**Mishy Harman:** Hi!

**Tzippi Rapp:** Hello!

**Mishy Harman:** What’s your name?

**Tzippi Rapp:** My name is Tzippi Rapp. R-A-P-P.

**Mishy Harman:** And can you describe where we are?

**Tzippi Rapp:** Ummm… We’re in the second holiest city in Israel - Hebron. Ummm… And we’re here for the fiftieth anniversary celebration since our return to Hebron in 1967. And there’s going to be a concert tonight and a lot of like… fireworks display and it’s a very exciting day.

**Mishy Harman:** Yeah, you look pretty excited.

**Tzippi Rapp:** *[Laughs]* I am! It’s exciting.

**Avi Buskila:** *[In Hebrew]* Bibi, you said we forgot what it means to be Jewish. You should be ashamed of yourself. You’ve forgotten what is means to be a Zionist. *[Goes under].*

**Itay Mautner:** We are at *Kikar Rabin*, Rabin Square. It’s a huge square inside… in the middle of Tel Aviv. And it’s a very very important place because this is where our late Prime Minister Rabin got assassinated and this is a place where many important things happened. Maybe this is a starting of a new important thing that will happen. The main message here is fifty years and that’s enough, and a two state solution.

*[Demonstrators chanting]*

**Itay Mautner:** My name is Itay Mautner. What do I do you want to know? Ummm… I’m an artistic director of the Jerusalem Season of Culture and I edit and host a new TV cultural show.

**Bougie Herzog:** *[In Arabic]* My brothers and sisters, happy Ramadan. And G-d willing there shall be peace between us and our Palestinians and Arabs neighbors.

**Itay Mautner:** I came to show my respect and my beliefs in the messages that are thrown out of this big stage that we’re standing next to right now.

**Zehava Gal-On:** *[In Hebrew]* It’s a lie. He’s lying!

**Itay Mautner:** To break out from this loneliness that sometimes I feel.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Last week, within the span of just two days, I got to see two very different Israels. The first was in the heart of the West Bank, in Hebron, where Rami Kleinstein, an Israeli pop star, was performing in front of *Me’arat Ha’Machpela*, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, where Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob and Leah are all buried.

**Yishai Fleisher:** I don’t like to call it the Tomb of the Patriarchs, I like to call it the Tomb of the Founding Fathers and Mothers. Ummm… I don’t like the word ‘patriarchy’ so much. It’s a kind of lame, you know, anachronistic word. I like to call it the Fathers and Mothers, it’s very simple, or the Mamas and the Papas.

**Mishy Harman:** Making it hip.

**Yishai Fleisher:** Well, just making it lively. And yeah, I guess making it hip is fine.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** That’s Yishai Fleisher, the International Spokesman for the Jewish Community of Hebron.

**Yishai Fleisher:** And we were basically kicked out of our town since 1929. 1967 we come back, and we’ve been in the process of trying to reestablish Jewish presence here, reclaim our ancestral place here, and our properties. And now, this small and brave community is a beacon for hundreds of thousands of people who visit here every single year.

**Mishy Harman:** So thinking about the fiftieth anniversary of the Six-Day War, what does it mean to you to be standing here today, and what do you think reflecting back on fifty years, ummm… of settlement here?

**Yishai Fleisher:** Well, ummm… we’re talking about what can really be seen as a miracle. So it’s a dual message tonight: One of celebration and one of kind of demonstration of sorts to say, ‘this is ours, we’re here, we have every historical right to be here, we’re not going to give it away in any solution, ok? That’s absolutely ridiculous because it would undermine every narrative that we have, that we’re a Jewish people that are rooted here. If we’re not rooted in this place we’re not rooted in Tel Aviv.’ And so, ahhh… we’re of course fighting the two-state solution and all those proclamations. And we’re telling the world, and we’re telling ourselves, we’re telling the Jewish people, mostly we’re telling Israel and the government of Israel that Hebron’s here to stay. That’s a reality. The Jewish people love Hebron and help us build it. So we’re not trying to kick anybody out, but we are trying to assert our sovereignty here, and normalize life and certainly uproot the *Jihad* in order so that normal people can live here normally.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** But the left-wing demonstrators I talked to at the rally in Tel Aviv two nights later, don’t think that there’s anything normal about the Jewish settlement in Hebron. Tali Kayam is an independent curator who lives in Tel Aviv.

**Tali Kayam:** I’m ashamed of what happening today in Hebron. The fact that there are street where the Palestinians cannot walk on, that feels to me like Germany of, you know, ‘38, when my grandmother couldn’t step in the street of Warsaw because she was Jewish and she had to wear something, you know, in order for her to be recognized as a Jew.

*[Demonstrators chanting]*

**Mishy Harman:** And what are you doing here tonight?

**Tali Kayam:** Umm…I’m actually a spectator mostly. I am left-wing, but I feel like a lot of the opinions that are rumbling around aren’t really mine.

**Mishy Harman:** What does the fiftieth anniversary of the Six-Day War mean to you?

**Tali Kayam:** Me personally, I know that when I have a kid, when I have a son, I won’t send him to the army. I feel like all these wars in hindsight, they are totally crazy and it’s bloodshed. My mom lost her brother in 1973, in the Yom Kippur War, so that’s why I feel like very strong in my belief that all these wars are, you know, obsolete. It brings us no place, and in the end of the day, the place he got killed, in the Golan Heights, they might just give it back in order to have peace. So he died in vain. And could have had, you know, cousins, and my mom could have had nephews, and none of it’s possible for just a piece of land that today nobody even lives at. You know, you’ve never been there I’m sure, in Filon. So…

**Itay Mautner:** Everything that I come across in my life has to do with the fifty years. Has to do with the heartbreak of it, the sadness of it. It’s like a post-traumatic society that we live in and the Palestinians live in. And I see it with my children in the kindergarten and I see it with people I talk in the streets, and I see it in Facebook and I see it everywhere.

*[Voices of people praying]*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Meanwhile, back in Hebron, people were singing a different tune.

**Hebron MC:** *[In Hebrew]* We are about to begin the exciting evening, dear friends, that we’ve been waiting for for fifty years.

*[Voices of people praying]*

**Tzippi Rapp:** Ummm… I think it’s just a huge milestone in Jewish people’s growth in Israel. That we’ve been in Hebron for fifty years, I think is an incredible… It’s an incredible thing to celebrate. It’s a sign that you know we have a future here and that our presence is strong and it’s important.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Genya Fleischer and her nine-year-old granddaughter, Leah, were standing nearby.

**Mishy Harman:** What brought you here tonight?

**Genya Fleischer:** Oh, it’s *Yom Hevron.* It’s fifty years since liberation of Hebron. It’s a very big thing for us. I feel like extremely happy. You know like Hebron is our connections to our roots. And it’s tremendous privilege to be able, you know, to come to the place where our mothers and fathers are buried and it’s… It’s where our roots are, and it’s where… Like… Source of our life and energy here. I am very happy to be here.

**Mishy Harman:** You came here with your grandma tonight?

**Leah Fleischer:** Yes. We’re gonna show about how… how we won this place and how it belongs to us, and it’s the place of our homeland. The place where all our fathers and mothers are.

**Mishy Harman:** OK, thanks so much Leah.

**Leah Fleischer:** You’re welcome. Goodbye.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Just as we parted, the fireworks illuminated the sky.

*[Sound of fireworks]*

**Woman One:** Yeah, we liked the fireworks. That was fun. It was a nice surprise.

**Woman Two:** Fireworks were beautiful. They’re really beautiful. Wish there were more.

**Mishy Harman:** A bit short.

**Woman Two:** Too short.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Alright, so we all know that Israel is politically fragmented. That there’s a left and a right, who have very different sensibilities about the ongoing conflict with the Palestinians, and also very different dreams of what Israel should, and will, look like.

We all know that the West Bank settlements are controversial, celebrated by some and lamented by others. None of that’s new.

So why did we end up going to these two rallies? Why now? Well, it’s because these days, as I’m sure you’ve noticed just about everywhere, we’re marking fifty years since the Six-Day War, in June 1967. And that war, those six days? It’s pretty safe to say that they’ve brought us to where we are today.

Even though very few people grasped it at the time, the young victorious state of Israel emerged from that war a different place. Not only had we tripled our territory, conquering the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Old City and the Golan Heights, but we also “inherited” a large Palestinian population that we’ve been controlling slash occupying slash administering (call it whatever you want) ever since. So that war is really like the starting point of it all. And it has a complicated legacy. In Hebron I heard things like:

**Phillip Black:** When I was a young boy of twelve years old, and the war broke out and I lived in a small town outside of Toronto, and we had heard that all the Jews were being slaughtered and killed and Israel was being destroyed, even in our small little town we were all afraid and we were all praying. And then the news started to come out on the positive side, so for me to be here, fifty years later, this is huge. It’s very emotional.

**Uri Karzen:** I’m on cloud nine, OK? I don’t know if it comes across, but I’m on cloud nine, OK?

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Yuli Edelstein, the Speaker of the Knesset, called the victory a miracle.

**Yuli Edelstein:** *[In Hebrew]* All this miracle that happened to us fifty years ago.

**Naftali Bennett:** *[In Hebrew]* Hebron is the DNA of the Jewish people. This here is our genetic code.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** “Hebron is the DNA of the Jewish people. This here is our genetic code,” Naftali Bennett, the Minister of Education, declared.

But in Tel Aviv, on the other hand, people like sixty-five-year-old Avraham Milgram, who came to Israel from Brazil in the early 70s, view that war as the beginning of a dangerous downward spiral.

**Avraham Milgram:** Look, the Six-Day War was a war that we couldn’t choose. It was a big victory but at the same time it’s a big tragedy for both people. The legacy is a… It’s a heavy legacy. We are living in difficult days too much. And we should change it.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** What’s clear then, is that regardless of where you stand on the matter, the fiftieth anniversary of the Six-Day War is an opportunity for *everyone* to pause, to think, to evaluate.

Hey, I’m Mishy Harman, and this is ‘Israel Story.’ Israel Story is brought to you by PRX, and is produced together with Tablet Magazine.

So, while everyone else is busy analyzing the deep meaning of the last half-century, we decided, in our episode today - **Peace Now. Almost.** - to go back to the days immediately following the Six-Day War, and to a little-known saga that could have, perhaps, changed the face of the Middle East as we now know it. Here’s Yochai Maital.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Our story begins with the radio. Or, to be more specific, with one radio station broadcasting out of Ramallah. It begins with two reserve officers sent out on a mission. It begins... in 1967.

**Radio Announcer:** *[In Hebrew]* The President of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser, imposed a siege on Eilat. *[Goes under].*

**Yochai Maital (narration):** In mid-May, Gamal Abdel Nasser, the popular Egyptian President, demanded that the UN withdraw its peacekeeping forces from Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula. A few days later, Egypt blockaded the Straits of Tiran, effectively cutting off Israel’s main oil supplies.

**Levi Eshkol:** *[In Hebrew]* The IDF will thereby stand prepared, weapons in hand, ready to meet any challenge, and to show that when needed, it is mighty and can prevail.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** The Egyptian army amassed troops in the Sinai, and Israel - too - mobilized forces to its southern border. And, as all this drama was taking place, a thirty-seven-year-old accountant and IDF reserve officer by the name of Dan Bavly was anxiously waiting to be called up for war.

**Dan Bavly:** The few weeks leading up to the Six Day War were very vague. It was unclear what's going to happen. There was a lot of tension in the air.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** That tension was, of course, resolved at exactly *zero seven forty five*, on the morning of June 5th. Within just four days of its preemptive strike on Egyptian airfields, Israel had conquered vast swaths of land, and Dan - whose unit had been deployed in the Jerusalem area, was released home for the evening.

After kissing his wife and hugging his kids, he picked up the phone and dialed his best friend, Mossad operative Dave Kimche.

**Dan Bavly:** And Dave said, “oh it's so good that you phoned me, I have just the right kind of assignment which your help will be very appreciated.” His assignment was to try to reopen the Hashemite Broadcasting Service, in other words, the radio service of the Kingdom of Jordan.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Now, as Dan explained to me, the ‘60s in Israel? It was a totally different world back then. One in which it made total sense for a *Mosadnic* to ask his best friend to join him on a sensitive mission.

In any case, Dan was up for the challenge. The very next day the two of them got into a car and headed into the newly conquered territories.

**Dan Bavly:** So we drive to Ramallah. This was early in June, late spring, the fruit trees on the roads were blossoming, it was an unbelievable place.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** As you're imagining Dan’s idyllic description of the road to Ramallah, bear in mind that the battles were still raging.

This was day five of the Six Day War. Still, that didn’t stop them from driving right up to the house of the radio station manager, one Mister Udde.

Dan and Dave walked up, knocked on the door… And he wasn't in.

**Dan Bavly:** But...

**Yochai Maital (narration):** One of the locals told them.

**Dan Bavly:** There's a man living here across the street, that I think would be very good that you meet. And his name is Aziz Shehadeh.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** In 1948,Aziz Shehadeh had fled Jaffa with his family and had since become one of the most prominent lawyers in Ramallah.

Aziz walked right up to the two Israeli officers, offered his outstretched hand, and said...

**Dan Bavly:** And now we can make peace. It was a total surprise. And for a minute we thought the guy is nuts. That he doesn't know what he is talking about. Shake hands, he offers us coffee, nice little Arab coffee, introduces us to his family, his wife, his four children.

**Raja Shehadeh:** I remember that very well, of course. I was already sixteen then.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** That’s Raja Shehadeh, Aziz’s son.

**Raja Shehadeh:** I’m a lawyer and a writer, and my father was Aziz Shehadeh, who was a lawyer also.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Back in the Shehadehs’ living room, an unusual conversation was taking place.

**Raja Shehadeh:** They started talking and he said he thought that the best way for the conflict to end is immediately to do something, and then they said, “well, what do you propose should be done?״

**Dan Bavly:** We really didn't take him seriously. We thought this is a dreamer, where does he live? But as we went on, and we started listening to him, he came out with a program of how to make peace between the Palestinians and Israel.

**Raja Shehadeh:** He envisaged the whole thing. And he envisaged all aspects of what should happen.

**Dan Bavly:** Convene an ad-hoc constituent assembly of forty-three Arabs.

**Raja Shehadeh:** How it should happen...

**Dan Bavly:** Establish a government of twelve or thirteen ministers...

**Raja Shehadeh:** On what basis it should happen.

**Dan Bavly:** Based on the temporary Green Line borders reaching out a full peace treaty.

**Raja Shehadeh:** And… and he also believed it should happen very quickly because he knew if it didn’t happen quickly, it would be disrupted by all kinds of forces from the outside.

**Dan Bavly:** Then we ask him, ‘OK, you think that but what about the whole Palestinian leadership?’ He said they'll all approve. On this platform, they will all approve. So we asked him, “can you put all this in writing?”

**Yochai Maital (narration):** So as soon as the two officers left, Aziz sat his son Raja on the...

**Dan Bavly:** Hermes baby typewriter...

**Yochai Maital (narration):** And began dictating.

**Raja Shehadeh**: He was very excited, he thought… he thought this is the moment that the conflict can be resolved. He was very excited. He shut himself up in a room and wrote it and nobody had… was allowed to bother him. And he was… had a great capacity for concentrating and he concentrated and did it. The document still has some of the typing mistakes that I made.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Early the next morning, on the sixth and final day of the war, Dan and Dave showed up at Aziz’s doorstep. As promised, Aziz handed them a typed copy of his peace proposal, along with a list of forty-three dignitaries, whom - he believed - would support it.

**Dan Bavly:** Then we went off to check the list that we received from Aziz.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** By now, the two officers had all but forgotten about their original mission, reopening the Hashemite Broadcasting Station. And focused, instead, on a new - slightly more ambitious - goal: Making peace with the Palestinians.

And so, as the last battles on the Golan Heights were winding down, two unarmed reservists in khakis drove up and down the West Bank.

**Dan Bavly:** Between the south of Hebron and up to Jenin, Tulkarem, Shechem.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Meeting with top Palestinian leaders - governors, ministers, mayors, businessmen.

**Dan Bavly:** And almost everyone of them said, “it's a very good idea, I’m in.”

**Yochai Maital (narration):** They managed to interview all forty-three people on Aziz’s list in just under three days. When they were done, they drove back to HQ, and reported that while they didn't get very far with finding Mr. Udde and reinstating his radio station, they might just have stumbled onto something a bit bigger.

So as the entire country was busy rejoicing - planning military parades, designing victory albums, awarding medals, and other such manifestations of a country patting itself on the back - Dan and Dave sat down with their notes and drafted a report.

**Dor Danino:** *[In Hebrew]* An independent Palestinian state shall be established in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This state shall request to be admitted to the U.N. The state will be linked to the state of Israel and they will have ties in the realms of security, economics, tourism, transportation… [Goes under].

**Yochai Maital (narration):** They made four copies, and sent them out.

**Dan Bavly:** To Eshkol (the Prime Minister), to Dayan (Minister of Defense), Sapir (Minister of Finance), Yigal Allon (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Labor)…

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Then, they patiently waited to hear back from one of the statesmen.

**Dan Bavly:** Only hope, only hope. Hope and hope for luck.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** But no one responded.

**Akiva Eldar:** Dayan says that he is waiting for a telephone call from Jordan or Egypt or Syria. He got a telephone call, not even a long distance call, from Ramallah, but the line was busy.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** That's Akiva Eldar, a journalist who's been covering the conflict for more than thirty years.

**Akiva Eldar:** I’m old enough to remember, that the message that we got from the highest echelons was that the Arabs keep saying no, and Israel wants peace. In a way it was true, until ‘67.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** At the time Aziz, Dan and Dave were outlining a peace agreement, Akiva was studying at the Hebrew University.

**Akiva Eldar:** As a student in ‘67 who lived in West Jerusalem behind the walls, we really didn't realize that there are people on the other side of the wall. And if there are people there they wake up in the morning and are asking themselves, ‘where is the Jew that we can kill?’ People who believed that we can make peace were naive, were even ridiculed.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** But Dan and Dave came from the heart of the establishment. They weren't Abie Natans or Uri Avnerys - types that could easily be dismissed as fringy members of the radical left.

YetAziz, Dan and Dave’s peace proposal… today it’s just another piece of paper; one of millions of pages collecting dust in the archives of the Israeli Ministry of Defence. Dan still has a hard time getting over it.

**Dan Bavly:** I'm a *sabre*, I grew up, I fought in the War of the Independence, I lived through to 1967, I married, we had four children by that time, and then came the Six Day War, and it was our opportunity, and we missed… everything we missed. It was our opportunity and we fucked up.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Akiva, who spent many hours talking to Dave Kimche about the saga, reported similar feelings.

**Akiva Eldar:** Dave Kimche went to grave with grapes of wrath, with bitter feeling. I think that they even felt that maybe their friends have lost their lives because of this missed opportunity. That maybe the Yom Kippur War was not inevitable. For them it was traumatic, because they had to go to bed every night and wake up every morning with the feeling that they had it, they held it in their hands, and their leaders… The people in whom they believed, just let it go. At least he knew, that he tried.

**Yochai Maital (narration):** Aziz Shehadeh was also disappointed. He never lived to see how similar his proposal was to the document Arafat and Rabin would sign, twenty-five years later, on the White House lawn.

On a cold evening in December 1985, Aziz was stabbed to death outside of his home in Ramallah.

The case has never been solved.

Almost everyone involved in this story has long since passed away. Dan Bavly is, basically, the last man standing.

Now, we often like our stories to have a neat, tidy ending. But this one doesn't have that. The silence with which the proposal was met, it didn’t stop any of the folks from believing that one day we’ll be able to live together.

**Dan Bavly:** I'm only eighty-seven-and-a-half, so I don't have all that much time, but I'm optimistic. *Slicha*, I often believe that things happen around the corner which you don't see, and they happen quite suddenly.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Yochai Maital.

Before we sign off, I want to remind you that we’re organizing a really fun Israel Story trip to Israel. You’ll be visiting the scene of action of many of our stories, and meeting some of the wonderful characters we profiled. I know I’m looking forward to this, and if you are too, you can easily find out more details at [israelstory-trip.com](http://www.israelstory-trip.com/), or just email us at trip@israelstory.org.

As always, you can hear all our previous episodes on our site, israelstory.org, or by searching for Israel Story on iTunes, and any of the other main podcast platforms. You can also follow us on FB, Twitter, Instagram, all under Israel Story. And, if you’d like to sponsor episodes of Israel Story, which you really should, it’s easy – just email us at sponsor@prx.org.

All the original music in today’s episode was composed and performed by the amazing trio of Ronnie Wagner, Ruth Danon and Eden Djamchid. They also wrote the song that ends the episode, *“It’s Time,”* which was recorded and mixed at the Mitzlul Studios in Tel Aviv. Eylon Perry and Yonatan Barak were the recording technicians. This episode was mixed by the one and only Sela Waisblum, and produced in partnership with Libby Lenkinski and the New Israel Fund.

A special thanks to Dor Danino who pitched this story to us, and produced the Hebrew version. He also did a lot of the research for the English piece. Thanks also to Benny Becker and Israel Goldvicht, to Federica Sasso for patiently schlepping to Hebron and Tel Aviv, to Jeremy Ben-Ami, Courtney Rohrbach, Dan Kalik, Jessica Rosenblum, Rabbi Elliott Tepperman from Bnai Keshet in Montclair, New Jersey, and all our NIF friends - Aaron Back, Orli Bein, David Shmidt Chapman, Ayelet Cohen, Hannah Ellenson, Tali Hershkowitz, Jan Kallish, May Pundak, Steve Rothman, Daniel Sokatch, Eyal Yerushalmi and of course of course the unbeatable duo of Shannon Reimers and Libby Lenkinski.

Israel Story is brought to you by PRX - the Public Radio Exchange, and is produced in partnership with Tablet Magazine. Our staff includes Yochai Maital, Shai Satran, Roee Gilron, Maya Kosover and Rachel Fisher. Zev Levi and Aviva Dekornfeld are our wonderful production interns.

I’m Mishy Harman, and we’ll be back very very soon with a brand new Israel Story episode. So till then, *yalla bye*.

*[“It’s Time” song]*

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