

Mishy Harman (narration): Last year, while working on a piece about the song *Yerushalayim Shel Zahav* for our Mixtape series, I went to interview Shuli Natan, the singer who originally sang it back in 1967. When I showed up at her house in Ra'anana, I discovered that a friend of hers - a heavy-set, white-haired gentleman - was randomly joining us for the interview. After we were done, he walked me to the door. "Call me," he said, "I have a story for you."

A few months later, we met up.

Abie Levy: My name is Menachem Abie Levy. I was born in April 1945, right at the end of WWII. My parents were Holocaust survivors, my dad from Italy, mom from Germany. Both of them escaped the Nazis' clutch in the very last minute, in 1939. They came to this land, settled in the Beit Shean Valley and established a Kibbutz, *Sde Eliyahu*.

Mishy Harman (narration): Abie told me a long, complicated tale about a woman he first met, more than half a century earlier, at the Western Wall. He then asked for help. He'd been looking for her for years, private eyes and all, but he simply couldn't find her anywhere. It was urgent, he said. He was almost seventy-five, and filled with both curiosity and nostalgia.

I promised Abie we'd do our best.

Abie Levy: If you find her, please please please let me know, and connect us. I just have to see this woman once more.

Mishy Harman (narration): Hey, I'm Mishy Harman, and welcome to the start of Israel Story's fourth season. Israel Story is brought to you by PRX, and is produced together with Tablet Magazine.

It's been a while, we've missed you very much, hopefully you've missed us a bit too, and now here we are... delighted to be back on air, and ready to jump, head-first, into the exciting season we have ahead of us.

A lot's happened in the world, and in our little country, since we finished our last season with that 'Mixtape' mini-series: There were elections in Israel, and... well... there are about to be elections once again. My favorite author, Amos Oz, a man I - and many others - considered to be a modern-day Israeli prophet, passed away. And we came within a few seconds of successfully landing a spacecraft on the moon.

Bereshit Engineer I: *[In Hebrew]* We are losing height.

Bereshit Engineer II: We seem to have a problem with our main engine.

Bereshit Engineer I: *[In Hebrew]* We just lost communication.

Morris Kahn: Well, we didn't make it, but we definitely tried! I think we can be proud. *[Applause]*.

Mishy Harman (narration): Throughout it all, however, if there's one word that's been with us, day and night, for the past year, it is - of course...

Donald Trump: The wall, has anyone ever heard about the wall? We have to start by building a wall. A big, beautiful, powerful, wall. Everybody wants the wall. We'll have the wall. Build that wall.

Mishy Harman (narration): Walls, it seems, are back in style. And it's not just Trump in America, or Bibi here. It's preoccupying our minds, too. So welcome, Israel Story listeners, to **'The Wall'** - our season-opening mini-series.

Around the world - from China to Berlin, from England to Peru - walls criss-cross our planet.

Over the centuries, we've called them by different names - fences, barriers, borders, curtains. We've made them out of stone and metal, concrete and barbed wire, iron and brick.

And taken together, they're reminders of their times; times in which people felt unsafe, or in need of protection. Bygone eras when fortification or expansion pushed certain groups out and let others in.

And while walls are sturdy, real-world, obstacles, their greatest power comes from within. They are, more than anything, a state of mind. A physical manifestation of a desire to divide, to defend, to safeguard a culture. "Walls," someone once wrote in an article I read, "aren't only built for *security*. They're built for a *sense* of security. They protect us not only from *barbarians*, but also from anxieties and fears, which are often even more terrifying."

When you build a home, the very first thing you do after laying the foundation, is put up walls. And that's exactly what happened in 1948, when Israel started building *its* national home. Over the last seven decades we've renovated - we've expanded the perimeter wall, fought about it with the neighbors, demolished walls, built new ones.

There are all kinds of walls in Israel today, and no, not just the Separation Wall.

Over the next few episodes, we'll visit some of the country's most famous walls. We'll ask them questions, listen to them whisper their stories, tell us their pasts, and predict their futures.

The entire series - which is based on our newest live show - will feature the original music of our wonderful Israel Story band - Dotan Moshonov, Ari Wenig, Eden Djamchid, Ronnie Wagner-Schmidt and Ruth Danon.

Our episode today - **Operation Hulda**. It takes us to a wall that generations of Jews around the globe - from Przemysl to Perth, from Sanaa to San Francisco - have yearned to see and touch. The Kotel. The Wailing, Western, Wall.

Mishy Harman (narration): Abie Levy, the gentleman we heard at the top of the show, was twenty-two-years-old in the late Spring of 1967. He had recently gotten out of the army, where he served as an officer, and was now back on his kibbutz - a religious kibbutz - working the land.

Abie Levy: I was born between the flower beds. Yes, because my parents were farmers who toiled away in the field from dawn to dusk.

Mishy Harman (narration): He was married, and his wife - Ilana - was eight months pregnant.

Abie Levy: And the fruit of her womb was about to come out [*laughs*].

Mishy Harman (narration): That's when he was called up to reserve duty for what would soon be known as the Six Day War.

Abie Levy: Can you imagine what it's like? When you go to war, no one knows what will happen.

Mishy Harman (narration): And what happened stayed with him for the rest of his life. On the morning of June 7, 1967, Abie's battalion of paratroopers entered Jerusalem's Old City, and captured the Temple Mount.

Abie Levy: Jordanian snipers were shooting at us, and you had to be very careful. Quickly run through open spaces. And I recognized the iron gate that led down to *Shchunat HaMugrabim* and the Western Wall.

Mishy Harman (narration): The soldiers stormed through the gate, and reached the - surprisingly undefended - Western Wall. Now, at the time, the Kotel didn't look anything like it does today. There was no grand plaza, but rather a densely populated and relatively poor Palestinian neighborhood called *Shchunat HaMugrabim*.

Abie Levy: *[In Hebrew]* A real slum.

Mishy Harman (narration): A crowded slum, Abie remembers. Kind of a Palestinian favela.

Danny Persky: Houses right next to another, doors right next to another.

Mishy Harman (narration): That's Danny Persky, the battalion's medic.

Danny Persky: No sanitation whatsoever.

Mishy Harman (narration): Only a narrow alleyway separated the houses of *Schunat HaMugrabim* and the Kotel.

Danny Persky: You look today at the Kotel and you see this huge thing. At the time it was a small little alley, not even a street.

Abie Levy: Yeah, a tiny little alley. And it was totally empty, there wasn't a single soul to be seen.

Mishy Harman (narration): The soldiers sat down.

Abie Levy: The quietness, and the cool shade, they gave us this sense of rest, of peacefulness.

Danny Persky: There was a calm atmosphere.

Abie Levy: And I allowed my soldiers to lay down for a minute and rest. Everyone leaned back on the stones of the Kotel.

Mishy Harman (narration): It was a moment of sober joy. Of contemplation. Each man, alone with his thoughts. All, in some sort of a daze.

Abie Levy: You're just spent. Either dead tired, or just emotionally exhausted from everything we had been through, and seen, during the night.

Mishy Harman (narration): It was the third day of the war, which meant that they hadn't really slept in the last seventy-two hours. It was also June, so it was pretty hot.

And the previous night they had fought at Ammunition Hill, in a bloody battle which claimed the lives of thirty-six of their friends.

Abie Levy: People saw and experienced so much in that night that it never leaves you.

Mishy Harman (narration): But more than anything, finding themselves there, in *that* alley, at *that* moment, was completely surreal. Just a few days earlier, everyone was sure that Hussein, the young Jordanian King, would stay out of the war, and there'd be no fighting in Jerusalem. And now, here they were, touching the stones of the Kotel.

Danny Persky: Suddenly, you know, it hit you. 'Hey, this is the Wailing Wall.'

Mishy Harman (narration): Even for a staunchly secular man like Danny, it was hard to fathom.

Danny Persky: I was very very excited. Nothing to do with religion. I mean, you born in Kiriyat Haim, I mean. The last time I went to *beit kneset*, to shul, is when I had my Bar Mitzvah, that's it.

Mishy Harman (narration): Still, even *he* felt a sense of spiritual uplifting.

Danny Persky: You standing there, in front of those magnificent wall, and you think of the history of Israel, from First Temple, Second Temple, and whatever. And here we are, Israeli soldiers, in the Old City of Jerusalem, liberating the city. I looked at that huge wall, and I was so proud that we are actually there.

Abie Levy: And then we started to understand... we liberated Jerusalem! And now Jews, from around the world, can come, and leave a note, and cry, and pray.

Mishy Harman (narration): At that very moment a high-pitched cry pierced the almost-sacred silence.

Abie Levy: Suddenly we heard the children screaming. And they came closer to us. It was two little kids yelling at the top of their lungs, "doctor, doctor, doctor." I saw these poor children, and I thought 'I must see if the doctor is around.'

Mishy Harman (narration): Abie quickly found the battalion's doctor, Uri Frand. Together, they rushed back and got Danny, the medic.

Danny Persky: The doctor looked at me and said, "Danny, c'mon, let's go!"

Mishy Harman (narration): They ran after the two toddlers, who were leading them into the bowels of the Palestinian neighborhood.

Mishy Harman: Were you afraid that this might be dangerous to follow these kids into *Shchunat HaMugrabim*?

Danny Persky: Look, there were still snipers in the streets. But we were cautious as we went through those small streets, small alleys.

Mishy Harman (narration): Finally, they arrived at a house. And there, on the floor, they saw a local Palestinian woman, screaming in agony.

Abie Levy: Uri, the doctor, knelt down beside her, examined her. And of course immediately understood that she was in labor.

Mishy Harman (narration): Though she was only seven months pregnant, they were told...

Danny Persky: She was in the middle of giving birth. I think I've already seen the head of the baby coming out. Not quite quite sure, but she was bleeding very heavily.

Abie Levy: And Uri said to me, "Abie, make sure we have some clean water here."

Mishy Harman (narration): Abie dashed back to the Kotel, and quickly returned with fresh water from the canteens of his fellow soldiers.

Danny Persky: We just washed her, and then, look, it was very dirty. It's not hygienic like a hospital scenario.

Abie Levy: And I was standing guard, and I thought to myself, 'what a world this is, what a world. We are now treating the enemy!' What can I say? And of course you're excited, but you're also nervous and alert. You need to make sure that G-d forbid someone

doesn't come in and start shooting, or throw a grenade into the room.

Mishy Harman (narration): As Abie's thoughts drifted, no doubt, to his own pregnant wife, back home on the kibbutz, the birth was in full swing.

Danny Persky: At that stage the baby started to come out. And it was a girl, I remember that Uri lift her up with her legs, and she started to cry, of course, which is the good sign - you know, she's alive.

Yaakov Frand: I remember Daddy was saying that once the child appeared, there was like light in the room.

Mishy Harman (narration): That's Yaakov, Uri Frand's son.

Yaakov Frand: Suddenly in all this death, and the sound of the shooting that was for almost two days before it, it was like happiness.

Danny Persky: Ah, then he cut the umbilical cord and wrapped the baby in towel or something like this, and gave it to the mother.

Mishy Harman (narration): Before they left behind the world of life and rejoined the world of war and death, Uri had one last piece of advice - though not strictly medical advice - for the new mother.

Yaakov Frand: Daddy suggested to call the girl Jamila, which is beautiful in Arab. Beautiful.

Mishy Harman (narration): He also said that - G-d willing - he'd come back and check on her once the fighting was over. And with that, the paratroopers turned around, and ran back to the Kotel.

Danny Persky: That's it. Quick in, quick out. And that's all that I remember of it.

Mishy Harman (narration): The story was one of many tales of bravery and courage during the war. But with time it became almost mythical. "Have you heard how Israeli paratroopers helped a Palestinian woman give birth?" people would say with an admiring twinkle in their eye.

Abie Levy: It's not about being enemies. It's about being human beings. A human being needs help, so you help!

Mishy Harman (narration): This is where we could have ended the story. It's an inspiring one, after all. It speaks to our shared humanity, and to the fact that - even mid-war - long before we are Jews and Arabs, long before we live on this side of the wall or the other, we're just people. Neighbors.

And for a while, this was, indeed, where the story ended. But then, well, then it took on a new life. Four-and-a-half years after the end of the Six Day War, in January 1972, a *Ma'ariv* journalist by the name of Mordechai Elkan was wrapping up a day of reporting in Jaffa. As he walked back to his car, he saw a group of people huddled together. Curious, he went over to see what the fuss was all about. This is Mordechai, recounting that moment years later in a home video.

Mordechai Elkan: That's when I came across something that really surprised me: I heard a conversation in Arabic in a Hungarian accent. I said to myself - there must be a story here. I stuck around, and it became the greatest story of my life.

Mishy Harman (narration): Mordechai passed away in 2015, but his widow, Ruti, vividly remembers his glowing face when he came home late that night. He had met a mysterious green-eyed woman, he told her.

Ruti Elkan: He said hello to her. "Hi, I'm Mordechai Elkan, I work for *Ma'ariv*." And then she told him her entire life story. Would you like me to tell you her story?

Mishy Harman (narration): "Absolutely," I said.

Yehudit Schwartz - that's the woman Mordechai met on the street in Jaffa - was born to secular Jewish parents, in Budapest, in 1927. Her father, Gabur, died when she was a year old. But that was just the start of her rough childhood. She and her three older brothers were sent to the Rosenbergs, a religious foster family who lived in a town about ninety miles away. They lived with them for eight years, before returning to Budapest, to their mother. When they came back, they discovered that she had remarried. Her new husband, a local non-Jewish Hungarian, wasn't - you can imagine - too happy about the reappearance of the four children. He kicked them out of the house, and Yehudit and her brothers spent several years trying to survive on their own. At times, friendly folks took them in, more often, they slept in shelters or on the street.

The worst, however, was still to come. In March 1944, the Nazis invaded Hungary. Later that year, Yehudit was deported to Auschwitz.

But she was lucky, and managed to survive - a day at a time - till the Red Army arrived in late January 1945, and liberated the camp.

Free at last, she made her way back to Budapest. That's where she discovered that she was the only member of her family to make it out alive. Once more, she found herself displaced.

In July 1946, *Youth Aliyah* - a Zionist organization that helped rescue Jews from Europe - offered Yehudit a fresh start. In Bakar, Yugoslavia, she and close to three thousand others, boarded a converted Canadian Navy battleship, re-christened the *Hagana*, and set off for the Land of Israel. This was, of course, a risky endeavour - part of the illegal immigration of Jews to Mandate Palestine also known as the *Ha'apala*. And as a matter of fact, the British seized the ship, dragged it to the Haifa port, and detained all the refugees in Atlit. Ultimately, Yehudit ended up on Kibbutz Afikim, near the southern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

After a solitary year there, she moved - by herself - to Jerusalem. She was utterly alone in this world. No family. No friends. She didn't even speak the language. So companionship, any companionship, must have been much welcomed. Shortly after she arrived in Jerusalem, Yehudit befriended a local Arab - Abu Walliyah - from the Old City. He invited her over. They spent time together.

This is where the story gets a bit murky. Some, like Ruti, the journalist's widow, believe that he kidnapped her.

Ruti Elkan: He forced her into staying with him, forced her to marry him, and made her convert to Islam.

Mishy Harman (narration): Other people told me, once I put the mic away, that she moved in with him willingly. Either way, that's when the War of Independence broke out.

TV Reel: Arriving in New York on the Queen Mary is Dr. Ralph Bunche, Acting United Nations Mediator in Palestine. He reports on the successfully concluded Armistices that have ended armed conflict between Israel and the Arab states.

Mishy Harman (narration): And when those Armistice Agreements were signed, and the new international borders were drawn, Yehudit Schwartz found herself in the Old City, now part of Jordan, living as a Muslim woman.

Ruti Elkan: Her name was changed to Layla Natasha.

Mishy Harman (narration): Life, needless to say, wasn't simple for Yehudit slash Layla, the Auschwitz-survivor-turned-traditional-Palestinian-wife.

Ruti Elkan: Her marriage was extremely difficult. Her husband would lock her in the house, because he was afraid she would escape back to the Jews, or else that the local Arabs would think she was a spy and hurt her.

Mishy Harman (narration): They had two daughters, but then - in 1957 - Abu Walliyah, the husband, had had enough of his unhappy wife, and left her. He took their girls, Ayisha and Samira, with him to Amman. Once again, Yehudit was on her own. Devastated. Some good-hearted neighbors in the Old City took pity on her. 'Look,' they said, 'there's a nice young man from Hebron, Ali, who's looking for a wife.'

Yehudit agreed, and a *shiduch* was arranged. Ali and Layla moved into a shack in *Shchunat HaMugrabim*. Life was far from glamorous. They lived, according to Ruti...

Ruti Elkan: In subhuman conditions, in a pathetic little hut.

Mishy Harman (narration): But after all her trials and tribulations, at least she was loved. And Ali, everyone agrees, was a good and honest man.

Ruti Elkan: She had a good marriage with him.

Mishy Harman (narration): Having had her two daughters torn away from her, she started a new family. In 1962, she gave birth to a girl, and three years later, to a baby boy.

Now, we've already met these two little kids.

Abie Levy: Suddenly we heard the children screaming, "doctor, doctor, doctor."

Mishy Harman (narration): Abie, Uri and Danny had no idea, of course, that the Palestinian woman whose baby they had helped deliver was actually Yehudit Schwartz - a Jewish Holocaust survivor. When Uri returned - as promised - to check on her, shortly after the war, she was already gone. In fact, *Shchunat HaMugrabim* itself had disappeared altogether.

Ruti Elkan: The IDF's Engineering Corps razed the entire neighborhood, to make way for the large Kotel Plaza we all know today.

Mishy Harman (narration): They had no way of knowing what happened to the mother or the baby. They didn't even know their names. Uri - you'll recall - had suggested Jamila. But they didn't know that she'd later acquire a new, biblical name.

Ruti Elkan: Hulda.

Mishy Harman (narration): Hulda.

Abie Levy: *[In Hebrew]* Hulda Ha'Neviaa.

Mishy Harman (narration): A female prophet from the time of Jeremiah.

After Mordechai, the journalist, heard this entire saga from Yehudit, on the street in Jaffa, he couldn't get it out of his head.

Ruti Elkan: He was really excited, and it remained *the* topic of conversation in our house for weeks.

Mishy Harman (narration): He wrote it up in an article for *Ma'ariv*.

Ruti Elkan: It was his biggest scoop. The scoop of a lifetime.

Mishy Harman (narration): Unsurprisingly, the story made national headlines. And Mordechai quickly arranged a meeting between the Schwartzes - Yehudit and Hulda - and Uri, the doctor. Now the reunion was emotional and joyous. But it also had a practical purpose.

Ruti Elkan: You see, Hulda didn't have a birth certificate. And at the time, the law said that the only person who could sign your birth certificate was the delivering physician.

Mishy Harman (narration): Uri gladly signed the certificate. He might have even shed a tear. After all, his son Yaakov told me...

Yaakov Frand: He was a very emotional guy. Very very emotional guy.

Mishy Harman (narration): Five-year-old Hulda claimed that she remembered Uri, from her *own* birth that is. Everyone laughed, and joked, and played around. But a year-and-a-half later, all that changed. It was Yom Kippur, 1973.

Yaakov Frand: Yom Kippur was real sacred for him. We were in the synagogue.

Mishy Harman (narration): During the *Musaf* prayer, they started to hear sirens, and noticed army cars frantically driving up and down the street. Uri knew what this meant. He took his eight-year-old son by the hand and rushed back home.

Yaakov Frand: He told my mother to help him pack all his stuff. He broke the fasting. And my mother took him to the main road, *Kvish Arba*. And he just hiked over to the south, and that's it.

Mishy Harman (narration): Uri never returned. On the very same day the ceasefire agreements came into effect, his helicopter was hit by an Egyptian missile near the Suez Canal. All twenty-four people on board were killed.

In the years following Uri's death, the story of the Kotel birth died down. Middle-aged Yehudit, was living in a small apartment in Bnei Brak, working as a part-time nanny. Abie went back to his life on the Kibbutz.

Abie Levy: I returned to the fields. I worked in the agriculture and cultivated crops.

Mishy Harman (narration): Danny, the medic, had seen enough.

Danny Persky: I left Israel in 1974, after the Yom Kippur War.

Mishy Harman (narration): He resettled in Sydney, Australia.

Danny Persky: And we living here ever since.

Mishy Harman (narration): Ruti and Mordechai Elkan, the *Ma'ariv* journalist and his wife, moved to the West Bank settlement of Sha'arei Tikva.

In 2004, Mordechai tracked down Yehudit and invited her to retell her story at a 'Jerusalem Day' singalong party, which took place exactly thirty-seven years, to the day, after the Kotel birth. Yehudit, now seventy-seven, was wearing a black head covering and a long dark dress. She spoke about the Holocaust, the journey to Palestine, the Kibbutz, moving to Jerusalem. This is from a video of that evening.

Yehudit Schwartz: I went to the Kotel. I was so intrigued to see the Kotel that everyone was always talking about, and everyone wanted to visit and pray at. So I went there, and that's where I was 'nabbed.'

Mishy Harman (narration): “So in 1948 you were ‘caught’ by an Arab, who didn’t let you go back to Israel?” someone asked.

Yehudit Schwartz: *[In Hebrew]* Yes.

Mishy Harman (narration): “Yes,” Yehudit answered. Then, somewhat sheepishly, she recalled hearing the paratroopers arriving at the Kotel. After all, it was right outside her window.

Yehudit Schwartz: Suddenly I went into labor. I didn’t know what to do. I told my husband to go out to them and say that I need to give birth.

Mishy Harman (narration): When Yehudit was done answering questions, a young woman in a white skirt joined her. It was Hulda, the “Kotel baby.” It was her birthday, someone brought out a cake, and the entire crowd sang to her. This was the last time people involved with the story met up. Yehudit died in 2009, and so did Mordechai, six years later. Everyone else just went on with their lives, and lost touch.

Now, *this* was the story I heard from Abie. Hulda was the woman he was trying to find.

Abie Levy: If you find her, please please please let me know, and connect us.

Mishy Harman (narration): We looked high and low, but she was nowhere to be found. We hired Maya Enoch, a relentless sleuth.

Maya Enoch: So... We tried old phone books, the Ministry of Interior, municipalities, even the Holocaust database at *Yad Va’Shem*.

Mishy Harman (narration): And even *she* couldn’t track her down. Hulda - it seemed - had vanished without a trace.

Radio Clip: *[In Hebrew]* The Finding Your Loved Ones Show with Izi Mann.

Mishy Harman (narration): After months of searching, we went on national radio, asking the public to help us locate her.

Izi Mann: *[In Hebrew]* Hello, Mishy Harman.

Mishy Harman: *[In Hebrew]* Hello, Izi, hello.

Izi Mann: *[In Hebrew]* And hello to Maya Enoch.

Maya Enoch: *[In Hebrew]* Hi!

Izi Mann: *[In Hebrew]* One could say we have a real detective tale here, right Mishy?

Mishy Harman: *[In Hebrew]* Totally. Totally.

Mishy Harman (narration): Izi Mann, the radio host, called it a “detective story.” We recounted all the details we knew, mentioned all the characters, places, events.

Mishy Harman: *[In Hebrew]* Abie Levy, Dr. Uri Frand, Yehudit Schwartz.

Izi Mann: *[In Hebrew]* Layla Natasha, yes.

Mishy Harman: *[In Hebrew]* She was in Auschwitz. Then she moved to Kibbutz Afikim. Hulda. Hulda Schwartz.

Izi Mann: *[In Hebrew]* And the question that now had everyone curious...

Mishy Harman (narration): “And the question that now has everyone curious,” Izi summed up.

Izi Mann: *[In Hebrew]* Where are they?

Mishy Harman (narration): “Where are they?”

We got dozens and dozens of leads as a result of the broadcast. Most of them turned out to be dead-ends. But then, one of Izi’s researchers sent us a link to a lifestyle blogpost about the wife of Bar Refaeli’s hairstylist. A woman called Fanny Sabag.

‘Might this be her?’ he wondered, citing a ton of circumstantial clues.

I called Fanny up.

Mishy Harman: OK, here we go. This could be her!
[ringing sound]

Fanny Sabag: *[In Hebrew]* Hello?

Mishy Harman: Hello, Fanny?

Fanny Sabag: *[In Hebrew]* Yes.

Mishy Harman: Hi Fanny. My name is Mishy Harman, and I’m calling you because I think I’ve been looking for you for many many months. Are you by any chance *[Fanny laughs]*... Are you by any chance Hulda from the Kotel?

Fanny Sabag: Yes.

Mishy Harman: Oh my G-d, Fanny, you have no idea. I have tears in my eyes. Wow. *[Fanny laughs]*.

Fanny Sabag: It's me. It's me. I'm so happy that you find me.

[car sound]

Mishy Harman: OK, I am in Pardes Chana, driving on my way to meet Fanny. Extremely excited actually.

Mishy Harman (narration): I was excited not only because we had successfully played Sherlock Holmes and found her. It was because given all I now knew about Fanny's complicated heritage, I was really eager to see who she had become. Somehow I felt that the unusual circumstances of her birth, endowed her with an enviable gift. Instead of viewing Israelis and Palestinians as warring enemies, on different sides of a wall, she had a ladder. Maybe, I thought, with her unique blend of Hebron and Hungary, Fanny could somehow use that ladder of hers to climb up, sit atop the wall, and look around, calmly, at all sides.

[Knocking and dog barking]

Mishy Harman: Shalom, Fanny.

Fanny Sabag: Shalom, shalom.

Mishy Harman (narration): We sat in her living room for hours, during which she filled me in on all the details of the story. Shortly after the Six Day War, she told me, her parents left the Old City. By that time, her father, Ali, was diagnosed with leukemia. He died when she was eighteen months old.

Mishy Harman: And did your mother love him?

Fanny Sabag: No.

Mishy Harman: No?

Fanny Sabag: No.

Mishy Harman (narration): As she spoke, I started to realize that Fanny grew up with a very clear, one-sided, narrative about her past. You see, after Ali's death Yehudit returned to Judaism, and raised her three kids in Bnei Brak, in a small public-housing apartment she received from the government.

Fanny Sabag: I grew up in Hebrew. And then my mom she talk with us only Hungar and when she was nervous she spoke Arab. Only when she was nervous. When she want to shout on us, she shout in Arab.

Mishy Harman: So she learned Hebrew ultimately?

Fanny Sabag: From us!

Mishy Harman (narration): For years Yehudit had lived behind a border. Behind a wall. And now that she had broken free of its confines, she put herself behind another one. One in which her complex history was simplified: She was a Jew, and she had always been a Jew.

I tried to understand what Yehudit had told Fanny. How she had explained all these unlikely twists and turns that made up her biography. But it turned out that - just like many Holocaust survivors of that generation - Yehudit largely chose to remain silent.

Fanny Sabag: She was kidnapped, by the Arabs.

Mishy Harman: Did she tell you stories about that?
What did she say?

Fanny Sabag: She didn't like to tell. To talk about it. She didn't like to talk about it because she was suffering there. She suffer all, all her life. I feel so sorry that, you know, in the Holocaust, and then with them. She all the time suffered. She have very tough life from the beginning until the end.

Mishy Harman (narration): It must have been confusing for Fanny and her siblings to grow up with all these layers of shame and secrecy.

Fanny Sabag: I never said that my father was Arab. No. Never. "My father die, I don't know."

Mishy Harman: Were you embarrassed to say?

Fanny Sabag: Embarrassed, sad, angry. I don't know. I deny. I don't want to know nothing about my father. Nothing.

Mishy Harman (narration): Her older brother, Haim, was so ashamed of his Arab heritage that he changed his father's name on his ID card from Ali to Eli.

Fanny Sabag: He don't want that somebody know that his father was Arab, or something like that. He don't want.

Mishy Harman (narration): Till this day, it turns out, that truth is so painful for both of them that they basically prefer to ignore it.

Fanny Sabag: We never talk about it because he hate Arabs, like me. I hate the Arabs so much that I didn't want to know nothing about them.

Mishy Harman (narration): It was jarring to hear Fanny declare her deep disdain towards her father's people. It confused me, honestly. I guess she couldn't afford, at least not psychologically, to straddle the wall and embrace her compound identity. Instead, she had to pick sides.

And as if all that wasn't mystifying enough, Fanny told me that towards the end of her mother's life, Samira - one of the two daughters from her first marriage, those who had been taken by their father to Amman - re-established contact. She was living in East Jerusalem, and she'd dress up as an *orthodox Jew*, and come to Bnei Brak to help her mom.

Fanny Sabag: Every day, she come from Jerusalem to see her mother.

Mishy Harman (narration): The day Yehudit died, in 2009, was the last time the two half-sisters spoke.

We're still looking for Samira.

Before I left, I asked Fanny to close her eyes and imagine an alternative reality. One in which a young King Hussein decides to stay out of the war, and Jerusalem's Old City remains Jordanian. One in which, in all likelihood, she would have grown up on the other side of the wall. As a Palestinian Muslim, rather than an Israeli Jew.

I asked the question several times, and in several different ways.

But Fanny always had the exact same reply.

Fanny Sabag: I don't know. I don't know. I don't want to think about it.
[Radio news bulletin from election day]

Mishy Harman (narration): April 9, 2019, was election day in Israel. An entire nation held its breath to see whether an upstart general could unseat an incumbent king. And that very day, in Jerusalem's Old City, next to a wall built by an Edomite ruler two millennia ago, a bunch of Israelis - folks who really couldn't be more different from each other - met up for a strange reunion. Some of them hadn't seen each other in decades, others had never met before. But they were there because a single act of altruism, performed fifty-two years ago, forever tied their fates together.

Abie, the no-longer-young officer from the paratroopers, came with his partner, Shuli - who first sang "Jerusalem of Gold." Dr. Uri Frand's daughter, Racheli, showed up with her husband, Avi. And so did Ruti, the gracious widow of Mordechai Elkan, who broke the story back in 1972. And then there was one, excited, overwhelmed, and dazed woman. A woman whose life began right here, at the Wailing Wall. Jamila. Hulda. Fanny.

Oh yeah, and also in attendance was Guy, Fanny's thirteen-year-old son. The Israeli grandson of a Hungarian Holocaust survivor and a Palestinian from Hebron, who was seemingly oblivious to all the crazy forces of history that allowed him, on a gorgeous

April day, to come to the Kotel, put in his earbuds, and listen - in a never-ending loop - to Ariana Grande pop songs.

Abie took us around, and showed us where all the events of June 7, 1967 took place.

Abie Levy: *[In Hebrew]* And lo and behold, she came out. This tiny little preemie. Absolutely tiny. Something like this. Like this.

Mishy Harman (narration): At the end of the tour, as if to exemplify the convoluted, intertwined DNA of this story, the *Muazzin* from El-Aqsa Mosque started calling believers to prayer. And as it did, I looked at Fanny, who seemed a bit detached from the rest of the group. It was as if she found herself at the center of a story which wasn't really hers. She was the belle of the ball, for sure, but somehow she also managed to make herself almost invisible. Gazing off to the side, a permanent smile plastered on her face, she was clearly distracted.

I couldn't really tell whether she was even happy to be there. Was it nostalgic for her? Or was it, rather, painful, forcing her to confront an identity she's clearly decided to bury?

I guess that, in my mind, I had made her into a symbol - this Jewish-Arab baby, born at the Kotel, on the day of Jerusalem's reunification. But most people aren't symbols. Fanny definitely isn't. She's just a person, grappling with her past, and constructing her own internal walls in order to live her life.

Still, on the most divisive election day Israel has ever known, a West Bank settler, a former kibbutznik, a self-described Arab-hater, a left-wing Tel Avivi, and many others who weren't there with us - Danny, the medic who left Israel and now lives in Australia; Uri, the doctor who was killed during the Yom Kippur War; Samira, the Palestinian half-sister we couldn't locate; and of course Yehudit, the Auschwitz survivor who spent nineteen years in the shadow of this wall.

All those people were somehow part of the same, complicated, story. One which isn't symbolic or metaphorical. It's just... well, life.

Mishy Harman (narration): And that's it. Our first episode of the season. You can hear all our previous episodes - three full seasons worth of them - on our site, israelstory.org, or by searching for Israel Story on iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher, or anywhere else you usually get your podcasts. You can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, all under Israel Story. If you want to sponsor episodes of Israel Story, and reach a large and committed audience - in one hundred and ninety two countries around the world - email us at sponsor@israelstory.org.

There are many folks who worked hard on this episode - thanks first and foremost to Maya Enoch, who produced this story with me, tirelessly tracked down every possible lead, and - in the process - learned more about the Schwartz family than anyone alive (including, that is, the Schwartz family itself). Maya also just got married, ten days ago, to Haim. So a big big mazal tov, Maya and Haim!

We haven't given up hope of finding Samira, or her sister, Ayisha - who apparently lives in Abu Dhabi. So, if you know either of them, or anyone who might help us reach them, let us know. Hopefully we'll be able to air an update later in the season.

Thanks to our dubbers: Alex Ansky, Liron Levi and David and Dorothy Harman. To Avi Shachar and Racheli Frand, Uri's daughter, who opened up their home, and welcomed us into their family. To Izi Mann and his team of researchers who helped us with all the mysteries of the story. To Rafi and Dani Schoffman, Yotam Michael Yogev, Rana Fahoum, Bayan Zoabi, Ora Rajevsky, Yael Neuman, Ahuva Rosenberg, Uri and Yael Rapaport, Danna Harman, Itzik Sabag, Halel Eshed, Matan Wygoda, Julie Subrin and all the countless people who've heard me go on and on about each and every detail of the search for the past year.

All the original music throughout the episode was written, arranged and performed by our wonderful Israel Story band - Dotan Moshonov and Ari Wenig, together with Ruth Danon, Eden Djamchid and Ronnie Wagner-Schmidt. It was mixed by our one and only Sela Waisblum, in what will be his last episode before becoming a dad! *Be'Sha'aa Tova, Sela!*

"The Wall" miniseries is based on our latest live show. Thanks to everyone who made our most recent North America tour possible, and especially to our JCC Manhattan family - Sheila Lambert, Megan Whitman, Rabbi Joy Levitt, Jordana Monzano-Sandler, Amanda Crater, Jeff Fontaine, Sam Brunswick, Philip Sandstrom and Matt Temkin. To Pamela Lavitt, Ameer Sherer, the University of Washington Hillel staff, Terri and Damian Green, Julie and Lyle Margulies and Jane Becker and Jason Kintzer. And to our partners on the Upper East Side coalition - Karin Lagziel, Rabbi Mo Salth, Rick Rosenbluth, Sean Fogarty, Central Synagogue, Park Avenue Synagogue, the 92nd Street Y, the UJA and JAFI.

We're coming back to North America with "The Wall" in January 2020, so if you'd like us to come perform in your community, contact us at live@israelstory.org.

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I'm Mishy Harman, and we'll be back very very soon with **The Wall Part II**.

Elayak Owayna: There were about a hundred of us present that day. Hassan Mustafa was the symbol of courage. He walked down the hill by himself. We were all sure he was going to get shot.

Mishy Harman (narration): So till next time, *shalom shalom* and *yalla bye*.

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