

ISRAEL STORY'S *MIXTAPE*

THE STORIES BEHIND ISRAEL'S ULTIMATE PLAYLIST

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE



Photo Courtesy Israel Story

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

USING ISRAEL STORY MIXTAPE IN THE CLASSROOM

EPISODE 3

Background and Summary Songs
Speaker/Personality Description and Bios
Themes
Discussion Questions
Recommended Activities
Resources
Songbook— heb/eng/transliteration

ACCESS TO ISRAEL STORY MIXTAPE EPISODE 3

<https://israelstory.org/episode/38-mixtape-part-iii-eastward-bound/>

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Music and song play a central role in Israel's culture. From the early pioneers, who adapted their songs to their new homeland, to the contemporary sound and verse of today's poets and lyricists—The playlist evolves to reflect the changing history of Israel.

As educators, we recognize the power of music. These materials harness that power to inspire connections to the land and people of Israel through their music. Israeli music has the power to connect us.

Mixtape, an Israel Story podcast series, provides an in-depth exploration of Israel's ultimate playlist. This four-part musical journey takes us through anthems, songs of yearning and songs of war, and peace, showcasing the stories behind some of Israel's most iconic tunes. Mixtape offers a multimedia experience, using sound (podcast), visual (YouTube videos), written text, and an online presence.

We offer this educational guide to support educators as they employ Israel Story Mixtape as a tool for connecting to Israel's accomplishments and complexities.

HOW TO USE MIXTAPE

Educators have been using podcasts as a classroom tool for more than a decade—but as their popularity continues to grow, educators are finding new ways to bring them into the classroom.

Podcasts bring stories to life, exposing us to different narratives and opinions, enriching our knowledge and providing an opportunity for critical inquiry.

There are many ways to explore the rich content that Mixtape offers. Each episode can be discussed in one session or broken into several lessons, depending on time and audience. Learners can listen on their own or together, during class. Educators can facilitate discussions on key issues, assign individual exploration or implement activities.

To help you plan lessons, we include:

- Background and Summary Songs
- Speaker / Personality Description and Bios
- Themes
- Discussion Questions
- Recommended Activities
- Resources
- Songbook—heb/eng/transliteration

We encourage you to put your own spin on lessons using these materials as a foundational source.

In this four-part miniseries, Mixtape, Israel Story sets out to explore Israeli society through the stories behind some of the country's most iconic tunes.

“When it comes to Israel, everything is complicated. Politics are complicated, religion is complicated, democracy is complicated, the conflict is complicated. Even the complications are complicated... But there is (seemingly) one island within Israeli society that escapes complexity, one thing that brings us together more than it divides us: Israeli music. Or so, at least, we thought.”

—Mishy Harmon, Israel Story Host

EPISODE 3 | EASTERN BOUND

(47:50 min)

In a music scene dominated by Ashkenazi culture, Mizrahi singers had to patiently pave their way toward the Israeli mainstream one song at a time. In Part Three of our miniseries, we meet two Yemenite trailblazers, who took very different approaches to their heritage.

In Israel today, Mizrahi, or “Eastern,” music is everywhere. To many, it is practically synonymous with Israeli music. But that wasn’t always the case. For decades, Israeli radio stations exclusively played tunes rooted in Ashkenazi traditions. In the 1970s and early ’80s, that began to change due to a small number of trailblazers.

This episode can be divided into two segments.

PROLOGUE: A MONA LISA CALLED ABANIBI (00:00-15:41)

Exactly 40 years before Netta Barzilai’s feminist hymn “Toy” won the Eurovision Song Contest and propelled thousands of fully clothed Israelis to jump into the fountain pool in Tel Aviv’s Rabin Square, another Israeli youngster conquered Europe with a set of bizarre utterances—the Hebrew equivalent of Pig Latin. Skinny with dark skin, black curly hair, and a million-dollar smile, Izhar Cohen made his mark. Mishy Harman shares the story of the ongoing love affair between Israel and the Olympics of cheesy pop melodies.

ACT 1: THE FLOWER OF MY GARDEN (15:42-37:10)

You may never have heard of Zohar Argov, but to Israelis he was “The King.” A mix between Elvis Presley, Amy Winehouse, and Billie Holiday, he forever changed the face of Israeli music. But he paid for it with his life. Yochai Maital brings us the tragic rags-to-riches-to-rags story of a sparrow who flew too close to the sun—a man whose angelic gift thrust him into the national spotlight and whose demons brought him crashing down. This story was produced together with Judah Kauffman.

15:42-31:57

Argov’s climb to the top

31:58-37:10

Argov’s spiraling cascade downward

This section deals with Argov’s drug use and decline until his arrest for theft and subsequent suicide in jail.

EPILOGUE (37:11-end)

In this section, Zohar Argov's story covers his conviction of sexual assault, and the question—timely and relevant in recent public debates—whether we can separate art from artist. It is followed by a brief introduction to the next episode.

Note: Be mindful of your audience, this episode includes several instances of adult content and language.

SONGS

- “Abanibi”—Izhar Cohen—Eurovision winner 1978
- “Halleluya”—Gali Atari & Chalav U'Dvash—Eurovision winner 1979
- “Diva”—Dana International—Eurovision winner 1998
- “Toy”—Neta Barzilai—Eurovision winner 2018 Eurovision Medley

MIZRAHI SONGS

- “Haperach Begani”—The Flower in my Garden—Zohar Argov
- “Elinor” – Zohar Argov

SPEAKERS



Photo Courtesy Izhar Cohen
Facebook Fanpage

IZHAR COHEN

Singer of Yemeni descent. First Israeli to win the Eurovision contest in 1978.



Photo Courtesy Wiki Commons

TOVA KLINGER

Music editor, *Kol Yisrael* (Israel National Radio Station).

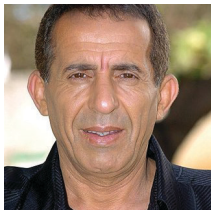


Photo Courtesy Wiki Commons via
Avihug

AVIHU MEDINA

Composer, arranger, songwriter, and singer of Mediterranean Israeli music.



Photo Courtesy Wiki Commons via
Deror_avi

NANCY BRANDES

Conductor, orchestrator, composer and Israeli comic actor, originally from Romania.

PERSONALITIES

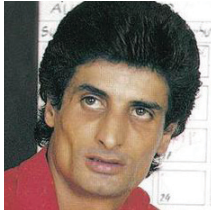


Photo Courtesy Wiki Commons

ZOHAR ARGOV

A popular Mizrahi singer with a distinctive voice. Born in 1955, he was the eldest of ten children in a Yemenite Jewish Family in Rishon Le'tzion. He earned the title “*Ha'melekh*” (the King) during a time when mainstream, overseas pop music dominated Israeli radio airplay, rather than traditional Oriental style music, as was his style. He is still the undisputed “King” of Mizrahi music, and contemporary singers continually remake his songs.

Zohar Argov unfortunately became a drug user, causing problems in his professional and personal life. He was arrested on alleged rape charges, and committed suicide in his cell by hanging the morning of November 6, 1987. [Reference: [IMDB](#)]



Photo Courtesy Wiki Commons

OFRA HAZA

Born in 1957 in the Hatikvah quarter of Tel Aviv to parents who had immigrated from Yemen with their eight sons and daughters, Ofra Haza played a major role on the Israeli and International music scene with the strength of her blend of pop with traditional Yemeni music. Haza is one of the major links in the chain of Yemenite women singers who have played a prominent role on the Israeli music scene over the years. For a full bio: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ofra-haza/>

THEMES

1. EUROVISION CONTEST

“It may just be the biggest song contest you never heard of” stated a CBS morning program announcer in 2015.

The Eurovision Song Contest is an international song competition held primarily among the member countries of the European Broadcasting Union. Each participating country submits an original song to be performed on live television and radio, then casts votes for the other countries’ songs to determine the winner. The Eurovision Song Contest started in 1956 with just seven participating countries and has grown to include more than 50 nations, including Israel. It is the longest running show on television and is watched by over 200 million viewers worldwide.

Israel entered the contest for the first time in 1973, has won four times, and has hosted the contest twice, in 1979 and 1999, both times in Jerusalem. Israel will host the contest for the third time in Tel Aviv in 2019, following Netta Barzilai’s win in 2018 with the song “Toy.”

Eurovision winning songs:

“*Abanibi*”—Izhar Cohen—1978 (1st place)

“*Halleluya*”—Gali Atari & Chalav U’Dvash—1979 (1st place)

“*Hora*”—Avi Toledano—1982 (2nd place)

“*Chai*”—Ofra Haza—1983 (2nd place)

“*Kan*”—Duo Datz—1991 (3rd place)

“*Diva*”—Dana International—1998 (1st place)

“*Toy*”—Netta Barzilai—2018 (1st place)

Two Israeli songs, that competed in the Eurovision, stand out for us as educators. They are “*Chai*” (“Alive”), and “There Must Be Another Way.”

2. CHAI—OFRA HAZA—1983

I Am Still Alive! The rhythmic pop song written by Ehud Toledano and Ehud Manor, begins with words of personal life affirmation and goes on to convey a metaphor for the people of Israel and the global Jewish community, surviving various attempts of destruction. The song had further profound meanings since it was performed on German soil conjuring Holocaust memory, and in the city of Munich, the site of the Munich massacre of eleven Israeli athletes who came to compete in the Olympics, in 1972. The creators and performers all understood the opportunity to make a statement (*Am Yisrael Chai*, “the people of Israel live”) to the entire world, from a stage in Germany. Even the costume designer Dorin Frankfurt, A daughter of Holocaust survivors, made a statement by dressing the backup singers in yellow, stating that she was putting the yellow star back on German soil.

The song continues to be one of Ofra Haza signature songs and remains popular in Israel and among Jewish communities worldwide.

3. THERE MUST BE ANOTHER WAY—NOA & MIRA AWAD—2009

Even though they didn't win, we include this song because of its importance and message. Israel put a unique spin on peace and coexistence, when they sent duo Noa & Mira Awad to the competition. Noa (Achinoam Nini) is a Jewish-Israeli while Awad is an Arab-Israeli and they performed "There Must Be Another Way" in English, Hebrew and Arabic. The singers describe the song not as a song of peace, but as a call to respect the humanity of others.

There was some controversy about the duo performing together for Eurovision. Several Jewish and Arab local artists and intellectuals called for Awad to step down because, in their view, her participation would convey a false impression of national coexistence that would be used to cover up the deaths of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip. In an interview on National Public Radio, Awad acknowledged this criticism, and said, "We're not naïve enough to think that we're representing any existing situation. We are trying to show a possible situation that we believe is possible if we just make the necessary efforts." [Source: Wikipedia]

NPR All Things Considered, interview with Mira Awad: [transcript](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Eurovision songs are heard by millions of people worldwide and are an opportunity to celebrate Israel. Pick several songs from the Eurovision winning songs list and YouTube links under "Resources"—how do they portray Israel?
- What are the messages that the songs "*Chai*" and "There Must Be Another Way" send to listeners? Are they similar? Different?
- If you were to write a song for the Eurovision, what would be its title?

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Use the following in your classroom: *Am Yisrael Chai*—The iCenter Educational Resource <https://www.theicenter.org/resource/am-yisrael-chai>
2. Ask learners to imagine they are writing a song for the Eurovision based on a familiar Israeli tune. Have them discuss what aspects of Israel they want to convey to the listeners.

4. THE PLACE OF MIZRAHI MUSIC IN MAINSTREAM ISRAELI CULTURE

"Mizrahi" is a socio-political term describing Jews from Arab and/or Muslim lands, including Jews from North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of the Caucasus. The Ashkenazic establishment in Israel coined the term in the 1950s in response to the large wave of immigrants from Arab countries at that time. The immigrants soon began to use the term to describe themselves as well. "Mizrahi" is distinct from, but often overlaps with, the term, "Sephardi," and the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably.

"The division between Jews from Europe and from the Islamic world remains one of

Israel's most painful fault lines, and it has played out in pop music. For many years, the Mizrahi sound was scorned by the curators of Israeli culture and kept on the margins. In record stores, you'd have a section for "Israeli" music, meaning mostly music by artists of European ancestry and orientation, and a separate section for "Mizrahi" or "Mediterranean" music, even though this music, too, was in Hebrew and produced in Israel. There was a time when you could barely get Mizrahi music played on the radio, and anyone who wanted to keep up with the latest hits had to go to a cluster of scruffy cassette shops around the Tel Aviv bus station. That reality was an expression of the broader disenfranchisement of Israelis from the Islamic world, who were rarely spotted in the academy or in the corridors of power.

Recent years have seen a reversal. Mizrahi music is now the country's leading pop genre."
[Reference: [MyJewishLearning](#)]

Read the full article: [here](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What kind of music do you listen to? Why? Do you listen to a mix of styles and genres?
- What kind of Israeli music do you like?
- Which are your favorite Israeli songs?
- What style are these songs? Are any of them Mizrahi or have an eastern sound? Give examples.
- Based on your discussion, Is there such a thing as "typical Israeli music?"

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Have learners listen to two or three songs from this episode and make a musical comparison. What are some of the similarities and some of the differences? (i.e. "Abanibi," "Toy," "The Flower in My Garden"). See under *Resources* YouTube audio and visual clips.