

# 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 4

*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 4

<https://israelstory.org/episode/39-mixtape-part-iv-war-peace-bumper-stickers/>

## 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 4 | WAR, PEACE, AND BUMPER STICKERS

(43:42 min)

In our season finale, we explore two songs that—perhaps more than any others—capture the complex and intermingled nature of Israeli society: a military band’s hit that, in its afterlife, became an anthem for peace, and a rap tune penned by the country’s leading novelist.

Over the last four episodes, we’ve uncovered the stories behind some of Israel’s most iconic songs. When we set off on this journey, we hoped to find a unicorn, a unifying island of Israeliness that escaped the polarization dominating almost every conversation about Israel. Instead we discovered that music not only reflects, but often amplifies, our contrasts. We all sing in different keys, with different words and in different voices. And THAT is what Israel is all about. It is not that the inherent complications stop existing. It’s just that somehow, miraculously perhaps, the cacophony can almost sound harmonious.

In this final installment of the Mixtape miniseries, we turn to Yitzhak Rabin’s 1995 assassination, and to two songs that symbolize the messy multifariousness of Israeli society. One takes us back several decades, the other catapults us forward into the 21st century.

*The episode can be divided into two segments.*

### **ACT 1: A SONG FOR PEACE** (00:00-20:03)

When it first came out, in the middle of the War of Attrition, “*Shir La’shalom*” was an anti-war hymn sung, paradoxically, by a military band. Meant to be an Israeli version of Hair’s “Let the Sunshine In,” it was quickly banned and labeled defeatist and demoralizing. But a quarter of a century later, it resurfaced in what would turn out to be one of the most fateful nights the country has ever known. Hannah Barg tells a story of a song, a dream, and a musical reincarnation. This story was written, recorded, and produced together with Maya Kosover and Yochai Maital.

### **ACT 2: CAN’T AFFORD THE LUXURY OF DESPAIR** (20:04-end)

On the day after Rabin’s assassination, author David Grossman was driving up to Jerusalem. On the side of the road he saw a religious settler standing next to his Volvo, peeling off bumper stickers with particularly provocative right-wing slogans. In his mind, David could trace a direct line, or chain, starting with inflammatory statements made by irresponsible politicians, continuing in the offices of creative copywriters who fashioned them into catchy phrases, on to drivers who adorned their cars with the stickers, and ending with a man with a gun in his hand shooting the prime minister. His eight-year-long attempt to decode that chain led to one of Israel’s most popular rap songs of all time. Host Mishy Harman shows how bumper stickers can betray the DNA of a nation.

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

## SONGS

- “*Shir La’shalom*”—“Song for Peace”—Rotblit/Rosenblum
- “*Shirat Ha’sticker*”—“The Sticker Song”—Grossman/Shaanan Streett

## SPEAKERS



Photo Courtesy Ariel Jerolimski

### DAVID GROSSMAN

Grossman has been publishing since 1982 and was awarded the Man Booker International Prize in conjunction with his frequent collaborator and translator, Jessica Cohen, for his novel *A Horse Walks Into a Bar*. In 2018, he was awarded the Israel Prize for literature. Grossman is an outspoken peace activist.



Photo Courtesy Wiki Commons

### SHAANAN STRETT—HADAG NACHASH

Shaanan Streett is one of the most influential and respected cultural voices in Israel today. He is a singer and songwriter for Israeli band Hadag Nahash (“The Sticker Song”). Streett has released 7 albums with the band, as well as 2 albums of his own. He is a screenplay writer (“The Wonders”), a former columnist (*Time Out Israel*), a peace and social activist (who founded The One Shekel Festival), and a lifelong Jerusalemite in a land where nearly the entire cultural scene has migrated to Tel Aviv. [Source: [Swarthmore College](#)]



Photo Courtesy Wiki Commons

### MIRI ALONI

Aloni is a singer who served in the army in 1968, in the Nahal Entertainment Unit. In the seventies and eighties she played in various bands, including Apocalypse, and had major roles in several movies and TV series. Minutes before Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated at a peace rally in November 1995, Miri Aloni sang the Israeli pop song “*Shir La’shalom*” (“Song for Peace”) with Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres by her side.

## PERSONALITIES

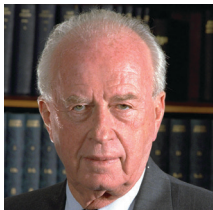


Photo Courtesy Wiki Commons

### YITZHAK RABIN

Yitzhak Rabin (1922-1995) was one of Israel’s leading military figures and political leaders. He was the seventh IDF chief of staff and was later elected prime minister twice, in 1974 and in 1992. Rabin, a decorated general, revered defense minister, a Prime Minister dubbed the “architect of peace” and a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, was also the first prime minister in Israeli history to be assassinated.

As prime minister, he led Israel during the period of the Oslo Accords, which attempted to set the groundwork for a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

On November 4, 1995, right-wing extremist Yigal Amir shot and killed Rabin following a peace rally in Tel Aviv. [Source: [YNet News](#)]

## THEMES

### 1. RABIN'S ASSASSINATION AND HIS LEGACY

Yitzhak Rabin's legacy embodies the contradictions of Israeli society, and its democratic institutions in particular. Perceived mainly as a military hero, Rabin is most closely associated with the struggle for non-violence within Israel and peace with its neighbors. In the history of the State of Israel, Rabin's centrality is indisputable. His legacy, on the other hand, is fiercely disputed.. Rabin's dream was for the creation of a safe homeland for the Jewish people with a stable, pluralistic, inclusive democracy, at peace with its neighbors.

Rabin was assassinated at a peace rally calling for non-violence and for legitimizing divergent ideologies through the democratic process. It is probably the most traumatic event in the history of the modern state and had an unimaginable impact on Israeli society. In the following days after the assassination, and every year since on the Saturday nearest to the anniversary date, thousands of Israelis have gathered in Rabin Square, as it was renamed, to pay their respects.

Many schools in Israel and abroad commemorate the day with lessons on tolerance and democracy.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

“And I, I.D. Number 30743, Retired Lieutenant-General Yitzhak Rabin, a soldier in the Israel Defense Forces, and a soldier in the army of peace; I, who sent regiments into the fire and soldiers to their deaths, I say to you [...] Today we are embarking on a battle that has no dead and no wounded, no blood and no anguish. This is the only battle that is a pleasure to wage—the battle for peace.”

Address by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to the United States Congress, Washington, D. C., July 26, 1994

- What elements of Rabin's personality and views does this speech reveal?
- How do these elements relate to Israel's history and reality?
- In your opinion, what are meaningful ways to mark Rabin's Memorial Day?

### 2. OPPOSING VIEWS AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

When it comes to freedom of speech, there is a fine line between expressing one's views and inappropriate or offensive language. In the classroom, on the play yard or through social media, guidelines are necessary to assure cordial and safe communication.

Many Israeli songs reflect the events and sentiments of their time. Both segments of this episode deal with opposing views of a political situation, and ways of expressing opinions and hopes.

“*Shir La’shalom*” represents a yearning for peace. Seen as an inappropriate expression during times of war, that song was not accepted by a top Israeli Army general, but others saw it quite differently. Indeed the song has survived as an anthem of the peace movement.

Grossman’s “Sticker Song” represents the deep division in Israeli society before the assassination of Rabin as demonstrated by bumper stickers that proclaim their owners’ opinions. The song was inspired by the charged atmosphere preceding the assassination, when large-scale demonstrations took place all across Israel. During those demonstrations controversial signs and images were raised accompanied by hateful and personal cries directed at Yitzhak Rabin. The assassination was followed by claims that such bitter and divisive cries ‘incited’ the assassin to take action and carry out his malicious and misguided plan.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you know any songs that celebrate peace?
- Do you know any songs that were written in response to, or during a specific time in, American or Israeli history?
- Does freedom of speech mean that you can say anything you want? Explain?
- In your opinion, what should be exceptions to freedom of speech or freedom of expression? (i.e., personal, hateful, racist remarks)
- If you were to write a song about present day USA (or present day Canada), what would it be about?

## RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Ask learners to plan, design, and create their own bumper sticker. Have them articulate which views they represent and their process of creating the sticker.
2. Check out a few ideas for class discussion and activities about being responsible for your words: *Power of words: Trigger-happy fingers on the keyboard—Taking responsibility for your words.*