**Mishy Harman:** OK, it is November 20th, 2017. I am in Talpiyot, walking to record the Friedman children. *[Climbing up the stairs].* Here we are. *[Knock, door opens].* Hey guys.

**Friedman Twins:** Hi.

**Mishy Harman:** Hey!

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Hello hello, it’s Mishy. So, today’s #givingtuesday, the day that’s sort of emerging as an international donation day, and your inboxes are probably flooded with appeals from every possible organization, institution and initiative telling you how much they need your help.

Well… guess what? We need your help. That’s the truth.

You know, when we began our show, about four years ago, we used to say we were going to be the Israeli ‘This American Life.’

**Ira Glass**: I totally remember. I said to you, like “oh, are you the Israelis who are ripping off our show?” *[Mishy laughs]*. I had heard about you.

**Mishy Harman**: And is that how you felt, that we were the Israelis who were ripping off your show?

**Ira Glass**: Well, it isn’t a question of how I feel, that’s just a statement of fact. You *are* the Israelis who are ripping off our show.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** A ton has happened since those early days - Israel Story has grown in every possible way, found its own voice, and - and this is the best part of this whole job - we have hundreds of thousands of listeners around the world who download our episodes.

According to our analytics, they’re folks in 187 countries who regularly listen to the show, including people in Iran, Iraq and Papua New Guinea. By the way, Iranian ‘Israel Story’ listeners - we want to hear from you. Drop us a line!

But for this listener drive, we decided to try something new. It isn’t a standard episode, with stories and narrative arcs and dramatic tension. Instead, we went to talk to some very special listeners: Our youngest and oldest number one fans. Amazingly, with all the listeners spread out across the globe, these fans live just a few minutes away from each other, in Jerusalem, the city where our show was born.

And like the show itself, they are mini Israel stories. Regular people you wouldn’t otherwise meet, who make up this crazy human tapestry called Israel.

So, let’s meet them, beginning with the younger generation - the Friedmans.

**Aviv Friedman:** Hi I’m Aviv. I’m ten years old. I listen to Sipur Israeli since I’m seven.

**Michael Friedman:** I’m Michael Friedman. I am ten years old also. I’ve been listening to Israel Story I think for three years.

**Mishy Harman:** OK, Tamar, can you introduce yourself?

**Tamar Friedman:** Yeah, I could! I’m Tamar Friedman, and I’m six years old, and I listen from when I was... I don’t know but when the boys started to listen I also… *[Laughs].*

**Mishy Harman:** So you were like three.

**Tamar Friedman:** Something like that.

**Mishy Harman:** Wait Tamar, are you already in first grade?

**Tamar Friedman:** Yeah.

**Mishy Harman:** Wow.

**Tamar Friedman:** But I’m bored.

**Mishy Harman:** You’re bored?

**Tamar Friedman:** Yeah.

**Mishy Harman:** How come?

**Tamar Friedman:** ‘Cuz I know everything!

**Mishy Harman:** What do you know?

**Tamar Friedman:** All of the letters that they teach us.

**Mishy Harman:** In Hebrew and in English?

**Tamar Friedman:** In Hebrew and I know also in English, a bit. Not so much.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** The Friedman twins and their little sister Tamar started listening to the show because their dad, Matti, produced a story about the Aleppo Codex for one of our earliest episodes.

**Mishy Harman:** And did you guys like your dad’s story on the show?

**Aviv Friedman:** Not really.

**Michael Friedman:** No. *[Everyone laughs].*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** But luckily for us, despite their lukewarm reaction to their dad’s piece, they were hooked.

**Mishy Harman:** Tell me why you guys like Israel Story?

**Aviv Friedman:** It’s really interesting!

**Michael Friedman:** Yeah, I also... It’s interesting. Something to think about.

**Mishy Harman:** And where do you guys listen?

**Michael Friedman:** In car rides, in really long car rides.

**Mishy Harman:** So wait, so describe these rides. What’s happening? You guys are all in car, the whole family…

**Aviv Friedman:** Yes.

**Mishy Harman:** And then what happens? Someone puts Israel Story on the radio?

**Michael Friedman:** Somebody starts asking like gently, like ‘can I?’ ‘can I?’ ‘can I?’ And then somebody just starts screaming ‘can we hear *Sipur Israeli*?’ Then we just put it on, and nobody talks anymore.

**Aviv Friedman:** Yesterday we were coming back from our grandparents and we heard the Balfour one. Yeah that was cool.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** I asked Tamar if she had any ideas for a theme for an upcoming episode. She thought about it for a sec, and then said.

**Tamar Friedman:** People?

**Mishy Harman:** An episode about people?

**Tamar Friedman:** Yeah! All kinds of people.

**Mishy Harman:** Well, that’s good ‘cuz almost all of our episodes are about people. *[Tamar laughs].* Do you have anything that you want to tell Israel Story listeners all over the world, from Australia to America to South Africa…

**Tamar Friedman:** Canada.

**Mishy Harman:** To Canada?

**Tamar Friedman:** I want to tell something to Toronto, ‘cuz my dad is from Toronto.

**Mishy Harman:** So what do you want to say to people from Toronto?

**Tamar Friedman:** That it snow a lot a lot a lot in there.

**Mishy Harman:** That it snows a lot there?

**Tamar Friedman:** Yeah, no, I want it it *will* snow a lot there.

**Mishy Harman:** Oh, you want it to snow a lot in Toronto?

**Tamar Friedman:** Yeah. I want it to snow here a lot also.

**Mishy Harman:** So should some of the people, some of the Israel Story listeners from Toronto send over their snow Jerusalem?

**Tamar Friedman:** Yeah! And throw it from the sky. *[Laughs].*

**Mishy Harman:** How much would you like?

**Tamar Friedman:** Tons.

**Mishy Harman:** OK, so Israel Story listeners in Toronto - you have now heard Tamar Friedman. Please Fed-Ex over your snow.

**Tamar Friedman:** Yeah. Now do it immediately, before the winter comes.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Unprompted, Michael chimed in.

**Michael Friedman:** My message is keep listening to Israel Story.

**Mishy Harman:** Oh, that’s nice.

**Tamar Friedman:** Bye-bye and please please please listen to Israel Story.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** As I was leaving the Friedmans’ house I told them who I was going to interview next. Our oldest listener.

**Mishy Harman:** You want to know something crazy?

**Michael Friedman:** What?

**Mishy Harman:** She was alive when Balfour gave his Declaration!

**Aviv Friedman:** Awesome!

**Michael Friedman:** Wow!

**Aviv Friedman:** Cool.

**Mishy Harman:** She wasn’t that far from Tamar’s age.

**Tamar Friedman:** What?! I’m six, and I’m almost seven. But she was four.

**Mishy Harman:** So you think that… that’s like a big difference, right?

**Tamar Friedman:** Nope. *[Laughs].* Nope, not so much.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** With that, I got into my car, and drove two-and-a-half neighborhoods over, to Katamon, to meet Ruth.

**Ruth Richman:** Hi. My name is Ruth Richman.

**Mishy Harman:** And Ruth, how old are you?

**Ruth Richman:** I’m going to be a hundred and four next month. *[Mishy laughs].* I know, but you know it’s embarrassing, because wherever I go people say ‘you know how old she is?’ The rabbi does that, and I go to *shul* and I get an *aliyah* and he helps me up (it’s hard to walking) and then he’ll say to the congregation “do you know how old she is?”

**Mishy Harman:** So Ruth, as far as I know, you are the oldest person who listens to our radio show.

**Ruth Richman:** Probably. *[Laughs].*

**Mishy Harman:** And Ruth would you recommend to people to listen to our radio show?

**Ruth Richman:** Oh, absolutely *[laughs]*. I remember the one specifically who adopted children who have Down Syndrome. It’s when thing affect me personally.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Ruth was referring to one of our episodes called ‘Love Syndrome.’ If you haven’t already heard it, you can check it out. And the reason it spoke to her, she told me, was that she has a grandson who has special needs.

**Ruth Richman:** So it meant a great deal to me. Last night we watched the last one.

**Mishy Harman:** You listened last night to the Balfour episode?

**Ruth Richman:** Yes.

**Mishy Harman:** The one about Balfour?

**Ruth Richman:** Balfour. That was a very interesting program. The only complaint I have is my hearing is bad, and when they speak very fast I don’t understand. I’ve been to three doctors lately and they tell me there’s nothing they can do. It’s my age.

**Mishy Harman:** So should we speak slower?

**Ruth Richman:** Yeah, if you don’t mind.

**Mishy Harman:** Do you know anyone else who is a hundred and four?

**Ruth Richman:** No. *[Laughs].* No. No one in my synagogue is that old. Do you know anyone a hundred and four?

**Mishy Harman:** No! *[Ruth laughs].* So Ruth, what is it like to be a hundred and four years old?

**Ruth Richman:** Terrible. *[Laughs]*. I didn’t pick it, and people say to me “*biz hundert un tsvantsig*” and I said, “no thank you.” You don’t realize it, you lose your abilities. I… My hearing is bad, my eyesight is bad. And it’s hard to not to be able to do the things you used to do. I used to love to dance. I can’t dance anymore… *[Laughs].*

**Mishy Harman:** You’re doing quite well for someone who’s going to be a hundred and four next month, Ruth.

**Ruth Richman:** Well, the point is I have nothing to do with it. You know, people don’t pick the days they die. And it has connotations that are difficult. I have no one that I can speak to about my early days. So that it’s harder than people realize, and it gets to be very lonesome. My friends are all dead. So I can’t get anyone to go to lectures with me. Nu? *[Laughs]*.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Ruth and her husband Nathan made *aliyah* in 1991. After two thousand years of exile, she remembers, they wanted to be part of the Jewish rebirth.

**Ruth Richman:** I figured, if I live in Israel I might as well live in Jerusalem. This is where I want to be. There is so much to do in Jerusalem. Well, you walk along the street, you see the walls, you think about the history that’s here. It’s absolutely wonderful being in Jerusalem, particularly.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Nathan died a few years after they arrived, but Ruth? She made new friends, bought season tickets for the symphony, and became a real Israeli, in almost every way.

**Ruth Richman:** Of course I took an *ulpan* for years and years and years. *[Laughs]*. I gave up trying to speak Hebrew ‘cuz I said I have enough trouble trying to remember words in English. *[Mishy and Ruth laugh]*. So most of the taxi drivers will say to me, “how long have you been in Israel?” When I tell them, “what’s the matter you don’t speak Hebrew?”

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Ruth also joined a Conservative synagogue, which is a big part of her life here.

**Ruth Richman:** I like going to *shul* and knowing that all over the world Jews are *davening* that day.

**Mishy Harman:** Ruth, tell me about your *bat-mitzvah*. You had a *bat-mitzvah* a little bit later in life, didn’t you?

**Ruth Richman:** Yes. Let’s see… I must have been, I think, eighty-five. I tell you, I taught religious school for twenty years and I figured if a boy of thirteen can do it, I certainly can do it. So I studied and I had a very nice *bat-mitzvah*. The rabbi was so nice - when I got through with my reading he started dancing around the whole synagogue and everybody followed him, it was such an unusual occasion. But I still get *aliyot*.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** In the years since her *bat-mitzvah*, Ruth has been busy volunteering, on the board of the shul, at Hadassah and with an organization that helps people with Alzheimer’s. She even does private yoga lessons twice a week.

**Ruth Richman:** Yes! She’s coming tomorrow. I’m pretty good. She said nobody she has is as good as I am. *[Laughs].* And I’m so glad because I feel my body’s all rejuvenated.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** When she turned a hundred several local newspapers sent reporters to interview her.

**Mishy Harman:** What happens when you turn a hundred in Israel? Do you get like a letter from the President or something?

**Ruth Richman:** Yes, as a matter of fact I have it down there, wishing me a happy birthday. *[Laughs]*. My mother when she turned a hundred got a letter from the President of the United States.

**Mishy Harman:** Oh wait, how old was your mom when she died?

**Ruth Richman:** A hundred and one. My grandmother and grandfather were in their nineties. My grandfather was ninety-five, only because he got hit by a car. All my cousins were in their nineties, I have one cousin now just turned a hundred.

**Mishy Harman:** So do people ask you a lot what your secret is?

**Ruth Richman:** Yes.

**Mishy Harman:** And what do you say?

**Ruth Richman:** I don’t have a secret. *[Laughs]*. I don’t think I did anything any different than anybody else. I don’t mind dying. I don’t mind… I was saying I hope I wake up dead some day. *[Laughs].* Because it’s what happens when you get old, your body goes and it’s hard. I’ve got about eight different doctors, everything is wrong with me, and I’m doing fine so far. You know, the last time I saw him, the doctor, I said, “when do you want to see me again?” He said, “oh, in about a year.” I say, “you’ve got to be kidding.”

**Mishy Harman (narration):** So, there you have it, our youngest and oldest fans. And in the ninety odd years between the Friedman kids and Ruth Richman are hundreds of thousands of people, all over the world, who form the Israel Story family. They tune in because they want to hear real stories of a different Israel, a more complicated and nuanced one. Or in other words stories of an Israel which isn’t the one they see on the news or read about in the papers, but also isn’t the one they hear about from advocacy groups and political lobbies.

And that’s good, because the Israel we try to explore is all about its people. About its diversity and complexity. A place that is simultaneously wondrous and messed up. That cracks you up one moment, and brings you to tears the next. That’s heartfelt, and bizarre, and interesting.

So today, we ask you to help us to continue doing what we do. In fact, we’re asking you to help us do a better job at what we do.

And we really can’t do this without your support. You might think I’m exaggerating, but believe me - and I say this after literally countless budget meetings - listener support is what makes this program possible.

So if you enjoy the show, and feel that it adds something to your life, please consider going to our site, israelstory.org that’s israelstory.org, and clicking on the red donate button. It’s that easy, and all donations are tax-deductible. Now, as Roman Mars often says, it really doesn’t matter how much you give. Because the mere act of donating is like making a statement. It’s like saying, “I think that this matters, that Israel Story is something that should exist in this world.” So if that is what you think, stop whatever it is you’re doing, go to your site, it’s mobile friendly, and donate.

By becoming a supporter, and even more so, a sustaining monthly supporter, you play a vital role in making Israel Story an ongoing reality. Our show is independent, so when you support Israel Story, you’re supporting us, directly.

People like you, who care about Israel and care about storytelling, are the reason that Israel Story exists, and we hope - with your help - to continue this magical storytelling journey of ours for many years to come.

We’ll be back in just a few weeks with the continuation of our regular season. So till then, *toda raba,* thank you very much, and *yalla bye.*

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