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MAGAZINE

# TALKING UP A STORM

Israel's English speakers have been bitten by the podcast bug





(Austin Distel/ Unsplash)



'THE WEEKLY Squeeze' podcast. (Screenshot)

# A JEWISH TALKFEST

Israel's Anglo podcasters have a lot to say

• RIVKAH LAMBERT ADLER

It shouldn't be surprising that in a Jewish state, so many people have so much to say. And with the proliferation of podcasts, the ability to put one's views "out there" for others to hear is easier than ever.

What's a podcast, one who's been living on a deserted island may ask? It's an audio program you can listen to on demand. Podcasts offer a deep dive into niche topics (think alternative medicine, coping with life as a widow or hassidic storytelling). Each podcast consists of multiple episodes lasting a few minutes to several hours.

Unlike newspaper reporters and radio hosts whose editors determine content and format, podcasters are generally an independent bunch, retaining full control over their content.

## Israel pulsates with English-language podcasts.

"Israel is the most intense country in the world. It stands to reason that podcasts, which often aim to take a closer look at things, would thrive in Israel. Intensity serves as the perfect catalyst for analysis, and that is what the podcast medium is built to foster," explained local podcaster Goel Jasper, host of *Return Again*.

Heather Dean, host of the soon-to-be-launched *Jewish Books Podcast*, explained the popularity of English-language



podcasting in Israel this way: "Anglos in Israel are more diverse than Anglos who reside outside of Israel realize. We are definitely not a monolith of like-minded people.... We are drawn to hear the experiences of our fellow Anglos in Israel."

We've highlighted a dozen, randomly chosen English-language podcasts originating from Israel and listed a few dozen more for you to explore. To locate a specific podcast without a link, search the name of the podcast and the name of the host on the Internet. Most podcasts are simultaneously available on multiple platforms.

## The podcasts

Israeli singer Chanale wants everyone to know that her relatively new podcast, *The Weekly Squeeze*, "is the first



Jewish podcast created and hosted by a woman to be a No. 1 show in America." It covers Jewish entertainment news and routinely gets 15,000 downloads a month.

In the wake of Kanye, Kyrle and Dave Chappelle's *SNL* monologue, Chanale recently interviewed A-list political commentator Candace Owens talking about Black-Jewish relations.

As an Orthodox singer, Chanale performs exclusively for women. *The Weekly Squeeze* allows her "to expand my reach by using my speaking voice and sense of humor as a means to entertain the entire Jewish community." She aims for "kosher, family-friendly entertainment that is funny, inspiring and informative."

Despite wanting to retain that No. 1 Jewish podcast in America slot, Chanale doesn't shy away from openly discussing Israel.

"I discuss Israel news on every episode and share my thoughts and insights on aliyah, life in Israel, politics and Israeli culture," she noted.

When 19-year-old Akiva Kra isn't studying Torah in yeshiva, he's working on his *Jews Shmooze* podcast.

"We all can name famous Jews, but we don't really know them. What motivates them? What are their aspirations? What are their greatest challenges?" Kra asks.

He's turned his passion for journalism into 41 episodes (and counting) of *Jews Shmooze*. "The goal of the podcast is to feature interviews with Jews that everybody knows, but people don't know. For example, people [may] know [certain

rabbis] for their articles, speeches and online bios. I wanted to find out more: about how and why they got started, what's challenging them today... digging more into things they have done or that I think people want to hear about."

Kra prides himself on his preparation. "Before a guest comes on," he revealed, "I usually read and listen to every interview they have done," a practice that regularly garners compliments from his podcast guests.

The podcast has already grown into merchandising. Kra "released a limited run of *Jews Shmooze* hats earlier this month at midnight, and they sold out before I woke up that morning. It was nice to see that people appreciate the interviews and want to connect more with the brand. Since then, a Jewish apparel company reached out about a collaboration, which was cool and may result in more products," he reported.

Living in Israel less than a month, Kimberly Schamroth has already been inspired to launch a podcast, using an interview format she initiated on Instagram. *The Fertility RN* podcast covers women's health and fertility for women in their childbearing years.

She features interviews with medical professionals such as reproductive endocrinologist and infertility specialist Dr. Arielle Bayer speaking about polycystic ovary syndrome.

Schamroth commented, "I've been a fertility nurse for five years and have noticed a gap in women's health knowledge. As soon as I started working as a fertility nurse, I became passionate about educating couples on lifestyle modifications that can be made to optimize conception. My passion increased tenfold when I started receiving pictures of my patients' children.

"Israel is a world leader in fertility medicine. There is such a high demand for IVF and egg freezing, and it's a true blessing that it is not necessarily an out-of-pocket expense here as it is abroad."

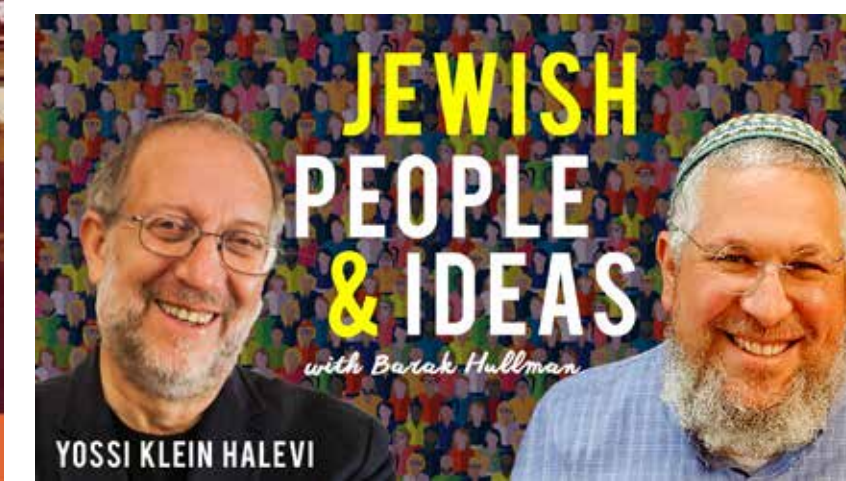


AKIVA KRA of 'Jews Shmooze.' (Moshe Rechester)

'THE LILACH Bullock Show' (Lilach Bullock)

GOEL JASPER, host of 'Return Again', with Israeli basketball legend Tal Brody (Goel Jasper)

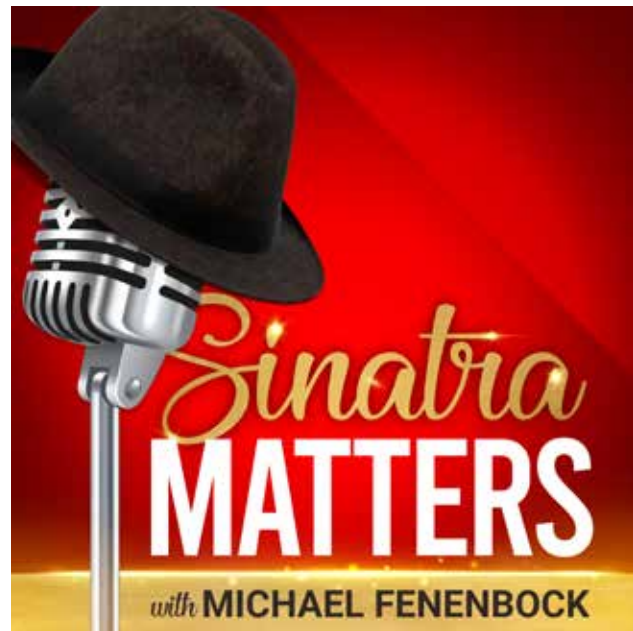
'THE FERTILITY RN's Kimberly Schamroth. (Kimberly Schamroth)



THE 'CHOCHMAT Nashim Podcast', with Shoshanna Keats Jaskoll and Anne Gordon. (Laura Ben-David)

'JEWISH PEOPLE and Ideas' with Barak Hullman. (Barak Hullman)

BEN AND JULIA, hosts of the "Song Per Day Podcast", catching the sunset in Tel Aviv. (Valeria Degtyarenko).



'SINATRA MATTERS' with Michael Fenebock. (Michael Fenebock)  
'TOO DAD to Quit' in the studio – Ben Stern (left) and Yoel Farkas. (Ben Stern)



'BRING THEM HOME' with Josh Wander. (Josh Wander)

'SECRET SONICS' with Ben Wallick. (Esti Appleton)

According to Schamroth, “one in every six couples struggles to conceive. With fertility education, we’re able to empower couples” and direct them to helpful resources. More than that, “going through fertility treatment is overwhelming, let alone learning a new medical system in Hebrew. *The Fertility RN* offers Anglos fertility education in English,” she explained.

Goel Jasper freely admits he has “been obsessed with aliyah for many years.” Nevertheless, he “felt all the aliyah content out there today was too rah-rah oriented and lacked the depth necessary to really illustrate what aliyah was all about.”

Thus, his podcast was born.

*Return Again* features “long-form interviews of people who have lived in Israel long enough to have perspective on life here. The idea is that guests return again to their aliyah stories, reflect on them and provide food for thought to listeners.”

Jasper shared that “for those who have not yet made the move,” his content “serves as inspiration and provides practical information. Israel, as the homeland of the Jewish nation, is the protagonist of my podcast.”

Jasper has a “dream to record all aliyah stories,” the way the Spielberg Foundation has recorded Holocaust survivor stories.

“I want to record the Ethiopians, the French, the Argentineans, the Russians, everyone!” he enthused. Unlike many hobbyist podcasters, *The Lilach Bullock*

*Show* was created to build brand awareness and generate leads. Bullock’s ideal listeners are entrepreneurs, subject matter experts, marketers and others who are “looking to increase their productivity” and change their mindset. These are exactly the same people she works with as a business coach. At the same time, she aims to use her podcast to “provide huge value, entertain and educate others.”

With 48 episodes recorded, Bullock prefers to “interview people that I follow, respect and like.”

A third of the guests she has already interviewed are either Israeli or Jews from abroad.

Commenting on why podcasting is so popular in Israel, Bullock said, “I think it’s the sheer volume of amazing talent and interesting people to interview!”

Bar-Ilan University history professor Noah Efron has been covering “Israeli politics, from a non-dogmatic and pretty self-critically leftist perspective,” since 2010. He’s created an episode of *The Promised Podcast* “every week, without fail, for more than 11 years.

“We’ve had more than five million downloads and, according to Chartable’s [podcast analytics], we’re the top podcast on Israeli politics and culture by a very wide margin.”

Efron fell in love with radio (and podcasting, radio’s younger cousin) as a high school student.

“I adore the medium because of how intimate and human and emotional it can be, when you do it

right,” he revealed.

According to Efron, *The Promised Podcast* demonstrates that “it’s possible to be filled with love and admiration for this place – engaged to the hilt and enamored – and still have lots of criticisms and doubts about stuff going on here.

“Jewish culture in Israel is going through the greatest efflorescence since – what? – maybe the Golden Age of Spain or maybe the Sanhedrin in Yavne. Music, art, literature, poetry, philosophy, rabbinics, scholarship – the stuff going on here is brilliant and mind-blowing. Being able to share some of that with English speakers is part of why podcasts from here are so popular,” he opined.

Anne Gordon and Shoshanna Keats Jaskoll’s *Chochmat Nashim Podcast* tackles “the state of Orthodox Judaism in the modern world, with an eye to Israel, and women’s experiences.

“*The Chochmat Nashim Podcast* was a natural extension of the blogging and other writing that the Chochmat Nashim women’s organization is already doing to educate the general and Orthodox public about the ‘slide to extremism’ that had already begun plaguing the Orthodox world,” explained Gordon.

Their goal is “to bring information and perspective to those who value a healthy Orthodox Jewish community, to spotlight the damaging trends Chochmat Nashim has tracked within Orthodoxy and Israel, and to offer tools and solutions to those

who want to take action to yield a more healthy community for themselves and the future.”

The co-hosts value reaching “those who are feeling alone in their own Jewish experiences and those who want to take action to help improve Orthodox Jewish society.”

They are especially proud that some “listeners have told us that they were ready to leave Orthodoxy and then found our podcast, and it gave them hope. Women, yes, but also men and teens.”

Although it is not specifically Israeli or Jewish in content, among the newest English podcasts coming out of Israel is the *Too Dad To Quit Podcast* with Ben Stern and Yoel Farkas. With just a few episodes recorded, the pair, who are divorced fathers themselves, aim to provide support for divorced fathers to stay connected to their children.

“Realizing how difficult it was to practically lose everything and have to start over, [we] want to help and inspire dads going through divorce to not give up on their kids and their integral role as fathers. By sharing the stories of dads on the other side of divorce, we hope to give strength to dads during this difficult time and let them know they will make it through to the other side, too,” Stern and Farkas explained.

Moving forward, they “hope to build a supportive community of dads helping, guiding and advising dads going through divorce. We plan on providing resources, ideas and much more.”

Two Orthodox Jews, one man and one woman who are not married to each other, speak together monthly about intimacy and healthy sexuality in the context of Jewish family life. This is the secret sauce powering *Intimate Judaism*, co-hosted by Scott Kahn and Talli Rosenbaum.

*Intimate Judaism* is a spin-off from Kahn’s primary podcast *Orthodox Conundrum*. Kahn shared, “I invited well-known individual and couples therapist Talli Rosenbaum to be my guest for an episode about masturbation – a sensitive but important topic, particularly for young Orthodox men. The episode proved so popular and our dynamic so natural, that my wife suggested we create a regular podcast together.

“Our goal is to initiate important conversations about these topics – topics that are crucial for religious Jews to address but too often are swept under the rug or ignored because of issues of modesty, general feelings of discomfort, or fear of the unknown.

“Talli and I work to answer people’s questions and – even more importantly – to normalize these conversations within

SCOTT KAHN and Talli Rosenbaum recording an episode of ‘Intimate Judaism.’ (Aliza Kahn)

ERIC GUTH in the ‘QSO Today’ studio. (Eric Guth)



'THE SPORTS RABBI' Joshua Halickman (a 'Post' contributor) with Omri Casspi. (Roye Shelem)

'HOLY HEALTH' with Dara Saker. (Dara Saker)





DANIEL RATNER (left) and Brandon Fisher of the 'Living in Clarity Podcast.' (Zev Schwartz)

'PEACHES' with Maarika Freund. (Maarika Freund)



the Orthodox world. I typically present the halachic perspective on various issues, and Tali presents insights from her experience as an individual and couples therapist," Kahn elaborated.

Over her lengthy career, Heather Dean has interviewed more than 2,000 people and hosted three previous podcasts, which, she explained "feeds my passion for interviewing creative people who do great things.

"These days I am in pre-production for *Jewish Books Podcast*, which will, God-willing, be a weekly program in which I'll interview different Jewish authors who have written books geared to Jewish readers.

"The program also features a segment in which a marketing pro answers authors' questions about publicizing their written work and another brief bit where my co-producer tells us what books are on her reading table.

"This podcast got started when I looked back at the time when my memoir was published and remembered how there was no specific podcast like this. To this day, my research shows that there still isn't one, so I'm using my professional skills and experience to create this podcast."

After all, "Israel is the top market for readers of Jewish books," Dean pointed out.

Josh Hasten could well hold the record for podcast episodes. He estimates that, over the past 15 years, he's record-

ed more than 1,000 episodes of *Israel Uncensored* on various platforms.

Politically active in Judea and Samaria, Hasten says his podcasting aims "to bring the latest news about Israel to the world – especially stories that rarely make headlines in the mainstream media."

His secondary goal is "to expose the Israel haters and BDS hypocrites. I end almost every show with something positive Israel has contributed to the world that week in medicine, technology, agritech, etc.

"I certainly promote Torah Zionism on my show as a proud member of the National Religious community. I always start the show with the English and Hebrew dates. I always cite the biblical rights of the Land of Israel for the Jewish people. I would hope my listeners by now understand that while I discuss, for example, Israel's rights to Judea and Samaria from a security perspective or historical perspective, it all comes from our God-given right to this place.

"Many people are tired of the mainstream media and want to hear realities from Israel in many fields which are not found in the mainstream media. I hope, through the news [and commentary] I share, that I can help be a voice for those stories and events they aren't getting," Hasten elaborated.

You'd never guess the topic of Maarika Freund's new podcast, based on its name. Freund explained that *Peach-*

THE 'LIVING Jewish' podcast. (Living Jewish)



## Podcasting with the 'Post'

Just under two years ago, *The Jerusalem Post* entered the world of podcasts. Today, it has one weekly podcast – hosted by Editor-in-Chief Yaakov Katz and Diplomatic Correspondent Lahav Harkov – and another podcast that drops every other week and is hosted by Mark Gordon and David Harris.

*The Jerusalem Post Podcast* – as the weekly one is called – dives into the news of the week, which Katz and Harkov discuss and oftentimes debate the issues of the week. It also includes an interview with at least one newsmaker and someone who is in the headlines. Recent guests have included Yossi Klein Halevi from the Shalom Hartman Institute, comedian Modi Rosenfeld, Disturbed lead singer David Draiman and an assortment of politicians and Jewish thought leaders.

Mark and David's podcast is focused on tourism and takes listeners on a tour of a different location – looking at the touristy and funny side of the places but also their unique Jewish angle. The two recently returned from Prague and Berlin and also recorded an episode a couple of months ago in search of the perfect destination for a honeymoon.

All *Jerusalem Post* podcasts are available on our website or on Apple Podcasts, Google Play, Spotify and other platforms where podcasts can be found.

es "explores everything I learned while dedicating my life to never being raped again."

For two years, she was subject to "a ban that made it a federal crime for me to tell my story. Once the ban was lifted, it took me a whole year to find the right words, figure out how to structure the podcast and, of course, heal from the whole experience so I'm not transferring my trauma onto my listeners.

"As intense as the subject matter is, I do my absolute best to infuse humor into my storytelling whenever and wherever possible."

Her first episode reveals why "the process of coming forward [after being raped] is so long, arduous and thankless, [and why] the chances of the victim's side 'winning' the trial aren't very high at all."

Her motivation is nothing less than "to help eradicate rape culture. People need to feel safe enough to laugh (even though the subject matter isn't funny), ask questions and explore our approach to these gut-wrenching narratives."

Freund recently celebrated her first "aliyahversary." "Being in Israel has been a wonderful safety net for me while I speak so openly about what I experienced. Having the distance from [Canada], where I spent those traumatic seven years of my life, has been such a blessing, and I am so grateful."

*The writer is the editor of Ten from the Nations: Torah Awakening Among Non-Jews and Lighting Up the Nations: Jewish Responsibility Towards the Nations Today and in the Messianic Era. rivkah@kotevet.com*



'ISRAEL UNCENSORED's Josh Hasten on air. (Josh Hasten)

NOAH EFRON and 'The Promised Podcast'. (Itai Shelem)

## English podcasts from Israel

Note: This list is not intended to be comprehensive.

### Business and career

*The Jewish Women Entrepreneur Podcast* with Nathalie Garson. Conversations with inspiring Jewish women on Jewish identity, women's empowerment and leadership in business. (35 episodes)

*What Should I Do With My Life?* with Stephanie Horwitz Reuveni. Career exploration for young adults. (30 episodes)

### Culture, entertainment, politics and current events

*How to Survive the Apocalypse* with Donna Rachel Edmunds and Joshua Levinson. Social trends and politics in the UK, US and Israel. (6 episodes)

*Israel Daily News Podcast* with Shanna Fuld. Round-up of the top five news stories coming out of Israel. (200+ episodes)

*Pull Up a Chair* with Andrea Simantov. Everything Israel, all things Jewish. Humor, reflection, spirituality. (270 episodes)

*Returning Home* with Natalie Sopinsky. Life in Israel and what you need to know about making aliyah. (100 episodes)

*Sinatra Matters* with Michael Fenenbock. All things Frank Sinatra. (25 episodes)

*Song Per Day Podcast* with Ben Salomon and Julia Cole. Introducing people to new music and bringing Israeli music to an international audience. (10 episodes, newly launched)

*Sports Rabbi Show* with Joshua Halickman. Israeli sports, for local and international fans. (343 episodes)

*The Ari Louis Show* with Ari Louis.

Longform interviews with well-known people in the Jewish world. (17 episodes)

*The Weekly Squeeze* with Chanale. Jewish entertainment news. (59 episodes)

### Geek and tech

*Israel Tech Talk* with Bob Aiello. Israeli technology and innovation. (250+ episodes)

*QSO Today Podcast* with Eric Guth. Oral history of the ham radio hobby and related amateur radio topics. (425 episodes)

*Secret Sonics* with Ben Wallick. Music production and engineering for audio professionals around the globe. (166 episodes)

### Health, wellness and self-help

*Holy Health* with Dara Saker. Interviews with health experts, followed by a Torah expert who adds a Torah/Jewish perspective to the topic. (35 episodes)

*How She Did It* with Chana Rachel Gaffin. Talks with inspiring individuals of all walks of life, revolving around sports, Torah, motivation and self-love. (19 episodes)

*Peaches* with Maarika Freund. "Everything I learned while dedicating my life to never being raped again." (3 episodes; newly launched)

*Real Life Rescues* with Raphael Poch. Emergency rescue service stories; analyzing emergency medical service cases in Israel. (24 episodes)

*Kiss and Tel Aviv* with Margot Touitou. Dating, sex and relationships in Tel Aviv. (41 episodes)

*The Rabbi's Widow Podcast* with Jolene Eckstein. Coping with life as a wid-

ow. (30 episodes)

*Well Wishes Podcast* with Molly Cutler and Brielle Collins. Practical tools and mindset shifts to help you step into your highest vibe self. (9 episodes)

*Too Dad To Quit Podcast* with Ben Stern and Yoel Farkas. Inspiring and giving strength to dads going through divorce by sharing success stories of dads on the other side of divorce. (4 episodes; newly launched)

*Wellness Wednesdays* with Yehudis Schamroth. Health and wellness topics, including nutrition, traditional medicine and alternative therapies. (100 episodes)

### Israel/Judaism

*Bring Them Home* with Josh Wander. Encouraging Jews around the globe to make aliyah and Torah from Rav Nachman Kahana. (100+ episodes)

*Hebrew Monkeys* with Eli G. Vocabulary for Hebrew learners. (40 episodes)

*Intimate Judaism* with Scott Kahn and Tali Rosenbaum. Intimacy and healthy sexuality in the context of Jewish family life from the perspective of Jewish law. (45 episodes)

*Inspiration from Zion* with Jonathan Feldstein. Guests and insight from Israel for a predominantly Christian audience. (80 episodes)

*Israel Story* with Zev Levi. The award-winning podcast that tells extraordinary, quirky, unpredictable, interesting and moving tales about ordinary Israelis. (76+ episodes)

*I've Got a Question!* with Shira Greenspan. Children call in with questions about Judaism, and Greenspan speaks to different experts to find answers. (5 episodes)

*Jewish Books Podcast* with Heather

Dean. Interviews with Jewish authors of books geared to Jewish readers. (pre-launch)

*Jewish People & Ideas: Conversations with Jewish Thought Leaders* with Barak Hullman. Conversations with top American and Israeli Jewish thinkers and writers on contemporary Jewish topics. (15 episodes)

*Kalman's Stories* with Keith Flaks. Stories of divine inspiration. (25 episodes)

*Living Jewishly Podcasts* with Elliott Malamet. Mental health issues and current ethical questions through a Jewish values-based lens. (100 episodes)

*Orthodox Comundrum* with Scott Kahn. Analyzing the contemporary Orthodox world and discussing issues relevant to members of the English-speaking Orthodox community. (146 episodes)

*The Chassidic Story Project* with Barak Hullman. Hassidic stories. (195 episodes)

*The Jay Shapiro Show* with Jay Shapiro. Israeli politics, the Middle East, Judaism and aliyah. (300+ episodes)

*The Jewish Story* with Mike Feuer. The story of Jewish history told from a traditional and critical perspective. (160 episodes)

*The Koren Podcast* with Alex Drucker. Interviews with notable figures in the Jewish community in Israel and the Diaspora about issues facing Judaism. (50 episodes)

*Tradition Podcast* with Rabbi Jeffrey Saks. Conversations with authors and editors of *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* (50 episodes)

– R.L.A.