



## Educator's Guide

# Unpacking Israeli TV Shows

From spy dramas to teen chaos, Israeli TV has taken Hollywood by storm. Some of America's biggest hits — from *Homeland* to *Euphoria* — started in Israel.

Discover how Israeli storytelling became Hollywood's latest obsession — and why it works so well.

[Link to video](#)

Resources compiled by Doug Berkowitz

## Big Ideas

1. American TV studios have adapted several Israeli TV shows for an American audience.
2. With smaller budgets, Israeli TV shows tend to focus on storytelling rather than showy cinematography.
3. The themes explored in Israeli TV shows provide insight into the culture of a country.

## Essential Questions

1. What makes Israeli TV shows so captivating?
2. What themes do Israeli TV shows explore?
3. How are Israelis able to write such compelling TV shows?

## Review Questions

1. *Homeland* was based on an Israeli show called *Hatufim*, which means...
  - a. Homeland
  - b. Hostages
  - c. Intelligence Officers



- d. Rivals
- 2.** Which celebrity stars in *Euphoria*?
  - a. Timothee Chalamet
  - b. Matthew McConaughey
  - c. Florence Pugh
  - d. Zendaya**
- 3.** Both American and Israeli *Euphoria* shows deal with which major theme?
  - a. Teens dealing with adult problems**
  - b. Poverty and homelessness
  - c. Life in the armed forces
  - d. Time travel
- 4.** *In Treatment* is a show in which the characters talk while...
  - a. Exercising in the prison yard
  - b. Living in a mental hospital
  - c. Doing therapy**
  - d. Eating in a hospital cafeteria
- 5.** *Your Honor* and *Kvodo* feature a main character of which profession?
  - a. Judge**
  - b. Doctor
  - c. Lawyer
  - d. Teacher
- 6.** Which American TV show was based on Israel's *When Heroes Fly*?
  - a. Echo 1
  - b. Echo 2
  - c. Echo 3**
  - d. Echo 4
- 7.** In the Israeli series *False Flag*, five ordinary citizens are accused of which crime?
  - a. Grand larceny
  - b. Kidnapping**
  - c. Treason
  - d. Drug trafficking
- 8.** Which of these shows is among the most remade TV shows globally?
  - a. *Your Honor*
  - b. *Echo 3*
  - c. *Homeland*



*d. In Treatment*

## Discussion Questions

### 1. Start up TV nation

Why do you think American television studios look to Israel for inspiration? Do you think there's something inherent to Israelis that enhances their creativity and allows them to come up with stellar ideas for TV shows?

Do you think this type of creativity extends beyond Israel's borders and is applicable to all Jews?

### 2. Cultural adaptations

A couple of the American shows (*Homeland*, *Echo 3*) that were mentioned in the video changed the focus or the presentation of the show as compared to the Israeli original (*Hatufim*, *When Heroes Fly*). For example, whereas *Homeland* is a CIA thriller, which deals with espionage, politics, and America's post-9/11 anxieties, *Hatufim* is a psychological drama focusing on three soldiers returning after being held in captivity for many years.

- Why do you think American producers chose to alter focus for their TV adaptations rather than staying true to the tone of the original shows?
- Can you think of any cultural differences between the audiences that might account for these changes (e.g., Israel has mandatory army service whereas most Americans do not serve in the armed forces)?

### 3. *In Treatment* in demand

*Betipul* is a show in which episodes allow viewers to sit in on a session between a therapist and patient. The show doesn't involve a lot of action and tends to be dialogue heavy. It also happens to be one of the most remade shows globally, with 20 international versions.



- Why do you think this show, in particular, has been adapted for such a wide variety of international audiences? Is there something about the premise of the show that you think might speak to people of different cultures? Explain your answers.

## Learning Activities

### 1. Lesson plan

Use our ready made lesson plan on Israeli TV shows [HERE](#).

### 2. Make your pitch

Split students into small groups and have them come up with an idea for a TV show about Jewish life or life in Israel. Groups should prepare the following in order to pitch their show to the rest of the class:

- Name of the show
- Names and descriptions of the main characters
- Brief synopsis of the show
- Genre of the show
- Target audience for the show
- Poster advertising the show

### 3. A taste of Israeli television

As a class, view trailers for some [Israeli TV shows](#) not mentioned in the video. Some shows to preview include:

- [Tehran](#)
- [Fauda](#)
- [Hit & Run](#)
- [Shtisel](#)
- [Trust No One](#)

After viewing each trailer, ask students the following questions:



- What is this show about?
- Who do you think the target audience is for this show?
- Did this show remind you of a show from your country that you've watched or have heard about? If so, which one(s) and what are the similarities?
- Do you think this show could be adapted in a different country? Why or why not?

**4.** Give your students our Kahoot on [Israeli TV shows](#)!

## Reflection Questions

### 1. That show sounds familiar

Did you previously know that the American shows mentioned in the video are adaptations of Israeli TV shows? Were you surprised to hear this fact? Why or why not?

Have you seen any of the shows mentioned in the video? If so, which ones and what do you think of them? If not, which of these shows do you think you might enjoy and why?

What do you think these shows teach viewers about Israeli society? Support your answers by citing specific shows and their themes.

### 2. Responding to conspiracy theories

In the early days of Hollywood, Jews were involved in starting major film studios such as Universal, Paramount and MGM. Today, there are some who say that Jews run [Hollywood](#) and believe in a conspiracy theory that Jews are behind every decision and trend in the industry.



What do you think about the conspiracy theory that Jews run Hollywood? Do you think that American TV studios finding inspiration from Israeli shows adds fuel to the fire in regard to this theory? Explain your answers.

Have you ever been confronted with the conspiracy theory that Jews run Hollywood or any other industry? Describe the interaction and how you responded to it. What do you think is the best way to react when others promote antisemitic conspiracy theories like the Jews controlling Hollywood, the media, the government, or other institutions?

### **3. Exploring themes and cultures**

Analyzing the themes that are depicted in TV shows and movies can provide insight into the values and culture of a country. What were some common themes that are present in the Israeli TV shows that you learned about in the video? What do you think this says about Israeli culture and life in Israel?

What are common themes in the shows that are popular in your country? What do you think this says about the culture and everyday life in your country?

What are common themes in the shows that you watch? What do you think your preferences in television shows say about you?

## **Further Learning**

### **1. Unpacked for Educators:**

- [The Jews Who Built Hollywood](#) (video)
- [Why the TV Show "HaYehudim Baim" Is Sparking Protests in Israel](#) (article)
- [How Israel Reshaped Jewish Culture](#) (video)
- [How Did Steven Spielberg Change Filmmaking Forever?](#) (video)
- [Israel on Screen](#) (article)
- [Jews and Comedy](#) (video)

### **2. The iCenter, [HaYehudim Ba'im](#) (educational resource)**



The iCenter provides resources for exploring an Israeli sketch comedy show, *HaYehudim Baim* (The Jews Are Coming), which provides satirical takes on Israel, Jewish history, antisemitism, Torah, and many other topics.

**3.** Israel21c, [10 best Israeli TV shows and films on Netflix](#) (article)

This article provides readers with a list of 10 Israeli TV shows to stream on Netflix, none of which were mentioned in this Unpacked video.

**4.** Vanity Fair, [Why Israeli TV Is Irresistible to American Producers](#) (article)

This article reviews many of the Israeli shows that were adapted for an American audience and what draws American producers to Israeli TV.