don't. Instead they send me Facebook messages from the internet café, or from their mom's mobile, when they are back in Kathmandu during holidays.

Sometimes, I call the mobile phone of Doma Lama, who is the house mother at their school. Manisha and Monika, who know to expect my call, stand by.

The conversations are still somewhat limited, but are improving, along with Manisha's English. If she's sick she coughs into the phone to illustrate. If she makes a new friend, she describes her. Or if someone is mean to her, she tells me that too. We send each other lots of air kisses and sometimes we just stay on the line not saying too much at all, until Doma Lama asks for her mobile back. "Missing you very much," Manisha will say, her syntax still a little wonky. "I miss you too," I tell her. And I do.

I could have bumped into a thousand different kids that day in the slum. One of Manisha and Monika's neighbors, a spunky little girl with a nose ring asked me once: "Why them?" Another kid informed me that: "Manisha's not special. She is not even good at school."

There is no rhyme or reason to why it was Manisha. Maybe there is some fate involved, as I once thought. More probably, it's *just* random. Our lives and stories intertwined for a moment, and then, because that moment happened to be exactly right, for each of us independently, we tied a knot.

Danna Harman: What does it feel like when we have to say goodbye?

Manisha Gurung: Sad, so sad.

Danna Harman: You think we're going to see each other again?

Manisha Gurung: Ah, another year.

Danna Harman: Another year?

Manisha Gurung: Yeah.

Danna Harman: I hope so.

Manisha Gurung: Yeah. I hope so. Today is so not good.

Danna Harman: My heart hurts a little.

Manisha Gurung: Yeah.

Danna Harman: You too?

Manisha Gurung: Yeah. Bad day.

Danna Harman: Bad day.

Mishy Harman (narration): Danna Harman. Danna's a journalist for Ha'aretz.

Now, I'm only thirty-four, but I got my first cellphone when I was in the army. And if you too grew up before the cellphone era, or BCE as some of our younger listeners might think of it, you'll remember what it was like to actually have to wait in one place for someone to call. This could be really frustrating, and never more so than when it came

to the dating world. Because you'd wait around endlessly for a phone call, which you didn't even know for sure was coming.

In some ways that feels like talking about the Dark Ages. But in others, especially to me, it feels like talking about a lost Eden.

You see, today, with all the countless dating apps - Tinder, Bumble, JSwipe, and the list goes on - people are in this frantic holding pattern *all the time*. Every ping, every vibration, could be a message from *the one*. It's exhausting.

Our next act is a story of dating in the smartphone age. Judah Kauffman tells us how one woman from Tel Aviv had to decide between listening to all of her human instincts or trusting an algorithm. **Act Two - Love in Translation.**

Judah Kauffman (narration): Our story starts with a classic millennial-quarter-life crisis.

Sharon Torten: It was after I quit my job. I felt like I needed something to look forward to.

Judah Kauffman (narration): That's Sharon Torten. She's twenty-four, lives in Tel Aviv...

Sharon Torten: I study philosophy. I used to be an LGBT activist, I still kind of see myself as an activist. But just postponing it for a little bit.

Judah Kauffman (narration): That postponing took the form of a big backpacking trip across the Balkans.

Sharon Torten: To Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bulgaria.

Judah Kauffman (narration): So, Sharon set off. She was seeing new places, clearing her head. Everything was going according to plan. That is, until she got to Macedonia. There, she did what a lot of young people do to get a more "intimate" knowledge of a new place. She opened up Tinder.

Sharon Torten: Not for anything like - yes, sexual is nice, but that's not the thing. The thing is I wanted to find someone local that I can speak to about the experience of living in this place that I am.

Judah Kauffman (narration): Sharon swiped and swiped.

Sharon Torten: To be honest, like, seventy percent of the people I see on Tinder, I swipe left.

Judah Kauffman (narration): Left swiping on Tinder means you don't want to talk to the person. And things progressed as usual for Sharon. Left, left, left. Until...

Sharon Torten: 'Wow.' She is. She is gorgeous. One of the most beautiful women I've ever seen. She has, like, large brown eyes. And her skin is like flawless. I swiped right, and then we had a match, surprisingly.

Judah Kauffman (narration): Sharon and her match, Cansu, started messaging. They covered all the small talk-y questions you'd expect. Sharon said she was travelling from Israel, Cansu said she was a student from Turkey.

Sharon Toren: She was super nice. Like overly nice.

Judah Kauffman (narrator): And they ended up making a plan for Cansu to join Sharon and some of her friends, at a pub the next night.

Sharon Torten: It was like a traditional Eastern European restaurant. Wooden walls and everything, it was really cozy and we sat by the fireplace, so it was even more cozy.

Judah Kauffman (narration): Sharon and her friends arrived a bit early. They were drinking, hanging out. And then the door opened.

Sharon Torten: And when she came in, I looked at her, and she looked at me. But she kind of also looked away. I think she was really shy.

Judah Kauffman (narration): But, like lots of people discover, after sitting in a pub for long enough, initial shyness can melt away. Soon Sharon and Cansu were laughing, passing phones back and forth and scrolling through travel pictures. The evening progressed. Their group eventually left the bar, everyone went bowling. (There was even a stolen smooch in the corner of the alley). By ten, most of the group had peeled off, and Sharon found herself at Cansu's kitchen table, sipping from a freshly-brewed cup of coffee.

Sharon Torten: Turkish coffee, which is the best.

Judah Kauffman (narration): It was a bittersweet moment. At the stroke of midnight, the glass slippers would disappear and Sharon's overnight bus to Bulgaria would pull out of the station, a proverbial pumpkin carriage if there ever was one.

Sharon Torten: And then she told me, "don't go."
And I was like, 'how... how can I not go? I mean I told my friends in Sofia that I'm coming, and I already bought the bus tickets. It's not possible not to go.' But then she said again, "don't go." And everytime she said, "don't go" I was like, 'I don't want to go. I know I don't wanna go.'

Judah Kauffman (narration): So Sharon made a deal with herself. She'd stay the night but be on the first bus out the next morning. 7am sharp.

Judah Kauffman: Did you leave at seven?
Sharon Torten: Of course not. [*Judah and Sharon laugh*].

Judah Kauffman (narration): Sharon stayed for a day and a night. A one-night-stand became a two-night-stand. And, at this point, I want to say that two days turned into a week, and then another. To tell you about their old t-shirts and books and hair elastics mixing together, the bric-a-brac of two separate lives swirling into one. But it didn't happen like that. There was still this one obstacle in their way.

Sharon Torten: We couldn't really speak. Because we had no common language whatsoever.

Judah Kauffman (narration): See, Sharon speaks Hebrew and English. Cansu Turkish and Macedonian. And all of their communications had been mediated by the slow passing back and forth of a smartphone open to Google Translate. Sharon remembers the first time she tried it.

Sharon Torten: I wrote, "you look really beautiful."
And I wrote it in English and I translated it to Turkish, and then I showed her the phone and she had the shyest smile I've ever seen. But... But I saw that she was really happy.

Judah Kauffman (narration): That might seem like shaky ground to build a connection on, but Sharon doesn't think so.

Sharon Torten: There's so much things that we can gain just by deciding to listen, not to words, but to the way people say things, or the way they look at us. So,

from some perspectives you can say we're not as close.
From other perspective you can say we're closer.
Cause we must listen.

Judah Kauffman (narration): For two magical days, Sharon and Cansu told each other everything and said nothing. They knew that soon enough they'd have to go back to real life and find a way to Google Translate 'goodbye.'

Sharon Torten: When I left, eventually, to go to Sophia, I wrote her this letter. And I wrote that leaving her bed this morning was one of the hardest thing I've had to do. I didn't think we gonna last. I mean it was too crazy. But when I came to Israel, she started asking me, 'OK, so when are you coming back to Macedonia?' And I was like, "oh, well, good question."

Judah Kauffman (narration): The answer? A whole three weeks later.

Sharon Torten: I came back to Macedonia and we were there for a month.

Judah Kauffman (narration): And like a lot of relationships, as the butterflies quieted and the connection deepened, it also got more complicated.

Sharon Torten: The whole month we were not only in Macedonia, we also went to Turkey to meet her family.

Judah Kauffman (narration): Cansu had grown up in a religious Muslim family in a small Turkish village. Being gay and out wasn't a viable option. So when she and Sharon visited...

Sharon Torten: We had this cover story.

Judah Kauffman (narration): They said Sharon was also a student in Macedonia. That they were neighbours and had decided to travel together. But for Sharon, a Tel Avivi LGBT activist, keeping up this story, going back into the closet like that, was no easy task. And the trip brought up some of her own baggage as well.

Sharon Torten: Everyone told me, 'what the fuck are you doing? This is crazy. It's Turkey. It's a Muslim country. And not only that it's a Muslim country that you're going to, not like Istanbul or a place where it's easy to find you but this like tiny village in the edge of

Turkey.” It can go really badly. And she told me, I’ll never forget this, she told me, “you know if you believe them, then you believe what you’re saying about *me*.” And when she told me this I was like, ‘oh shit.’ Cause it’s true. Because if all Muslims are like this, then it’s also about her, and about her family, and about her friends. It was, yeah, it was really hard.

Judah Kauffman (narration): Even with everything in their way - different religions, enemy countries, language barriers - really, Sharon and Cansu are just working through the exact same questions as every other couple on Earth: How can we communicate better? How can we know each other more deeply? And they’re committed to finding an answer. Together.

Sharon Torten: I am willing to go wherever she goes. And we also, we have a lot of dreams, cause I think this whole experience has made us both believe that we can do whatever we want.

Judah Kauffman: And in those dreams, are you talking the same language?

Sharon Torten: In these dreams we have our own language, that only us understand.

Judah Kauffman (narration): In fact, those dreams are becoming a reality. The morning after Sharon and I spoke, she boarded a plane. She had a suitcase, a one-way ticket to Macedonia, and no plans on coming back.

From the outside, Sharon and Cansu’s story can seem like one of distances and gaps. At its center though, there’s a single relationship. And beyond that, sets of families and friends and countries, pushed apart by historical accidents and foibles, now drawn closer. All because of a love knitted together by translation algorithms, coded across rolling continents and frothy oceans, in Californian suburbs, half a world away. And in those suburbs, servers, that shoot back the translated love notes, up and up through the clouds and the gases and the black to the blinking satellites in the starry beyond. And all that? That’s not a story of distances. That’s a story of coming together.

Mishy Harman (narration): Judah Kauffman. Judah is finishing up his internship here at Israel Story, and this is an excellent opportunity to remind you all about our five-month-long internship program. Applications for the Fall cohort open in mid-June, so make sure to check our website and social media pages, and spread the word.

OK, so we’ve got one final story for you today. And I’m pretty sure that if the biblical authors would have known about Susi Doring Preston and Tirtze Eyal, the two women

you're about to hear in our next piece, we wouldn't be reading the Book of Ruth on Shavout, but rather the Book of Susi.

When we went to interview these two women, we found them sitting on an off-white couch, holding hands. Tirtze and her husband Moshe live in Mazkeret Batya, a sleepy town near Rehovot. Susi, on the other hand, is from very far away.

Susi Doring Preston: I'm from Tulsa, Oklahoma, and I've been in Israel for thirteen years.

Mishy Harman (narration): Federica Sasso will tell us how and why this freckled Tulsan ended up on that couch, holding hands with someone who might as well be her mother. **Act Three - A Biblical Bond.**

Susi Doring Preston: This story begins at the Bubbles Nightclub in Thailand.

Federica Sasso (narration): It's 2003, and Susi, who had just graduated college, was a member of the Peace Corps.

Susi Doring Preston: And I was stationed up north, and we were in Chiang Mai, which was amazing because you get to eat mangos all day and sit in the jungle, and I discovered post-army Israelis.

Federica Sasso (narration): It was very easy to spot them, Susi says.

Susi Doring Preston: Curly-haired, sun-kissed, guys wearing only 'Thai,' like tank tops and Thai pants. Always having a good time. Super confident.

Federica Sasso (narration): So one night she was at this club with a bunch of other Peace Corps volunteers.

Susi Doring Preston: And it was like loud music, it was horrible it was shitty drinks, it was gross and sweaty but everyone went and partied until like three in the morning.

Federica Sasso (narration): And it was in that uber romantic setting that Susi first laid her eyes on a skinny, handsome and tan Israeli.

Susi Doring Preston: Tsiki and I just hit it off immediately. He asked what I was doing in Thailand, and I was like, “well, I’m a teacher.” And he’s like, “well, you don’t look like a teacher.” And I was like, “well, you don’t look very Jewish, so...” And then we just started dancing or something, I don’t know. I was just like what does that mean I don’t look like a teacher?

Federica Sasso: Did you kiss that night?

Susi Doring Preston: Meh, I don’t know! We’re so conservative. [*Susi laughs*].

Tirtze Eyal: Yes?

Susi Doring Preston: Yes. I don’t know. We probably did something, right? We were like twenty-three and twenty-two.

Federica Sasso (narration): A few days later, Susi got an email from Tsiki.

Susi Doring Preston: Saying like “I have to see you again. I’m gonna come visit you.” And I was like this male is very forward but he was really fun so I invited him to my village and he showed up and that was it. That’s how I met Tsiki Eyal.

Federica Sasso (narration): Seemingly oceans set them apart. Tsiki had been a tank commander in the IDF, and was now in the middle of his big post-army trip. During that exact same time, Susi had been an undergrad at the University of Tulsa. He was Jewish, she was Christian.

Susi Doring Preston: Well I was baptised Lutheran, because my dad requested that we were baptized Lutheran, but my mom is a devout Filipino Catholic so we were raised in the Catholic Church.

Federica Sasso (narration): Susi basically knew nothing about Israel.

Susi Doring Preston: Like I just assumed it was this dusty old Middle Eastern country that no one would want to go visit.

Federica Sasso (narration): Whereas Tsiki, on the other hand, was a big Zionist.

Susi Doring Preston: He was very passionate about me knowing Israel, knowing Judaism. You know, when we spoke of our future together and what was

possible he was always very much like, “yeah but we have to go back to Israel, Israel needs people like us.”

Federica Sasso (narration): That’s right. It didn’t take long before this Thailand fling turned serious, and they began talking about sharing a life together.

Susi Doring Preston: There was a lot of chemistry. I think that’s when you kind of know you met someone who’s gonna change your life forever, because it was really this instant chemistry and this instant passion, and this instant willing to like figure out how to make it work.

Federica Sasso (narration): And they did. Long distance. See, shortly after they met, Tsiki came back home to Israel and began studying management and behavioral sciences at Ben Gurion University in the Negev. Here’s his mom, Tirtze.

Tirtze Eyal: He was a very very good student.

Federica Sasso (narration): And, in the meantime, half a globe away, Susi kept on teaching English in her small Thai village.

But their love for each other? It just grew stronger and stronger by the day.

Susi Doring Preston: We kept like video diaries. And then every seven days we would send and put on a CD rom.

Federica Sasso (narration): After a few months of this ‘proto-vlogging,’ Susi came to visit Tsiki in Israel.

Susi Doring Preston: He’s like, “you must see everywhere in Israel!” He took your little car from Be’er Sheva to Haifa, meeting all of his army friends, the Dead Sea, everywhere. Like I had to do everything, I had to eat shawarma, I had to have falafel, I had to have ‘*Bamba*’ every day. He was like, “this is what we’re doing, let me show you Israel!” You know? I was like, “alright!”

Federica Sasso (narration): Susi had a great time in Israel, but even more so, she had a great time with Tsiki.

Susi Doring Preston: He was like always thinking of like the next big thing, you know? He was like very

happy, very in touch with his emotions, he was always happy to just hang out. He was really laid back, it was refreshing.

Federica Sasso (narration): Tirtze and Moshe, Tsiki's parents, were surprisingly welcoming of this non-Jewish girl from Oklahoma.

Tirtze Eyal: I know Tsiki, if he picked Susi so everything is OK.

Federica Sasso (narration): Susi actually remembers a bit more pressure.

Susi Doring Preston: Tirtze turns to me when I first meet her and she's like, "family is everything!" I was like "OK, I don't know what that means..." "Family is everything."

Federica Sasso (narration): Back in Oklahoma, Susi's family also had some adjusting to do.

Susi Doring Preston: My father was a German-born older guy. (He grew up in World War II Berlin). So I asked him, I was like, "how do you feel about me meeting an Israeli?" And he was like, "Susi, I don't care. Just bring me grandchildren." When I came to Israel to visit, my dad called and wanted to speak to Tsiki, and Tsiki like holds the phone away from him and he's like, "your father keeps trying to speak Yiddish to me but I don't speak Yiddish." [*Susi laughs*]. But I guess my dad was like, "you're Jewish! Doesn't everyone speak Yiddish?"

Federica Sasso (narration): Soon after she returned to Thailand from her visit in Israel, Susi received a phone call from Oklahoma.

Susi Doring Preston: They just said like, "you need to get on a plane, your dad's had a heart attack."

Federica Sasso (narration): He died a few hours later.

Susi Doring Preston: Then I went to Oklahoma. Me and my brother like cared for our mom that month, and helped her sort things out.

Federica Sasso (narration): And Tsiki, from far away Israel, was Susi's rock.

Susi Doring Preston: I just remember him talking about Moshe and saying that he could never imagine losing his father because his father meant so much to him. And I just remember being mad at him and telling him like, “well, at least you’re the lucky one and you have your father.” And he’s like, “I know and I’m so sorry.” And I think I even said in that conversation like, “how could you not know what it’s like to lose anyone, you’re from Israel, you know?!” And he’s like, “I know, but I don’t and I’m sorry.” I don’t think I... I’ll ever forget that conversation. [*Susi cries*].

Federica Sasso (narration): Susi eventually returned to Thailand, to the village, to her teaching. And Tsiki continued to be there for her, on Skype, over the phone, in letters.

Passover break came in the middle of his second semester at university. But he didn’t go visit Susi. And he didn’t go home. Instead, he went to *miluim*, reserve duty.

Tirtze Eyal: I was the one who took him to the bus, and he told me that it’s not dangerous at all. And we hugged. And I was so calm, I was so confident that he will come back. I didn’t think at all that something like that can happen to him. I was so confident, I don’t know why I was so confident.

Federica Sasso (narration): On April 25th, 2005, two nights after the Passover Seder, Tsiki was manning a checkpoint outside of Hebron. A Palestinian taxi driver stopped at the checkpoint, and then accelerated, ramming into Tsiki.

Tirtze Eyal: He fell down and when he came up he took a bullet.

Federica Sasso (narration): Tsiki was killed on the spot, by friendly fire from one of his teammates trying to stop the driver.

Tirtze and Moshe were vacationing in the north when they were notified.

Tirtze Eyal: And they told me that “Tsiki.” That’s what I heard, “Tsiki.” And I told them, “go away, I don’t want to see you, go away.” And that’s what I remember.

Susi Doring Preston: I was at a Peace Corps conference in Bangkok. I think we were doing some

team building stuff. I remember 'cause like they asked a question like you know, 'what are the things that you think about the most everyday?' And I just wrote "Tsiki" and I then I sat back down. And we were at the hotel and I hadn't heard from Tsiki that day, and then my phone rang and I answered it, without even saying hello I was just like, "there you are, I've been waiting for you to call all day." And then there was a pause on the other end, and it was Nadav, Tsiki's best friend. He's like "Susi, you need to sit down." And I was like, "what are you talking about I need to sit down?" And he's like... I don't even... He was like, "Tsiki's..." All I know is that I threw the phone. And I just fell to the ground, clawing at the walls, asking someone to help me. And I hid under the bathroom sink like rocking myself. And then I was like, "I got to go! I got to get on a plane. I got to go."

Federica Sasso (narration): Susi didn't make it in time for Tsiki's funeral, but showed up at Tirtze and Moshe's home, in Mazkeret Batya.

Susi Doring Preston: I will never forget when I walk in to the Shiva house. You were on this couch here, you know. And you start wailing, "what a beautiful bride you would have been."

Tirtze Eyal: It was so... so hard. And many people... how many people, *elohim*.

Susi Doring Preston: Yeah, I come and I lay on your lap. And you just like stroke me. And it was like... And you don't even know what to do.

Federica Sasso (narration): Susi stayed for the entire Shiva. And when it was over, she couldn't bring herself to get back on a plane to Thailand. She couldn't leave Tirtze and Moshe, and really, she couldn't leave Tsiki.

Susi Doring Preston: When Tsiki died, like I didn't think I would be able to function ever again. I didn't know what was going to happen to me. I actually assumed that I would die from grief. I didn't think I could survive.

Federica Sasso (narration): So, not really knowing what else to do. She stayed.

Susi Doring Preston: I mean I stayed in Mazkeret Batya because it was safe for me, and it was a very warm and loving place.

Federica Sasso (narration): The way Susi saw it, this was what she and Tsiki had always wanted.

Susi Doring Preston: We had a plan for our life together, which was to go to school, get married, live in Israel ultimately, and I figured that I would stick to that plan until I learned something different. I didn't know. I was like this is the plan I had for my life, do I go home? Or do I stay here?

Tirtze Eyal: So she was with us and I felt that I was responsible for her. And I ask her, if she really wants to stay in Israel. And every time I asked her she says, "yes, I want to stay."

Federica Sasso (narration): Susi - the twenty-four-year-old-half-German-half-Filipino Catholic from Tulsa - notified the Peace Corps that she wasn't coming back, and instead she moved in with Tirtze and Moshe. She lived with them for a whole year, sleeping in Tsiki's bedroom, eating dinners together, becoming... family.

Susi Doring Preston: I think grief attached us.

Tirtze Eyal: Yeah, sure.

Susi Doring Preston: Like, I mean we were in despair for a long time together.

Tirtze Eyal: It was too hard for us.

Susi Doring Preston: Yeah. I mean I think it's hard for us because in many ways I'm probably a symbol of what Tsiki isn't, you know?

Susi Doring Preston: I started *ulpan*. And I didn't know how to read or write so Tirtze sat with me at the table every night and taught me my *Aleph Bet*.

Federica Sasso (narration): But it didn't stop at learning Hebrew. Tsiki and Susi had talked about her converting to Judaism, and now, even though he was gone, Susi decided to go ahead with the plan.

Susi Doring Preston: My entire life fell apart. Like the man of my past died, the man of my future died. I was suspended in the middle of the universe. And Judaism creates a relationship with everything you do. Like from waking up in the morning to what

you're eating, to how to view the world if you have a question about ethics. You can rebuild your world.

Federica Sasso (narration): In Judaism, Susi found some solace. Things fell into place for her.

Susi Doring Preston: I guess I put it this way - sometimes the universe opens up. And if you keep saying 'yes' or 'why not,' it leads you to places you can't imagine. Like I think I've always been a religious person. It's just that I never found, growing up, a religion that made sense to me. And then Judaism makes absolute sense, and it was very comfortable for me.

Federica Sasso (narration): Susi converted. She could have easily closed this painful chapter of her life and moved on. But instead, she chose to embrace Israel.

Susi Doring Preston: It's a nation full of people who have learned to live with their grief and move forward, and it was the only place where I could heal the way I needed to heal.

Federica Sasso (narration): Tsiki and Tirtze's home became *her* home. Their land, her land. Their religion, her religion. But Tirtze didn't want their calamity, their tragedy, to govern her life. Though she cherished Susi's company, Tirtze started prodding her to move on. To live.

Tirtze Eyal: Every time I asked you to meet people, to have a boyfriend, not to remain alone, "No, I will stay with you." I told her "no, I don't want you to be with me, I want you to have a family. You have to raise a family."

Susi Doring Preston: She would be like in her bed after like hours of crying. "I need to speak to you. I need you to move on."

Federica Sasso (narration): And slowly slowly, Susi did just that. At *ulpan*, she met David, a new immigrant from London. They became friends, and ultimately lovers. Three years after Tsiki was killed, Susi got married. Moshe, Tsiki's dad, walked her down the aisle.

Tirtze Eyal: I remember the day. I couldn't be very close because it was too hard for me. And I cried in the corner, but afterwards I think I was OK.

Susi Doring Preston: You cried for two weeks before.

Tirtze Eyal: But I think you didn't see that I cried during the wedding.

Susi Doring Preston: Of course we did! I found a great partner and husband and Tsiki's definitely a presence in our life. You know, we have his photo next to the shabbat candles, next to my father. I know that David is very aware that his life, while he never met Tsiki, was... everything that he has is because of him. You know, we have a wonderful life now as well, you know? And I think it's a great gift that I'm still able to share that experience with the Eyal family and they can partake in it. It's not perfect, but it's ours, you know?

Federica Sasso (narration): Susi and David have three children, who call Tsiki's parents Saba Moshe and Savta Tirtze. They visit them often, and stay over for *shabbat* at least once a month.

Tirtze Eyal: We are so pleased that you raised a very good family, and I am so pleased to see that you educate very nice your children.

Susi Doring Preston: Tirtze said on *Yom Hazikaron* this year, she like, "Susi, I'm so glad you married and had children."

Tirtze Eyal: I am very happy for you, really.

Federica Sasso (narration): Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law often have complicated relationships. And that's not even exactly what Susi and Tirtze are to each other. After all, Susi *has* a mother-in-law, David's mom. But there's something biblical about the bond between these two women sitting on the couch holding hands. It's raw and loving. Painful and tragic and hopeful.

Susi Doring Preston: It's unconventional, but I think that it's our normal now, you know? It's just our lives, it's who we are, right? Like, it's unfortunate that life happens the way it does but I think we learned to live alongside it, and make the best of what we have. Do you wanna add anything?

Tirtze Eyal: [*Tirtze sighs*] Sometimes I feel like I'm not living in this world, you know? But I say to myself, I have to... to live for my family.

Susi Doring Preston: I also need you guys a lot. Like I think you and Moshe are also my rock.

Tirtze Eyal: I still living for you too.

Mishy Harman (narration): Federica Sasso. As you might have noticed from her accent, Federica's Italian. She's a print and radio journalist living in Jerusalem. This story was produced together with Abby Neuschatz.

And that's our Shavout episode, our three very different modern-day Ruth stories. As always, you can catch up on all our past episodes - in both English and Hebrew - on our site, on iTunes, and on any of the other main podcast platforms.

Also, in the spirit of the holiday's agricultural origins, think for a sec about Israel Story as a flower. And if you want to help us grow, the way you can water us is pretty simple. All you have to do really is go to iTunes, rate us and write a review. That's it. You can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, all under Israel Story. And, if you want to sponsor episodes of Israel Story, drop us a line at sponsor@prx.org.

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Aura Lewis created the stunning original artwork for this episode. You can find a link to her work on our website.

The original music in today's show was written and performed by our one and only in-house Mozart, Ari Wenig. Julie Subrin edited the episode, Ben Wallick (in Jerusalem) and Paul Ruest (in New York) recorded it, and Sela Waisblum mixed it all up.

Israel Story is brought to you by PRX - the Public Radio Exchange, and is produced in partnership with Tablet Magazine. Our staff includes Yochai Mital, Shai Satran, Maya Kosover, Roe Gilron, Zev Levi, Ari Wenig, Hannah Barg, Rotem Zin, Judah Kauffman and Abby Neuschatz.

I'm Mishy Harman, and we'll be back very soon, very soon indeed, with our first ever mini-series! So till then, *shalom shalom*, *chag sameach*, eat a lot of cheesecake, and *yalla bye*.

[End Song]

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