**Mishy Harman (narration):** ​Hey, I’m Mishy Harman and from PRX this is Israel Story. Israel Story is produced together with Tablet Magazine. Today, fashionably a few days late, we’re joining the omnipresent V­Day love fest, with an episode called “Love, Revisited.” Yes yes, we know. You’re probably sick of roses and cheesy Hallmark cards, but stick with us… You won’t want to miss out on this one, no matter how love saturated you are.

The stories on today’s episode are all part of our live show, ‘Israel in Love’ (we’re actually in the midst of our East Coast tour as we are recording this episode). So, in case you couldn’t make our shows in New York and Miami, today on Israel Story, we have the stories of three couples looking back at their love affairs, from very different vantage points. Of all the love tales we’ll hear today, Zvi and Regina Steinitz’ has been going on the longest. In fact it’s been going on since the very birth of the state of Israel. Danna Harman, my wonderful sister, brings us ​**Act One – Like A Stone.**

**Danna Harman (narration):** ​Their first kiss was memorable, but not, at all, in the way first kisses usually are.

**Regina Steinitz:** So one day, I lost my… how you say​ it?

**Danna Harman:**​ Inhibitions.

**Regina Steinitz:** ​Control, yeah. And I went to him and give him a kiss here.

**Zvi Steinitz:**​ I think that it was very sudden and very surprising, that we came so close to each other. **Regina Steinitz:**​ And suddenly he fell down on the floor.

**Danna Harman (narration):**​ Zvi… ​*[short pause]*​ fainted.

**Regina Steinitz:**​ ​Yeah, ​he was so excited for… and I was… I looked and I was afraid what happened. And helped him to come up from the floor. He will tell you. **Danna Harman:**​ What happened Zvi? Why did you faint?

**Zvi Steinitz:**​ I never had a close relation to a girl. Look I was nearly 18, but I have lost my best years in the camps and in the ghetto… I had no experience in my life.

**Danna Harman (narration):**​ Zvi and Regina​ ​*[hard ‘g’]*​ Steinitz met in 1948, just as they were surfacing, each one separately, and in their own way, from respective corners of hell. Zvi’s father, a schoolmaster, his mother, who played piano beautifully, and his younger brother and sister ­ were all murdered by the Nazis. The last time Zvi saw them was the day before his fifteenth birthday.

He survived Plaszow. He survived Auschwitz. Buchenwald. Gliwice​. ​Sachsenhausen​. ​And he survived, barely, two death marches through the snow.

**Zvi Steinitz:**​ I was walking with other prisoners, eleven days without food. I was hungry…. I had no

family, I had nobody and I should find my way in my life.

**Danna Harman (narration):**​ When Regina met Zvi for the first time, two years later, he was in British Mandate Palestine. A skinny young man in khaki kibbutz shorts and sandals, with sad eyes. She wouldn’t have noticed him, Regina admits, but for the music.

Regina and her twin sister Ruth had survived the Holocaust in Berlin, first in an orphanage, and then in hiding. Their mother had died of tuberculosis. Their father escaped to America where he started a new family, losing contact, for years, with the children from his first one.

After the war, the twin girls tracked down one of their older brothers who had managed to reach Palestine.

They journeyed there to join him, on a kibbutz he had founded, together with other survivors, including Zvi. It was initially called Kibbutz Buchenwald, after the concentration camp from which many of its members had been liberated. Later the name was changed to Netzer Sireni.

Sparkly and chatty, and a tiny bit of princesses despite it all, the sisters were not the types, it was clear to everyone, to be put in tents like all the rest of the newcomers. So, they were given a room. More like a closet, really, attached to the back of another shared room.

**Zvi Steinitz:**​ In order to leave the room, she should pass my room…. and my room, was the only one, radio in the Kibbutz and I liked very much from my childhood classic music.

Regina one day asked me if she can join me to listen to the music. So I had no problem to give her my green light.

**Danna Harman (narration):**​ Regina, meanwhile, was never too impressed with

Zvi’s looks or charm, she says. She basically liked him for his radio.

**Regina Steinitz:**​ So I asked him if I could listen to music.

**Danna Harman:**​ What kind of music?

**Regina Steinitz:**​ Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert lieder and then we came in conversation.

**Danna Harman (narration):** ​From music they moved on to books: They spent late afternoons reading Dostoyevsky together, and long Shabbats discussing Stefan [Sh­te­fan] Zweig or reciting Goethe, Sch­iller or Heine​*.*​ All this music and poetry and literature was something of a gateway for them, a gateway back to worlds they had lost, and missed.

**Regina Steinitz:**​ We saw that we have a lot in common. We had the same culture and education. He was brought up with the German culture, music, literature, and I too. So we… we could speak together, we could change books, we can hear music together and so it begins.

**Danna Harman (narration):**​ They grew closer. But Zvi, who had not yet kissed a girl, and who ­ since he lost his mother ­ had never really, even, been hugged or loved by a woman, or by anyone, held back.

**Zvi Steinitz:**​ Regina was… Let us say she had more initiative than I had and I was more passive.

**Regina Steinitz:**​ I know it immediately when I felt it, of course. I wanted to hug him, to kiss him, to come near to him, but he was very conservative. He was very introvert, he didn't have the courage to do it. And that was tension between us.

**Danna Harman (narration):**​ Finally, unable to take it anymore, Regina leaned in and planted her kiss.

Kibbutz life in those early days wasn’t exactly conducive to dating, to put it mildly. But after that surprising kiss­slash­fainting episode, Zvi and Regina did manage to slip away once in awhile.

**Regina Steinitz:**​ You must know, we were very poor, we had even not no money. But we went out… In Kibbutz, in the evening, by the swimming pool and the trees, and the moon was shining and we kissed each other and hugged each other. And it was very romantic.

**Danna Harman (narration):**​ Six months later, in the middle of the sweltering summer heat, they stood out on the grass, under a bedsheet. A handful of their fellow kibbutz members ­ all in dusty work clothes ­ showed up between shifts to wish them *mazal tov*​. The kibbutz committee donated a bottle of cheap red wine and some biscuits.

**Zvi Steinitz:**​ We were young, we needed love, we needed family.

**Regina Steinitz:**​ In the Kibbutz, if you marry you get a room.

**Danna Harman (narration):**​ Zvi and Regina have been married for sixty­five years by now. Regina is 86. Zvi’s 88. They have two children, and two grandchildren, one of whom is a star high school basketball player. They left the kibbutz, years ago, and now live in a small ground floor apartment in Ramat Aviv, surrounded by memories of a long life together.

​There are books everywhere, including six they have written themselves, in German and Hebrew, about the Holocaust. There are plaques of appreciation from Zvi’s former workplace ­ a flower export company ­ that Regina proudly dusts off. There are Regina’s framed nursing degrees, and boxes upon boxes of old photos. They bring all this out, together with a nut cake, and cashews, and tea, and a whole set of cutlery. In a back room, Robert, their Indian caregiver, is chanting hindu prayers. Zvi and Regina, both a bit hard of hearing, don’t notice.

It’s cold outside, and the two of them are padding around in sweatpants and fleeces, wearing thick socks with their crocs, as so many Israelis, inexplicably, do.

It was never a given that their lives would turn out as they did. Productive, good, happy even. Way back then, under that makeshift ​*chuppa*​, Regina had been struck with fear. What if, she worried, after all the horrors they had gone through, happiness was simply impossible?

**Regina Steinitz:**​ When I cried under the ​*chuppa*​, I thought by myself ­ ​*elohim yishmor*​ ­ God save me. If my marriage will be like this, like I am crying under the chuppa. So, what… what will be my life?

**Danna Harman (narration):** ​But Zvi, who still has sad eyes, says that already then he knew they would make each other happy. There is a saying he likes. Regina things it’s a Yiddish expression. Zvi’s convinced it’s German. Being alone, it goes, is for stones.

**Zvi Steinitz:**​ I was several years alone like a stone. The human being cannot be a long time alone, he must find somebody who loves him.

**Mishy Harman (narration):**​ Danna Harman. Danna’s a journalist for Haaretz, and that piece was produced together with Shoshi Shmuluvitz.

So we called this episode “Love, Revisited.” And why ‘revisited’? Well, exactly a year ago, our Season One finale was a Valentine’s Day special. It was called, “What’s Love Got To Do With It?” And now, a year later, we went back to a couple of those stories, to see how they’ve changed and evolved over the past twelve months. And, as you’re about to hear, they’ve become something completely new and different, at least for us.

Our next story stretches the boundaries of the kind of storytelling we usually do, and is the collaborative brainchild of some of the most talented people we’ve had the honor to work with. It began as a radio piece, called “Jerusalem Love Story,” by Daniel Estrin. Daniel’s piece followed the winding love affair of two men. In the original version they weren’t named, but but for this version we called them David and Ibrahim. They first met in an online chatroom. David’s an Israeli Jew from Jerusalem and Ibrahim is a Palestinian Muslim from the West Bank. We then gave the original recordings Daniel had made, so the *actual words*​ ​ that David and Ibrahim had said, over to Or Matias, who is one of the most brilliant composers and musical directors around. (You should remember his name, Or’s the Musical Director of a phenomenal electro­pop opera, “Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812,” which will go up on Broadway this coming Fall). Or adapted the piece into a mini­musical, with entirely original music he wrote. ​**Act Two – There’s A Wall Between Us.**

**Ibrahim:** [Spoken Arabic].

**David:** [Spoken Hebrew].

[Music].

[Singing].

**David:** I feel like a stranger in here.

**Ibrahim:** I feel like a stranger in this place.

**David:** I feel like a stranger in here.

**Ibrahim:** I feel like a stranger in this place.

[Spoken].

**Ibrahim:** David.

**David:** Ibrahim

[Singing].

**Together:** He looks charming, he looks intriguing.

**Ibrahim:** He looks charming, he looks intriguing.

**David:** He looks charming, he looks intriguing.  He’s a very good-looking man, seems intelligent.

[Spoken].

**David:** He’s from the West Bank. I’ll write to him in Arabic.

**Ibrahim:** Looks like he speaks Arabic.

[Singing].

**David:** Sees my pictures, thinks I am fooling him. I ask if there’s a problem, but he says:

**Ibrahim:** No, no, no, no. No, no, no, no.

**David:** No, no, no, no.

**Ibrahim:** [Spoken]. His profile says he’s in Jerusalem. [Singing]. He sends a picture, his eyes are innocent. He’s not the first Israeli that I have talked to here. [Spoken]. But they all have issues with meeting Palestinian guys.

**David:** [Spoken]. No, no issue at all.

[Singing].

**Ibrahim:** I asked him if he thinks I’m dangerous. I asked if there’s a problem, but he says:

**David:** No, no, no, no. No, no, no, no.

**Together:** No, no, no, no.

[Spoken]

**David:** What’s your favorite color?

**Ibrahim:** Dude, when did you learn Arabic?

**David:** Um, how tall are you?

**Ibrahim:** Foods. What are your favorite foods?

**David:** Hummus.

**Ibrahim:** Ay.

**David:** Have you ever been to Jerusalem?

**Ibrahim:** No.

**Together:** Do you think there is a problem? [Singing]. No, no, no, no. No, no, no, no.

**David:** It didn’t take a long time to suggest to meet the next Saturday.

**Ibrahim:** [Singing]. I feel like a stranger in this place.

**Israeli:** [Singing]. I feel like a stranger in this place.

[Music changes].

[Singing].

**Ibrahim:** It didn’t take a long time to suggest to meet the next Saturday. Ah, man. I still remember his face, how happy he was. It didn’t take a long time to say the things I had to say. You are in Jerusalem and I am in the West Bank, and there’s a wall between us.

**David:** We talk every day and I love the things he is telling me. And I’m excited and I feel like something special is about to begin. But it didn’t take a long time to see the glaring obstacle that’s ahead of me. I can come to where he lives but here he’s not allowed in. There’s a wall between us.

**Together:** There’s a wall between us.

**Ibrahim:** It’s not a good idea to draw expectations

**Ibrahim:** The rules are against us, I cannot go far.

**David:** He needs permits.

**Ibrahim:** Permits.

**David:** He’s got no permits

**Ibrahim:** But I’m so excited.

**David:** But I’m so excited.

**Together:** But we’re so excited, so: let’s break this wall between us.

**David:** I’ll sneak you in.

**Together:** Let’s break this wall between us.

**Ibrahim:** Come to my house.

**Together:** See this wall between us? There’s no wall between us.

**David:** I feel a lot safer in here.

**Ibrahim:** I feel a lot safer in this place.

[Spoken].

**Ibrahim:** So I invited him to come to my house and meet my family. They were surprised in a nice way. Like, “Wow, you are Jewish.” But then my mother told me it would dangerous if somebody would know he is there. And I agreed. So, eventually he stopped coming to my house.

**David:** A few months after we started going out I told my parents. They were very against it.

**Ibrahim:** But then my mother once asked me about him. She said, “How is he doing? Why don’t we see him anymore?” I said, “Mom, you were the one to tell me to stop bringing him home.” She said, “No no no, it’s fine. It’s ok if he doesn’t sleep at our house. But if he only visits, it’s fine.” The very next day he came to my house. He was like a part of the family, you know. But, I’m very sure that they didn’t know that we are in relationship.

**David:** But everything is against you. Everything. The law is against you. Being gay is against you. And your parents are against you.

**Ibrahim:** I really can’t tell what would happen if somebody from Palestine would know that I’m gay. I live a big lie which is, uh, hiding my sexuality, you know? But it is. It is a very big love.

[Music begins].

**Ibrahim:** [Spoken]. So he smuggles me into Jerusalem because I don’t have permission to enter.

[Singing].

**Together:** Jerusalem. Jerusalem.

**David:** I’m smuggling him into Jerusalem, almost every week, on the weekend. Sliding through checkpoints in full confidence, as though I have nothing to hide. The soldiers who guard, they let you come through, as long as you look Israeli. But if they suspect you’re from Palestine they stop you and search inside.

**Together:** Permits, permits.

**David:** But if they signal to stop, I just speed ahead. Acting confident although I hate it. They won’t ask us to stop if I look in their eyes. And it works every time. it works every time, and we’ve made it.

**Together:** Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem.

**Ibrahim:** Everything in this city is new to me, I want to come back and explore it. The people, the bars, the food, and the cars unlike anything in my town. The thing I want now is to be myself, I’m gay and for years I am home. Tonight is the night I go to his house to sleep over for the first time. And we’re very excited. We’re very excited.

**Together:** We’re very excited. We’re very excited. We’re very very very very excited.

**Ibrahim:** So we drive and we drive and approaching the checkpoint, acting confident although we hate it.

They won’t ask us to stop if we look in their eyes. And it works every time, it works every time.

**David:** Permits, permits. They’re asking for permits. [Spoken]. W e saw a police car coming towards us, and police officers got out of the car and ask us for IDs. They do usually stop people in the middle of the night, usually looking for drugs. I think they were a little surprised to find a–

**Ibrahim:** [Singing]. An illegal Palestinian. Illegal Palestinian.

**Together:** [Singing]. Illegal Palestinian. illegal Palestinian.

**David:** [Spoken]. They asked us if we were going to my home, and I said yes. That’s a felony to host an–

**Together:** [Singing]. Illegal Palestinian.

**Ibrahim:** [Spoken]. So they took us aside. They asked me if I have permits. [Singing]. No no no no. No no no no. I don’t have permits.

[Spoken].

**David:** So they took us to the police station.

**Ibrahim:** In the interrogation they asked us–

**Together:** How did we meet? What we were thinking?

**David:** We didn’t want to tell them about the nature of our relationship because–

**Ibrahim:** It was less of an interrogation, more like a warning.

**David:** You can be friends, you can be whatever you want.

**Ibrahim:** You can be friends, you can be whatever you want. Talk on the phone.

**David:** Talk on the phone. Go see him in his home, if you can go there.

**Ibrahim:** If you can go there.

**Together:** But you can’t bring him to Jerusalem.

**David:** I still kept bringing him to Israel. We even took a trip abroad together. But–

**Ibrahim:** For me, it was love. It was love. I didn’t want to hang it on the wall, that we are Palestinian and Israeli guys who are in love.

**David:** Israeli and Palestinian guys who are in love.

**Together:** [Overlapping]. Palestinian and Israeli guys who are in love.

**Ibrahim:** At some point, I thought it would last forever.

[Singing].

**Ibrahim:** [Sings in Arabic]. If you can search me, then you can hear me. I am a man and a man is all that I am, I am. I am man and a man is all that I am, I am.

**David:** [Sings in Hebrew]. I f you can search me, then you can hear me. I am a man and a man is all that I am, I am. I am man and a man is all that I am, I am.

**Together:** Doo, doo, doo, doo, doo… If you can search me, then you can hear me.

**Ibrahim:** I am a man and a man is all that I am, I am. I am man and a man is all that I am, I am.

**Together:** If you can search me, then you can hear me.

**David:** I am a man and a man is all that I am, I am. I am man and a man is all that I am, I am.

**Together:** I am a man and a man is all that I am, I am. I am man and a man is all that I am, I am.

**Mishy Harman (narration):**​ There’s A Wall Between Us. Original radio piece by

Daniel Estrin, musical adaptation, composition and text by Or Matias. Alaa Daka was

Ibrahim, Eyal Sherf was David, and our amazing musicians: Mike Cohen on flute, Dillon Condor on guitar and mandolin, and Dan Weiner on percussion. So, ever since we’ve started working on this musical, a few months ago, I’ve been walking around Jerusalem, humming “I am a man,” to myself. People have definitely been looking at me, as if I’ve kind of lost it, but if you too want to hum these amazing tunes, stay tuned. We have a surprise that we will be releasing very soon.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** ​OK,​​our next​​story takes place in a tiny village, called Mevo Modi’im, midway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The 254 people who live there, according to Israel’s latest census, sort of look like a cross between the Lubavitch Rebbe and Jerry Garcia. This is the story of two of them, Michael and Leah Golomb, and their thirty­seven year long marriage. We first heard about them from one of our listeners. This guy:

**Adam Sinclair:** ​My name is Adam Sinclair.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** ​After listening to one of our early episodes, he thought to himself:

**Adam Sinclair:** ​Oh man, like Michael and Leah are an Israel story! I mean, they are perfect for this show.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** ​So he wrote us an email.

**Adam Sinclair:** ​Hey guys, you know, I listen to your show, and I’m already a big fan, and I've got… some story ideas for you.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** ​Adam started describing his wife’s cousin, Michael.

**Adam Sinclair:** ​I've got a cousin who is a tall guy with red hair with this huge red beard, big penetrating eyes. You know, everybody that you meet you sort of put them into like one category or another. But every once in awhile you meet someone who is completely unlike anyone you’ve ever met. Michael is that kind of person.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Now, a lot of people think their friends, or family​ members are *really*​ ​ interesting people, and that we should record their stories. We’ve gone down that road many times (probably more than we should admit…). So we were kind of sceptical about this one. But then there was something unusual in Adam’s email. If we wanted to record Michael, he wrote, ​we had to move fast.

**Adam Sinclair:** ​He's got terminal cancer. And you know, I don't exactly know how much time he had left. **Mishy Harman (narration):** ​So we called. Our Senior Producer Yochai Maital takes it from there. ​**Act Three – When Time Will Fold Over.**

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​Michael’s voice was much stronger, more vibrant than I had expected from a dying man. I wish I had recorded that conversation, but I swear he called me “Brother Yochai” at least a dozen times. He sounded happy, even energetic. And he invited us over, to his home on Moshav ​*Mevo Modiim,* ​the village that Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach’s hippie ​*chassids*​ had founded in the 70s. Michael and his wife Leah met us at the door, and immediately hugged us.

**Mishy Harman:** ​Hi Leah!

**Leah Golomb:** ​Hi!

**Mishy Harman:** ​Hi, how are you doing?

**Leah Golomb:** ​OK.

**Mishy Harman:** ​Hi, so nice to meet you.

## [goes under]

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​Leah poured us some tea.

**Leah Golomb:** ​Ginger honey?

**Mishy Harman:** ​I’ll take the ginger.

## [goes under]

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​And we all sat down to talk, around the dining room table. Michael and Leah were facing each other. She seemed tired, and hunched over, leaning on her cane. Michael, on the other hand, sat upright, and glanced at his wife with the admiring eyes of a teenager. If it weren’t for the visible catheter bag draining his urine, it would have been hard to guess that *he*​​ was the sick one, let alone the one about to die.

**Leah Golomb:** ​You go first, you’re older. But make sure to say you’re almost sixty­five, not just sixty­four. **Michael Golomb:**​ My name is Michael Golomb. Call me Michael, but as my parents call me Mike. And uh,

Israelis really love it... Mike.

**Leah Golomb:**​ I’m Leah, Leah Golomb.

**Michael Golomb:**​ I’m now 64.

**Leah Golomb:**​ I’m 61 years old, and I have six children, eight grandchildren, another one, at least that we know of on the way. Thirty­seven years... It’s

almost our anniversary sweetie, by the way, hint hint...

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​Quick update ­ there are now nine grandchildren and one more on the way.

**Leah Golomb:**​ I grew up in suburban New Jersey, I was always very popular, I did well in school without really trying.

**Michael Golomb:**​ Totally opposite of me! We were like opposite sides of the world.

**Leah Golomb:**​ Michael, you once said to me that we probably wouldn't even have been friends, but I always kind of felt bad for those guys that were always being made fun of, and you know, had a hard time, so we probably would have still connected.

**Michael Golomb:**​ I was born and raised in Mobile, Alabama. I wasn’t much of a social person. I was like a loner kind of. Look I was dyslexic, I couldn't read (was was were, and you and him) it was a ​*balagan*​. My twelfth grade English teacher, said to me when I walked out of the school, he says ‘Michael you’ll fail in everything you do.’

**Leah Golomb:**​ ​*[laugh]*​ That’s lovely.

**Michael Golomb:**​ It’s like really, thanks guy. Really young, fifteen­fourteen started doing yoga because nobody else was being my friend. So spirituality was my friend.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​They met at a Carlebach gathering in New York.

**Leah Golomb:**​ It’s so crazy, we didn’t even talk. It’d be such a groovier story if we had like noticed each other, eyes meet, but that didn’t happen, but I walked out thinking, ‘I dunno, I saw this man and I’m not saying he’s my soulmate,’ but...

**Michael and Leah Golomb (together):**

Everybody has a soulmate.

**Leah Golomb:** ​And I said to my mom, ‘you know, I met this guy, I really feel like he’s my guy.’

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​After that first encounter, in which they barely exchanged a single word, Michael flew back to Israel and the ​*moshav*​, where he was already living. Now, remember how in that first email Adam claimed that Michael’s unlike anyone you’ve ever met? Well, this is a good example. When he got back home, Michael sat down and wrote to Leah, basicly saying ­ come to Israel, be with me. And she did. Then, a few weeks after she arrived…

**Michael Golomb:**​ Friday night… we ate and then we went to the ​*shul*​. After learning some ​*Torah*​, I stood up and I said to Leah, ‘will you be the mother of my children?’

**Leah Golomb:**​ And I said okay.

**Michael Golomb:**​ And she said okay *[*​*Leah laughs]* and two weeks later we get married.

**Leah Golomb:**​ I think of when we stood under the *chuppa*​ and I remember feeling like this was the most — I couldn’t love anybody more than I did in that moment and now I think of it and I just want to laugh like we didn’t even know each other, we didn't know anything, I didn't know what it meant to really love somebody so completely.

**Michael Golomb:**​ What a ​*zchut*​, what a merit to be married to you in ​*Eretz Yisrael*​. Wow. Thank you Leah’le, thank you so much. *[*​*Leah laughs].*

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​In preparation for this interview, we had asked Michael and Leah to make a list of questions they wanted to ask each other, and topics they wanted to discuss before it was too late. They dove right into it, talking to each other for hours.

**Leah Golomb:**​ When we were first married, you

remember what you said to me? **Michael Golomb:**​ What? **Leah Golomb:**​ You said to me that, ‘I just want you to know that no matter what I’ll always love God more, like I can’t love you that much. I can only love God the most, not you.’ And I remember thinking, ‘I dunno, that sounds so screwed up, like that can’t *[Michael laughs]*​ possibly be true.’ Like I don’t want to be with someone who doesn't love me the most, but somehow I still knew that we were supposed to be together and then it— years and years later you said to me that the truth is the way I love you is the way I love

*Hashem*​.

**Michael Golomb:**​ When I see you I see a taste of heaven. That's what I see you. I don't see you old I don't see you young, I see you forever. And I see you just as much as you were beautiful as a young woman, you're just as beautiful ​*mamash*​ as being sixty­one. I can't believe it it's so true. You glow.

**Leah Golomb:**​ Yikes, I can’t look at you cuz I’m gonna cry.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​It wasn’t easy for them to discuss Michael’s situation. It was there in the background all the time, but they prefered, understandably, to revisit simpler memories, sweeter ones. When they finally talked about it, Michael continued the same kind of optimistic tone in which he had discussed their meeting, or the children, and home.

**Michael Golomb:**​ My illness— I have ahhh… cancer... bladder cancer that’s in my whole pelvic area.

**Leah Golomb:**​ It’s called in aggressive

Eurolythi­ithial.. I don’t even know how to pronounce it, but a very invasive and aggressive form of cancer, and once it was able to spread throughout his body, there aren’t even statistics.

**Michael Golomb:**​ You know it’s exciting for me to me it was clear life and death, and how exciting!  **Leah Golomb:**​ We did very aggressive treatment, and Michael you were basically falling apart.

**Michael Golomb:**​ Falling apart.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​At one point Michael asked Leah to imagine life without him. What it would be like, and how she would feel.

**Leah Golomb:**​ I believe in ​*mashiach*​ and I don’t fill my head at all with thoughts of what will happen then. There’s a place of timelessness when you love somebody that has nothing to do with their body, or their ability to do things. There is a time when time will fold over. If I could fold the time over… I would really like that.

## [musical beat]

**Michael Golomb:**​ I would love you, if I wasn't here if you ​*mamash*​ being alone is really sad, and if you connected up to the right person.

**Leah Golomb:** ​Really doesn't sound good to me. **Michael Golomb:**​ I just, look, I'm sharing to you in my head space, right? Because for me I want you to *mamash* ​to be strong and to live to like 130 years old.

**Michael Golomb:** ​Maybe my question would be to

you is, if it was my last day…

**Leah Golomb:**​ Yeah?

**Michael Golomb:**​ What would you say to me?

**Leah Golomb:**​ I’d say, let’s sit and learn a little bit.

**Michael Golomb:**​ Right ​*[Leah laughs]*​.

**Leah Golomb:**​ I’d say ah… Like, I can’t walk, cuz it’s hard for me to walk, but then I would sit out on the deck and just be outside with you, learn some ​*Torah*​, drink some tea, and I’d be davening my guts out that we’d still have more time.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** ​We aired a​​slightly different version of that story a year ago, in our first season's Valentine's Day special. You know, we get intensely involved in our subjects’ lives, and then we release their stories. Supposedly, that’s that. But well… life goes on, and the stories never stop at the point where we left off. That’s what happened in this case too. Here’s Yochai again.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​We had many hours of tape of Michael and Leah. We recorded them at home, and then later in the hospital. Now, usually we would take our time editing a piece like this, but we knew that time was the one thing Michael didn’t have. So we rushed, and managed to get them the final version just in time.

**Leah Golomb:**​ Michael and I actually listened to it together. It came out that thursday, or something, it was Valentine's Day, and we listened to it in the hospital that Friday. Just I sat on his bed with him, and I turned it on. At that point he was still

responsive, and then he died that Wednesday.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​Michael died on ​*Rosh Chodesh Adar*​, the beginning of the month of Adar, and was buried that very night. The funeral began well after midnight, and we were there, standing in the rain together with hundreds of his friends, recording. Everyone huddled around the muddy grave to see Michael off.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​According to Jewish tradition,​​when a funeral falls on *Rosh Chodesh*​, ulegies are forbidden. And during Adar ­ the month of Purim ­ it's actually a ​*mitzva*​ to be happy and rejoice. So there were no parting words at Michael’s funeral, which you are hearing here in the background. Instead, there were a lot of tears, and, of course, music, led by two hipster ​*chassids*​ with a guitar and a ukalayli.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​They began with some sad ​*nigunim*​, and people hummed along. The singing increased, and grew louder and louder.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​Then something unexpected happened.

**Leah Golomb:** ​Yeah, we started singing ­ משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה. We asked them to sing it.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** ​When the month of Adar arrives, you must rejoice.

When we visited Leah again, almost a year after

Michael’s passing, she was sitting at the same table where we had done the recordings.

There was a ​*yahrzeit*​ candle in the middle of the table. She lights it when she studies *Torah*​. It reminds her of Michael, she says.

**Leah Golomb:**​ The boys stop saying ​*kaddish*​ for him which is like hard to believe. So umm… Yeah I guess I've just been through a lot. Like, I've had to really think about what I'm doing and who I am without him here. It's hard. I feel like we grew up together. So it's kind of hard to ask me really how I am, because I'm not really sure where the ‘I’ is, like how much is just me. And I don't really want to be Michael, I really want to be Leah, I want to be myself, but I'm so a part of who he is also like we kind of grew into who we are.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** ​This story was produced by Benny Becker and Yochai Maital. Original music by Collin Oldham.

And that’s our episode, “Love, Revisited.”

You can hear all our episodes on our site, israelstory.org, or by searching for Israel Story on iTunes, Stitcher, or any of the other main podcast platforms. You can also follow us on FB, Twitter, Instagram, all under Israel Story.

Now, in case you haven’t heard, we’re looking for a sponsor. So if you want to support our show, and reach a dedicated and rapidly growing audience, email us at sponsor@prx.org​.

We’ve got a lot of people to thank for today show, and for help on the Israel in Love live show tour. First and foremost a big thanks to Megan Whitman, Amanda Crater, Matt Temkin, Jeff Fontaine, Ayelet Cohen, Joy Levitt and the entire staff at the JCC

Manhattan. This couldn’t have happened without you guys. To Faye and Hartley Koschitzsky, the Charles H. Revson Foundation, Zabar’s and zabars.com for supporting our tour. To Nina Lehman, Federica Sasso, Yona Silverman, and Chloe Treat for help on putting the show together. And to our amazing hosts in Miami, Miriam Fisher, Ike Fisher and Lourdes Suarez, who ­ so so generously ­ welcomed us into their homes and lives. To Allen Levitt, Michael Andron, Igor Khokhlov, Larry Spiegelman and Robyn Fisher.

Israel Story is brought to you by PRX ­ the Public Radio Exchange, and is produced in partnership with Tablet Magazine. Go to tabletmag dot com slash Israel Story to hear all our previous episodes. Our staff includes Yochai Maital, Shai Satran, Roee Gilron, Maya Kosover, Shoshi Shmuluvitz and for the first time as a full staff member ­ Rachel Fisher.

Amir Factor and Itay Hyman are our incredible production interns. Julie Subrin’s our

Executive Producer. I’m Mishy Harman, and we’ll be back next time with a brand new Israel Story episode. Till then, ​*yalla bye*​.