

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Hey, it's Mishy. So before we begin this episode, I just wanted to ask you to go to our site and fill out our listener survey. OK, thanks so much, and here we go.

It was nearly 2am when, on a rainy night a few weeks ago, thousands of fully clothed Israelis jumped into the shallow pool in Tel Aviv's Rabin Square. They were all splashing around, making loud buk-buk-buk-buk-buk chicken sounds and enthusiastically waving Israeli flags. And no, this wasn't, as you might think, some sort of alternative festival or acid rave. Not at all. It was, rather, a rare moment of national pride. Israel, you see, had just won the Eurovision, the biggest song competition in Europe.

Back in Lisbon, Portugal, where the 2018 Eurovision took place, the victorious Netta Barzilai was busy receiving congratulatory phone calls from Bibi and liking supportive Instagram posts made by Wonder Woman. Meanwhile, folks around Israel gathered to celebrate something that had only happened three times before. "*Kapara Alaich*," everyone was yelling and tweeting. "You made it!"

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.

So we've reached Part Three of our mini-series, '**Mixtape**,' in which - you'll remember - we're telling the stories behind some of Israel's most iconic tunes. Stories that reflect the intricacies of Israeli society, and the complications that are inherent in it.

We've already heard all about our national anthem, *HaTikvah*, and all about the song that might as well be our national anthem, *Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*. And today, in perfect timing with Netta's glorious Eurovision triumph, we continue our musical journey.

On February 11th, 1978, eleven years after Shuly Natan's *Yerushalayim Shel Zahav* exploded on the stage of *Binyanei Ha'Uma* in Jerusalem, a new star was born at *Festival Ha'Zemer Ve'Ha'Pizmon*. He was skinny, had dark skin, a black curly 'fro and a million dollar smile. His name was Izhar Cohen.

**Izhar Cohen:** Alright, I'm Izhar Cohen. Eh, what do you want my age, my shoe size, what do you want me to say? You just open the internet, you write Izhar Cohen and you read everything about me [*Izhar laughs*]. It's easier.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** But long before Izhar had a wikipedia page, long before he was an international sensation with millions of fans, he was a twenty-seven-year-old singer from Tel Aviv who - just like Shuly - was given the opportunity of a lifetime.

**Izhar Cohen:** I was so excited. My leg were shaking, you know. It was like to jump to the... like to the main course, you know. I mean I almost fainted that I will be part of the festival.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** And in 1978, believe it or not, the stakes were even higher than they had been a decade earlier, on the eve of the Six Day War.

**Izhar Cohen:** In that year they decided that the winner of the *Festival Ha'Zemer*, the Israeli Festival, will represent Israel in the Eurovision.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** The Eurovision is sort of like the Olympics of cheesy pop melodies.

**Izhar Cohen:** It was such a big deal here in Israel. A hundred percent rating of everywhere.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** But in order to get there, Izhar first had to win the local festival. And the song he sang, written by Ehud Manor, was called 'Abanibi.' It's refrain was in *Sfat Ha'Bet*, sort of like an Israeli 'Ubbi Dubbi' or 'Pig Latin.'

**Mishy Harman:** How does *Sfat Ha'Bet* work?

**Izhar Cohen:** Well, you take a word, like 'ani.' You put the letter 'B' in the middle of the words, like *ani* become (in 'B Language') *a-ba-ni-bi*, *ani*. *Ohev - o-bo-he-be-v*. *Otach - you - o-bo-ta-ba-ch*. And this is the song, *a-ba-ni-bi-o-bo-he-be-v-o-bo-to-ba-ch*. *Ani ohev otach*, I love you, of course. O-bo-v-co-bo-rse. In English [*Izhar laughs*].

**Mishy Harman (narration):** So that might not seem like much of a winner, but lo and behold, Izhar and his 'Bet Language' came in first, became a national hit, and were headed to Paris to represent Israel on the Continent's biggest stage. At the time, Izhar likes to reminisce...

**Izhar Cohen:** We were a very small country, that wanted to show the whole world [that] beside the wars and that we are the best fighters and soldiers, we wanted to show our culture to the world. And you know, everyone knew that Israel it's *hava nagila* *hava*, something Jewish, you know, Eastern European Jews. And I came there, and I made like a change in the way they look at us, because suddenly Israel was *a-ba-ni-bi-o-bo-he-be-v*, we were young, beautiful,

active, bringing new things to the world, and it was like a turning point.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** The entire nation was glued to its TV sets as Izhar got up to sing.

**Eurovision Commentator:** The song is called “Abanibi,” it’s called...

**Izhar Cohen:** And when the flag of Israel was on the screen, people cried! Can you imagine?

**Eurovision Commentator:** Cream trousers, the girls all in white. And this is a good, vivacious song for Israel. Might do very well. *[Music comes up]*.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Izhar and his backup troupe rocked it. And when the votes started pouring in, they were right up there neck and neck with Belgium, France and Monaco.

But then, all of a sudden... the feed cut out.

**Izhar Cohen:** Can you believe? When I’m winning! It’s ridiculous.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** See, the heads of the Israeli television hadn’t expected Izhar to do so well, so they didn’t purchase enough satellite time to actually air the whole competition.

Those Israelis who were within range, tuned into the Jordanian channel, only to see something pretty odd.

**Izhar Cohen:** They just covered the screen with flowers, and I mean, it was so stupid.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Just as soon as the Jordanian Broadcasting execs realized that Israel could actually walk away with it, they cut their transmission, and declared Belgium the winner.

So in a world without Internet, most Israelis went to sleep not knowing what had happened. It was only the following morning that they got the news.

*[Clip of the announcement of the winner of the 1978 Eurovision]*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Izhar had won. And all over Europe, all over the world, really, he became synonymous with Israel.

**Izhar Cohen:** I was a symbol of Israel. You know the... *Misrad Ha'Chotz*, the Foreign Ministry, told me that I'm doing every day a work of three thousand ambassadors, which it was true.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** The victory capped off an unusual run for Israel in the mid-to-late seventies. It began with the heroic raid on Entebbe, and continued with...

**Izhar Cohen:** The first Miss Universe, and then we were the champions of basketball, and year later was the Eurovision that was the most important thing on earth. It was like earthquake.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** As per the Eurovision rules, the winner hosted the following year's competition which, believe it or not, Israel won again.

*[A Cappella version of Hallelujah]*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** *[Mishy sings]* Hallelujah. (And that, ladies and gentlemen, is why we work with the talented musicians you hear accompanying our stories...). In any event, it would take almost two decades before Israel came out on top once more, this time with Dana International (the first transgender winner) and her flashy 'Diva.'

*[Diva]*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** And then another twenty years passed before Netta's feminist hymn, 'Toy,' had everyone - including the Prime Minister, the President and my four-year-old niece Shai Zena - clucking like chickens.

*[Shai Zena Harman singing 'Toy']*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** So, as you can tell, Israel and the Eurovision have an ongoing love affair. Check out this Eurovision medley by our very own Mixtape band.

*[Band plays Eurovision medley]*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** But no matter how many Israeli hits the Eurovision has produced over the years, everyone knows that it all began with one jumpy song, performed by one energetic singer.

**Izhar Cohen:** My 'Mona Lisa' it's *Abanibi*.  
Everywhere I go, until my last day it will be, maybe

after I go from here, this song will stay forever,  
probably yes [*Izhar laughs*].

**Mishy Harman:** Do you think that the word  
'Abanibi' will be on your grave?

**Izhar Cohen:** [*Izhar laughs*] I don't know. I'm...  
Look, I'm Yemenite, I live long even after you. Don't  
worry [*Izhar laughs*].

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Today Izhar is sort of a national celebrity. Little kids - whose parents weren't even born when he won the Eurovision - show up at his jewelry store on Dizengoff Street in Tel Aviv and ask for his autograph. But back then, in 1978, it wasn't so obvious that a Yemenite singer would represent Israel abroad. Sure, we'd already had Shoshana Damari and Izhar himself was born in Tel Aviv, even his parents were born in Tel Aviv. But the music scene - much like the entire country at that time - was dominated by an Ashkenazi elite. Izhar was welcome, as long as he agreed to fit in. As long as he sang songs written by Ashkenazi song writers, and didn't sound too 'ethnic.' I asked him about it, and well, he didn't like that interpretation.

**Izhar Cohen:** No, no, no, no, no, no. You are totally wrong. There is no Yemenite singer and Ashkenazi singer, this is all, excuse me for my language, but it's bullshit. What are you talking about? I'm Israeli, real Israeli singer. I'm like mixed salad, you know? Ashkenazi, Sepharadi, it doesn't matter. This is really a rubbish.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** But our story today is about someone for whom this *did* matter. Someone for whom this mattered a lot. **Act One - The Flower of My Garden.** Here's Yochai Maital.

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**Yochai Maital (narration):** You may never have heard the name Zohar Argov, but to Israelis, he's a kind of mix of Elvis Presley, Amy Winehouse and Billie Holiday, all rolled into one. He changed the Israeli music scene forever. He also paid for it with his life. We could start with the angelic gift that thrust him into the national spotlight. Or, the demons that brought him crashing down. Or even by wondering whether those angels and demons were really the same figures all along. But maybe the best place to start is simply his childhood.

**Ari Wenig [as Zohar Argov]:** I was born in Rishon, the first out of ten children. We had a rough childhood, my parents didn't have money.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** These are verbatim quotes from recorded and print interviews with Zohar.

We're in the late sixties. Naomi Shemer is basking in the glory of her golden song, Meir Ariel is back on his tractor in the kibbutz, and Zohar Argov? Well he's actually still Zohar Orkabi - a rowdy teenager growing up in a slum, in the poorest neighborhood of Rishon Le'zion.

**Ari Wenig [as Zohar Argov]:** We lived in a shack in *Shikun Hamizrach*. My parents were brought here from Yemen. You know why? I'll tell you the truth. They didn't bring us here because we're Jews. They brought us over as cheap labor - *hotvei eitzim ve'shoavey mayim* - that's how I see it. We tilled the land. We poured concrete. My father cleaned streets to bring home bread. We didn't grow up listening to concerts. Our concert was a tin canister.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Zohar's father was an abusive drunk who would spend his days at the local *hmara* - the neighborhood bar. At thirteen, Zohar dropped out of school and started working construction. At fourteen, he was arrested for robbery. But when he started singing, the whole neighborhood would gather around.

**Zohar Argov: [Singing]** Le ley le ley...

**Yochai Maital (narration):** And Zohar was never shy about singing. At synagogue or at school events, Zohar was the community's go-to *zamir* - their sparrow. He walked around with the aura of a star and the insatiable drive to make it in the world - to become a huge singer. He knew he had a gift, but he also knew that the local radio stations were not playing *his* kind of music.

*[Zohar Argov Singing]*

**Tova Klinger:** It was really strange to our ears.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** That's Tova Klinger.

**Tova Klinger:** I was for forty years a music editor at *Kol Yisrael*.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Israeli Public Radio.

**Tova Klinger:** The Oriental songs - they sounded to me like Arabic music, and we weren't used to Arabic music.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** The year was 1977, and the twenty-two-year-old Zohar thought, 'if you can't beat them, well... join them.' Zohar put out an LP with two songs in which he mimicked Ashkenazi singers like Arik Einstein and Shalom Hanoach - who in turn were mimicking music from the US and the UK (The Beatles, The Doors, etc.). So this is basically what a copy of a copy sounds like.

*[Zohar Argov Singing]*

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Before the LP was released, Zohar made one last-minute alteration: He changed his last name from Orkabi, a distinctly Yemenite name, to the *sabra* sounding Argov. With this freshly minted name on the cover, he sent his first record out to stations and record labels.

It aired exactly once on a late night program called, 'A Needle in a Record Stack.' Following this total flop, he decided to return to his roots and his community. He performed in local clubs, weddings, *bar mitzvahs*, basically any gig he could find. Night after night, he collected fans. Before too long, Zohar had an underground following. And that's what led him, in 1980, back into the studio. This time, to record the kind of songs that his crowd was going wild for.

**Tova Klinger:** He really sang songs like he heard in his father's and his family's synagogue, and Arabic music that he heard at his home.

*[Zohar Argov Singing 'Elinor']*

**Yochai Maital (narration):** But this independent, low budget record didn't stand a chance in the Israeli music scene. Music editors like Tova were not slating those types of songs. Record labels were not signing contracts with Mizrahi singers.

**Tova Klinger:** It was very difficult for us. I didn't hear Umkultum when I was young *[Tova laughs]*.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Still, there was an audience for this type of music, and the demand fueled a bustling alternative music scene. Its heart was Tel Aviv's Central Bus Station. It was packed with stalls selling cassette tapes. This was the only place people could consume such music, and the LP Zohar put out, titled *Elinor*, became a huge hit. Despite being completely ignored by mainstream labels, Zohar became wildly popular - he was an underground sensation, a 'cassette singer' - a title he did not care for, to say the least.

**Ari Wenig [as Zohar Argov]:** Look, the media can't completely ignore us. So they say, "we'll give them a slot. Saturday evening, one hour of 'Mediterranean Love.' Let's make a ghetto" (and make

sure you write it as I'm telling you, yes?). They play ten Yemenite songs in a row and then they say, "they have a whole hour, what are they crying about? It's enough." I'm not willing to take this. It's a slap in the face. Why should my audience have to wait for *motzei shabbat*? For the black people's music? It's a badge of shame on all of us.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Being a niche star wasn't enough for Zohar. He wanted his voice to carry farther. He wanted to infiltrate the closed Ashkenazi world and become a national name. There was only one outlet available to him.

**Tova Klinger:** The Oriental Festival, *la'mnatzeach shir mizmor - shirim besignon edot hamizrach* what we called in Hebrew.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Now, as you already heard if you've been listening to our miniseries, the country had a big annual song competition. But Mizrahi music was excluded from this event. It had their own show. Or, as Zohar might have called it, ghetto, in the 'Oriental Festival.' Zohar's previous attempts at infiltrating the mainstream had taught him that his talent alone wouldn't be enough to carry him to the top. He needed someone from the inside.

**Avihu Medina:** Yeah.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Enter Avihu Medina.

**Avihu Medina:** I've been in that festival ten times and I won eleven prizes.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Avihu was the most distinguished songwriter in the Mizrahi scene, so naturally...

**Avihu Medina:** People wants my song because they know that my song is going to win.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** So Zohar contacted Avihu and said...

**Avihu Medina:** Hey, what time you are going to write for me a song for the festival.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Avihu went to check out the young singer in a small club in Jaffa.

**Avihu Medina:** It called *Ha'barvaz* - Duck. Duck.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Avihu thought Zohar had a great voice, but was not mature enough. There were little things that bothered him.

**Avihu Medina:** He used to put in many elements of something that's not belong to the song.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** For example, Zohar would sing this Yemenite song...

**Avihu Medina:** *Et Dodim.*

[Zohar Argov singing 'Et Dodim']

[Avihu Medina singing 'Et Dodim']

**Avihu Medina:** There is not 'wallak' in the original!

**Yochai Maital (narration):** This really pissed off Avihu.

**Avihu Medina:** Cuz' he's not honoring the song. And if he is not honoring the song, the song will not honoring him.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** The way Avihu saw it, Zohar had great potential, but he lacked...

**Avihu Medina:** The minimum of... How you say 'tarbut'? Culture? He was very young and I told him he must got more experience on the stage until he will be ready. In two years I will write for him, I told him.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Two years later...

**Avihu Medina:** As I promised him.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Avihu called Zohar.

**Avihu Medina:** The song is ready, you please come to hear the song and say what do you think about it.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** The song, titled 'Ha'Perach Be'Gani'...

**Avihu Medina:** The Flower of my Garden.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Is about two teenagers who are in love but can't summon the courage to tell it to each other. It was was submitted and accepted. Now, the last thing left to do was to arrange the song for an orchestra.

**Avihu Medina:** They call me from the festival and they say, ‘you know we are going to send you to to Nancy, Nancy Brandes.’ And at the beginning I thought, ‘it’s a girl...’

**Nancy Brandes:** *[In Hebrew] Hi, ze Nancy.*

**Avihu Medina:** Like Nancy Sinatra.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** *[In Hebrew] Nancy, shome’a oti?*

**Nancy Brandes:** *[In Hebrew] Shome’a otcha nehedar.*

**Avihu Medina:** This is the first time I met a man called Nancy.

**Nancy Brandes:** *[In Hebrew] Ole chadash me’Romania. Aliti artza be-1975.*

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Nancy was a new immigrant from Romania, where he had been a rock star. But being a classically-trained musician, now in Israel, Nancy looked for work arranging music.

**Nancy Brandes:** And the strangest thing happened - so they’re asking me to arrange a song for Zohar Argov. And until then, I had never even heard Mizrahi music in my life. I had no connection at all to that music!

**Yochai Maital (narration):** But a job is a job is a job. And Nancy said, “sure.” The next day, Avihu and Zohar came over to his apartment in Tel Aviv to talk about the song.

**Nancy Brandes:** All of a sudden there was a knock at the door. I see... I see these two really ugly people. I mean, they looked like two crows, ‘cause I... Look, I am used to the European features. I’m used to Romanians. And I have a different esthetic. What can I say?

**Yochai Maital (narration):** So Nancy opened the door and told them...

**Nancy Brandes:** “Folks, I’ve already donated.” I shut the door in their face.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Avihu and Zohar rang the bell again, and suggested that there might be some kind of a misunderstanding. The embarrassed Nancy showed the two in, and Zohar asked Nancy politely if he could get him a pot or a pan.

**Nancy Brandes:** So I said, “look friends, if you're hungry, let's go downstairs, there's a good Turkish restaurant where we can eat and then get back to the music.”

**Yochai Maital (narration):** AviHu explained that they needed the pan to get a beat going. Finally, pot in hand, AviHu and Zohar proceeded to demonstrate the opening they had envisioned - with a Yemenite '*marwhal*.'

[Zohar Argov sings a '*marwhal*']

**Nancy Brandes:** The minute this prodigy, this genius, started singing, you forgot what he looked like, you just saw a beautiful prince in front of you, because he sang like a sparrow.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Nancy took this song and the Yemenite *marwhal* and started incorporating different elements into it.

**Nancy Brandes:** Balkan elements. A bit of a Spanish influence. There's rock music in there. Classical music. All kinds of elements were mixed together, but no Eastern music. There was absolutely nothing Mizrahi in that arrangement, just so you know. Because I knew nothing about Mizrahi music.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** A few weeks later, on *chol ha'moed* Pesach of 1982, at *Binyanei Ha'uma* in Jerusalem, Zohar put on his best white suit, planted himself on the stage like a lamp post, and started singing - totally still.

**Tova Klinger:** He didn't have to move. His voice is so expressive, that it tell the whole story. He sang from his stomach, Zohar Argov, he sang from his heart.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** '*Ha'Perach Be'Gani*' won by a landslide.

**Tova Klinger:** '*Ha'Perach Be'Gani*' broke the boundaries. '*Ha'Perach Be'Gani*' became really a big hit and was broadcasted also on what you call *Reshet Gimel* and *Reshet Bet*.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Like any viral phenomenon, it's kind of hard to put your finger on what exactly made this song such a hit. Perhaps it was the pop-y international vibe that Nancy's arrangement introduced. Maybe it was Zohar's enigmatic voice. Or, perhaps, the time was just right.

Either way, a few months later, the Lebanon War broke out. Soldiers called in from the frontline requesting the song over and over again. Zohar was invited for interviews. In one of them, taped in front of a live audience, he was asked, “is there anything that characterizes your audience?”

**Zohar Argov:** *[In Hebrew] Ein shum hevdel, ein shum davar sh'me'afyen ta'kahal sheli.*

**Yochai Maital (narration):** “Nothing,” Zohar replied. Then he added...

**Zohar Argov:** *[In Hebrew] Yesh echad she'ohev lishmo'a et Wagner ve'yesh echad she'shome'a et Elinor ve'mizdahe im ze.*

**Yochai Maital (narration):** “One person likes Wagner, the other likes Elinor, and can relate to it.”

**Female Interviewer:** *[In Hebrew] Ata makir et Wagner?*

**Yochai Maital (narration):** “You know who Wagner is?!” the sceptical interviewer responded.

**Zohar Argov:** *[In Hebrew] Shamati alav [audience laughs].*

**Yochai Maital (narration):** “I’ve heard of him.”

Zohar was the first Mizrahi star to step onto the mainstream national stage. The next album he put out went platinum within a month, selling over three-hundred-thousand copies. The headlines were calling him ‘Zohar *Ha'melech*’ - ‘The King’ - and he lived up to that title.

**Ari Wenig [as Zohar Argov]:** Today, I am king of the blacks. Without a doubt. There’s a radio show called ‘*Ha'Perach Be'Gani*.’ That’s because of me. All the new Mizrahi radio slots are because of me. All the other Mizrahi singers are behind me.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Zohar was *living* like a king as well. A penthouse in Givatayim, a Mercedes, expensive clothes. Growing up, he never had any money. And now that he did, he just kept living the same way - spending whatever he had at the moment. In 1983, at the height of his success, Zohar was invited to the US, and spent time performing at an Israeli-owned club in LA.

**Avihu Medina:** And when he get to the US in Los Angeles, people gives him that drug called herion, and he taste it, and he liked it.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Like the perfect cliché of a self-destructive rockstar, as soon as Zohar hit the top, he began his spiraling cascade downward.

Zohar came back to Israel to a packed schedule of performances. But the previously hard-working singer started showing up late to gigs, or not showing up at all. In the studio, he was sometimes so doped that he couldn't stand and had to be held up to the microphone.

Still, the more Zohar deteriorated, the more the public loved and admired him. He could show up drugged to a club, late at night, grab a microphone, and people would pack the place.

In a radio interview, the late Uzi Chitman, another great Israeli songwriter who had worked with Zohar, recalled coming over to his Givatayim penthouse and finding Zohar passed out on the floor.

**Uzi Chitman:** The house was totally empty! And when I say empty I mean empty - no rugs, no plants, no fridge. And then I asked him, "Zohar, what is all this? Why is the house empty?" And he gave me this answer, "when the flower bloomed in my garden, this house was full. When the flower slightly wilted, everyone left me."

*[Music comes up]*

**Avihu Medina:** Look, of course '*Ha'Perach Be'Gani*' killed him. He wants to be famous, he wants to be beloved by people, but he was not ready for all of this. He was running away to the drugs from people, from love, from duty.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Zohar painstakingly worked his way from singing at neighborhood gatherings, to *bar mitzvahs*, dubious hotel lobbies and dingy nightclub gigs all the way to Israel's top stage at *Binyanei Ha'uma*. His song, '*Ha'Perach Be'Gani*,' instantly captivated the heart of the nation and propelled him to the status of a rock legend. But just five years later, he had reached rock bottom.

Zohar was arrested for stealing a purse. He was interrogated, and it was determined he had nothing to do with the theft. As he was being released, he stole a pistol that was lying around on a desk at the police station. Following a manhunt, he was arrested with the gun in his possession, convicted, and sent to prison. On the night of November 5,

1987, Zohar started shouting and complaining. The guard, used to these type of withdrawal symptoms, ignored him. Early the next morning, he was found hanging in his cell. He was thirty-two years old.

**Ilana Dayan:** *[In Hebrew] Ha'zamar Zohar Argov  
hit'abed lifnot boker. Hu tala atzmo be'ta  
ha'ma'atzar, be'tachanat hamishtara be'Rishon  
Le'tzion.*

**Yochai Maital (narration):** It was a Friday morning, and the *Chevra Kadisha* rushed to prepare the body before Shabbat set in. Just a few hours later, thousands of fans gathered to accompany 'The King' to his last resting spot, in a graveyard adjacent to *Shikun Hamizrach*, the Mizrahi slum in which Zohar had been born. He was interred just outside of the cemetery fence, as per Jewish custom in suicide cases. It was the perfect metaphor for his life and his legacy: Zohar opened the gates, yet remained outside.

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**Mishy Harman (narration):** Yochai Maital. That story was produced together with Judah Kauffman. And you might have recognized the voice of our doubter, our dear Radiolab friend, Robert Krulwich.

Now if that ending wasn't enough of a downer for you, there's something Yochai left out of his piece. You see, the rags-to-riches-to-rags version we just heard follows the most prevalent narrative of Zohar's life. He was a sparrow who flew too close to the sun.

That's the account we grew up with, and that many Israelis still have in their minds when they think about Zohar.

But there's another side of the story, and it's one we shouldn't ignore. Early on in his career, Zohar had been found guilty of rape, and sat in prison for a year. At the time of his death, yet another rape charge was pending.

For years, this part of Zohar's bio has been suppressed. It didn't mesh well with his mythological image.

There's no doubt that Zohar played a pivotal role in elevating Mizrahi culture in Israel. But he was also a convicted perpetrator of sexual assault. And as storytellers, journalists, and just members of society more broadly, I think we're still working through how, or if, we can separate art from artist.

And with that, we've reached the end of Part Three of our miniseries. Join us next week for the final instalment of "Mixtape," which will also be our Season Three finale. We're

going to meet the real musical trendsetters of the the early days of the the state - the military bands - and encounter one song that really riled up some of the IDF's top brass.

**Eitan Haber:** I was very close to Gandhi, the Head of the Central Command. And he didn't like this song. He thought it was defeatist.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** We'll also circle back to David Grossman, whom we met at the very start of the miniseries, and hear how one of Israel's most celebrated novelists ended up writing a hit hip-hop tune.

**David Grossman:** When I was stuck there in a traffic jam, I saw on the left a Volvo of settlers. And there stood a guy, the driver, with a screwdriver and he was peeling off the bumper stickers, and he peeled off the 'Rabin a Murderer,' 'Rabin a Traitor,' '*Rabin Rozeach*,' '*Rabin Boged*.' And then suddenly it occurred to me how strong and effective bumper stickers (that we all treated almost like a joke but) how effective they are in shaping public opinion after all.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** So while you wait in anticipation to know how Rabin's assassination got people rapping about the Messiah, you can catch up on the previous Mixtape episodes, and all our past episodes - in both English and Hebrew - on our site, on iTunes, and on any of the other main podcast platforms.

Zohar sang about the flower of his garden, and if we're a flower in your garden, please help us grow. You can do so by spreading the word, sharing episodes on social media and - and this really works - by writing (hopefully glowing) reviews on iTunes. As always, you can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, all under Israel Story. And if you want to sponsor episodes of Israel Story, simply drop us a line at [sponsor@prx.org](mailto:sponsor@prx.org).

Next episode will be our last of the season, and as such, we want to spend some time over the summer learning about you, our listeners. That will allow us to understand what you like, what you don't like, what we should do more of, less of. So, do us a big favor - go to our site, [israelstory.org](http://israelstory.org), and fill out our short listener survey. It shouldn't take more than a few minutes, and will really help us plan for Season Four.

Thanks to Dani Dotan and Dalia Mevorach, the creators of the wonderful film trilogy "The Sad and Foretold End of Zohar Argov," to Dalit Ofer, who advised us on all our musical selections for the miniseries, and to Sheila Lambert, Hanoach Piven, Naomi Schneider, Shlomo Maital, Esther Werdiger and Wayne Hoffman.

This 'Mixtape' miniseries is all based on our latest live show. Thanks to everyone who made this tour possible, and especially to the wonderful Bar Sananes, Chrissy Rinehart and Carlos Montero of Palm Beach, Florida, Yael Bermano and Jon Mills-Winkler in Princeton, New Jersey, and our dear friends at Amherst, Massachusetts - Valentina Khomenko, Rachel Schy and Rebekah Steinfeld.

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](mailto:livetour@israelstory.org).

This episode was edited by Yochai Maital, recorded by Tony Hernandez at the Off Record Studios in New York, and mixed by the one and only Sela Waisblum.

All the original music throughout the episode was written, arranged and performed by our wonderful Mixtape band - Dotan Moshanov and Ari Wenig, together with Ruth Danon, Eden Djamchid and Ronnie Wagner-Schmidt.

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

I'm Mishy Harman, and we'll be back very soon with our season finale - Mixtape Part Four, *wallak* join us. So till then, *shalom shalom* and *yalla bye*.

*[End Song]*

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