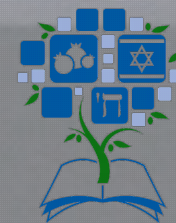




Center for Israel Education

Netta Barzilai

The Leadership Series



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www.israeled.org
info@israeled.org

1. Childhood and Early Years

"[I was told] dress like you have nothing to celebrate. Dress in black. Dress big. Short skirts are not for you. Short sleeves are not for you. You're not sexy or beautiful. You're funny - that's what you are. And you are a good friend. Well I am here to break that because this is a great evil that is done in the word to so many people." -Netta Barzilai

Netta Barzilai was born on January 22, 1993 in Hod HaSharon, in the Central District of Israel, north of Tel Aviv. Her mother is Sephardi (Jews of Spanish/Middle Eastern origin), with family from Morocco and Libya. Her father is Ashkenazi (Eastern European origin) and is Polish.

She attended Hadarim High School in Hod HaSharon. She and her two brothers were raised in Hod HaSharon. However, her family moved to Nigeria for her father's work when she was a baby.

In Nigeria, Netta picked up on the rhythms of African lullabies that her nanny taught her. Netta's family lived in Nigeria for four years, before returning to Israel.

As a kid, Netta always loved to sing. However, she got bullied by many peers for being overweight, leading her to develop self-confidence issues. She was always passionate about music, but did not think she was good enough to be a singer. She decided to study education and psychology and put her musical interests to the side.



Hod HaSharon, where Netta grew up

Source: Ori ~

Hod HaSharon on Israeli map

Source: This file was derived from: [Israel location map.svg](https://www.israellocationmap.svg)

2. Early Professional Life

When Netta was 18, she spent a service year in the Nahal brigade. She also joined the Israeli Navy band. These incredible experiences boosted her confidence in her musical abilities. She was able to overcome the voices from her youth that said she was not good enough or did not fit the image of a musician.

During this time, Netta found a video by an artist named Kimbera playing the looper, an instrument that repeats music, making it sound like more than one person was playing. She was fascinated by it and decided to buy a looper. In order to afford the looper, Netta had to work in a side job as a waitress. In a short period of time, she became very good at playing the looper. In fact, by the time Netta entered the Rimon Music School, a partner school of the Berklee College of Music in Boston, she had already mastered the instrument.



Looper | Source: Massygo, National Photo Collection

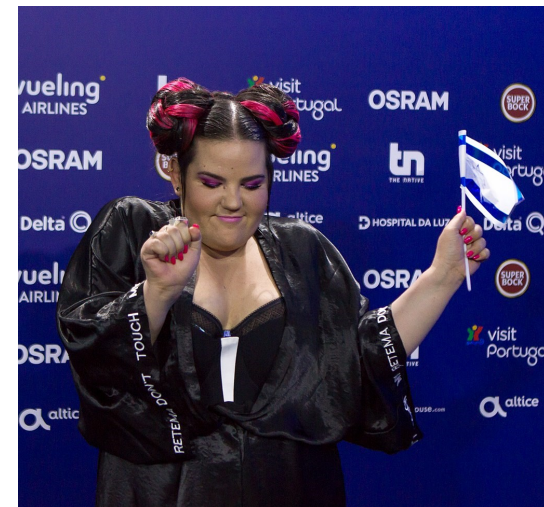
3. “HaKohav HaBa”

When Netta finished her one-year course at Rimon in voice and electronic music, she decided to audition for “HaKohav HaBa” (literally meaning “Rising Star”). She auditioned for the Israeli reality singing competition with the song ‘Rude Boy,’ which earned her a spot in the first round. She successfully made it through all six of the first stages of the show, reaching the quarterfinals. In the quarterfinals, Netta sung her own version of ‘Wannabe’ by the Spice Girls. She earned the highest score from her performance.



Netta during rehearsal before semi-finals | Source: Lauren Outerson, EuroVisionary, Creative Commons License

On February 8, Netta became the first artist to qualify as a finalist, singing the song ‘Beautiful’ by Christina Aguilera, beating Riki Ben Ari. However, she suffered a setback when she lost in another competition against Riki. The judges wanted her to continue on the show and saved her. This would prove to be very significant to her career, as Netta went on to win the finals of the competition. Her high achieving performances included ‘Gangnam Style’ and ‘Tik Tok.’ The awarding of points is done by a jury and viewers in each participating country.



Source: Wouter van Vliet, EuroVisionary, Creative Commons License

4. EuroVision

"[I am] very proud and honored to represent Israel through my art." -Netta Barzilai



Hosts of Eurovision 2018 | Source: Roger Dewayne Barkley, EuroVisionary, Creative Commons License

Lisbon, Portugal hosted the EuroVision Song Contest, organized by the European Broadcasting Union, in 2018. Netta Barzilai competed for Israel. Avshalom Ariel was one of the driving forces behind Netta competing in Eurovision, reassuring her of her musical talents and abilities to compete successfully. He served as Netta's producer.

"I'm so happy. Thank you so much for choosing difference. Thank you so much for accepting differences between us. Thank you for celebrating diversity. Thank you. I love my country. Next time in Jerusalem...Be good to others, and be good to yourselves " -Netta Barzilai

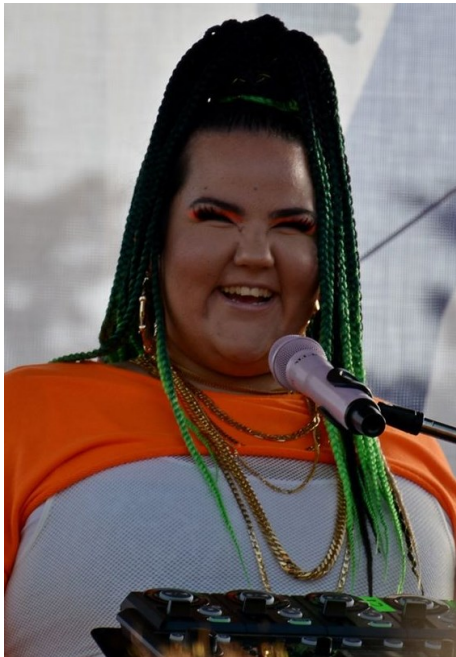
For EuroVision, Netta sang an original song called "Toy." This song discusses ideas of women's empowerment and highlights the importance of positive body image. Doron Medalie and Stan Berger wrote the song, with Stav Berger serving as producer. The song's lyrics are mostly in English, with the exception of a Hebrew phrase, *ani lo buba* אני לא בובה, translating to "I am not a doll." Also, the song incorporates one Hebrew slang word *stefa*, meaning a pile of banknotes.

Netta released the song on March 11, 2018 with the official music video clip directed by Keren Hochma.

Netta went on to win the competition for Israel with this song, with 529 points in total. As per custom, Netta performed her song "Toy" a second time after they announced she had won. Cyprus came in 2nd place with 436 points, followed by Austria with 342.

5. Aftermath of Netta's Win

"I learned this year from my fans that I'm stronger than I think I am. The light and the joy within me and the people around me can conquer all the darkness that comes from inside and out. A rhinoceros is an animal with a very thick skin, that protects itself and its herd by attacking, not feeling." -Netta Barzilai



Netta during Sofia Pride (2019)

Source: Zahari Baharov, Creative Commons License

"She's a brilliant vocalist, artist and inspiring personality...A big shoutout to her producer Avshalom Ariel as well. They are a power duo, putting pop on the map again in and for Israel."

-Israeli singer Hagar Levy

Netta's victory in EuroVision was monumental for Israel. An Israeli had not won the competition since 1998, twenty years earlier. This victory was not only monumental for symbolic reasons; the EuroVision traditionally is held the following year in the country of the winning artist. This meant that EuroVision was coming back to Israel! Unlike their previous times they hosted EuroVision, Israel chose to host the competition in Tel Aviv rather than Jerusalem in 2019. Netta was excited for EuroVision to be held in Israel in 2019, saying this will allow the world to see

"how wonderful we are, what a vibe we have. Best people... the best place in the world."

Despite the results only coming in at 1:30am local time, Israelis stormed into Rabin Square in Tel Aviv to celebrate this incredible victory. Tel Aviv's city hall even lit up with the word "Toy." Celebrations also began in Jerusalem, at the Mahane Yehuda street market.

6. Netta's Activism

"Through my audience, I learned this year that I am stronger than what I thought I was. I learned that the light and the joy within me and the people around me are capable of defeating all the darkness that comes from inside and out." -Netta Barzilai

In addition to the monumental win for Israel, Netta's winning song had an even greater impact. Her win undermined the common misconception that pop stars have to look one way or be a certain weight. In fact, Netta emphasized that she was one of the first major pop stars who wore plus sized clothing.

She also said in an interview to an Israeli newspaper that *"[t]he way I carry myself inside my own body, when I play with it, how I choose to present it"* is her only concern. Her win at this competition served as validation for Netta, who had repeated failures on diets and bouts with an eating disorder as a child. She said that her singing had allowed her to cope with many of her struggles with her body image.

"She can really make it in Europe and America. It's all about your attitude and knowing who you are. But the skies are the limit for Netta." -Yehuda Eder, President of Rimon music school



Cities that have hosted Eurovision Song Contest

Source: [Berkaysnklf](#), Creative Commons License

7. Countries in EuroVision 2019

"I had an amazing year and I feel that everyone is trying to sum it up....'Nana Banana' is my personal summary, and I think that I want to take you into my bubble, to my most personal place over the past year." -Netta Barzilai

Here is a list of the 41 countries that participated in Eurovision 2019 in Israel:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Albania | 22. Italy |
| 2. Armenia | 23. Latvia |
| 3. Australia | 24. Lithuania |
| 4. Austria | 25. Malta |
| 5. Azerbaijan | 26. Moldova |
| 6. Belarus | 27. Montenegro |
| 7. Belgium | 28. Netherlands |
| 8. Croatia | 29. North Macedonia |
| 9. Cyprus | 30. Norway |
| 10. Czech Republic | 31. Poland |
| 11. Denmark | 32. Portugal |
| 12. Estonia | 33. Romania |
| 13. Finland | 34. Russia |
| 14. France | 35. San Marino |
| 15. Georgia | 36. Serbia |
| 16. Germany | 37. Slovenia |
| 17. Greece | 38. Spain |
| 18. Hungary | 39. Sweden |
| 19. Iceland | 40. Switzerland |
| 20. Ireland | 41. United Kingdom |
| 21. Israel | |

"I'm so happy. Thank you so much for choosing difference. Thank you so much for accepting differences between us. Thank you for celebrating diversity. Thank you. I love my country. Next time in Jerusalem" -Netta Barzilai



Official Emblem of Israel

Source: National Photo Collection

8. Sample of Netta's Song Lyrics

Eurovision 2018--Toy

Ree, ouch, hey, hm, la
Ree, ouch, hey, hm, la
Ree, ouch, hey, hm, la

Ree, ouch, hey, hm, la
Ree, ouch, hey, hm, la
Ree, ouch, hey, hm, la

Look at me, I'm a beautiful creature
I don't care about your modern-time preachers
Welcome boys, too much noise, I will teach you
Pam pam pa hoo, turram pam pa hoo

Hey, I think you forgot how to play
My teddy bear's running away
The Barbie got something to say, hey hey hey

Hey, my Simon says leave me alone
I'm taking my Pikachu home
You're stupid just like your smart phone

Wonder Woman don't you ever forget
You're divine and he's about to regret
He's a bucka-mhm-buck-buck-buck-mhm boy
Bucka-mhm-buck-buck-buck
I'm not your bucka-mhm-buck-mhm-buck-mhm

I'm not your toy (Not your toy)
You stupid boy (Stupid boy)
I'll take you down now, make you watch me
Dancing with my dolls on the mada-baka beat
Not your toy

Don't you go and play, shake
Ah ah, ah ah, ani lo buba
Don't you go and play with me boy
Ah ah, ah ah, ani lo buba

(Kulului, kulului) Ah, wedding bells ringing
(Kulului, kulului) Ah, money man bling-bling
I don't care about your stefu, baby
Pam pam pa hoo, turram pam pa hoo

Wonder Woman don't you ever forget
You're divine and he's about to regret
He's a bucka-mhm-buck-buck-buck-mhm boy
Bucka-mhm-buck-buck-buck
I'm not your bucka-mhm-buck-mhm-buck-mhm

I'm not your toy (Not your toy)
You stupid boy (Stupid boy)
I'll take you down now, make you watch me
Dancing with my dolls on the mada-baka beat

Not your toy (Not your toy)
You stupid boy (Stupid boy)

I'll t-t-t-take you now
W-w-w-with me now, boy

(I'm not your toy)
You stupid boy
I'll take you down now, make you watch me
Dancing with my dolls on the mada-baka beat

(I'm not your toy) Look at me, I'm a beautiful
creature

(You stupid boy) I don't care about your modern
time preacher

(I'm not your toy) Not your toy, not your toy, not
your toy,
I'm not your toy, not your toy, not your toy, toy

Source: <https://4lyrics.eu/esc/2018/netta-barzilai-toy/>



Source: Dewayne Barkley, EuroVisionary, Creative Commons License

Nana Banana (2019)

I was sitting all day long in my pajama
Eating peanut butter jelly with my mama
Always fighting with myself just for the drama
Just for the drama
Just for the drama

I see pushi pushi people all around now
But my belly belly's telling me to run now
They keep asking me to shine just like the sun now
Just like the sun now
But I don't wanna

'Cause baby, it's so comfortable
In my bubble I stay
Always running away
'Cause baby, it's so comfortable
They keep calling my name
I'm not hearing nothing

(X4)
Nana Banana
I do what I wanna
I do what I wanna do

I keep picturing myself as if I'm rising
And I'm Fanta-Fanta-Fanta-fantasizing
Boy I take my time, I'm not apologizing
Clock goes ticki tack, on my belly on my back

Baby, it's so comfortable
In my bubble I stay
Always running away
'Cause baby, it's so comfortable
They keep calling my name
I'm not hearing nothing

(X2)
Nana Banana
I do what I wanna
Nana Banana
I do what I wanna do

(X2)
Nana Banana
I do what I wanna
I do what I wanna do

Don't save me
If you see me sleeping, don't wake me
What you doing lately, don't ask me
I know you think I'm wasting my time

But baby, it's so comfortable
In my bubble I stay
Always running away
'Cause baby, it's so comfortable
They keep calling my name
I'm not hearing nothing

(X2)
Nana Banana
I do what I wanna
I do what I wanna do

9. Israeli Leaders on Netta

“You are wonderful. You are lovely... You are the best ambassador for Israel.” -Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

“I want to warmly praise Netta Barzilai for her win this evening at the Eurovision. The victory set our hearts overflowing, and brought national pride to us all. Congratulations!”
-Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein



Netanyahu shakes hands with Yuli Edelstein.

Source: Avi Ohayon, National Photo Collection

“This morning I want to thank you, the amazing Netta Barzilai...Not only thanks for a wonderful song and amazing performance and incredible victory, and for bringing the Eurovision to Jerusalem next year — but for who you are....I want to tell you that after 30 years of working for feminism, I can point to you and say, ‘There, that’s how you do it.’”
-Member of Knesset Merav Michaeli

“Proud of you, dear Netta. Waiting for everyone next year in Jerusalem!” -President Reuven Rivlin



President Rivlin with children suffering from cancer at presidential house in Jerusalem

Source: Kobi Gideon, National Photo Collection

10. Additional Quotes by Netta

"This is an amazing time when women are finding their voices...giv[ing] power to anyone who's been struck down, who's been bullied – it's to everyone who has been told that they can't be what they want to be."

"I am a very poppy little girl. I wasn't allowed to be poppy at first because y'know in my mind, pop stars are thin and beautiful and light, and I've never felt beautiful, skinny and light. When you are a big girl you are told to think of yourself certain things: that if you are a musician you have to have a "big mama" voice, you have to sing Adele or Aretha Franklin. People expect to be "moved" by your voice in that way. I fell into that for a very long time."

"Me and [Yvette Cooper] are jumping round the room to the fabulous Israel entry – top top top #Eurovision madness" -Ed Balls, former British cabinet minister

"I had an amazing year and I feel that everyone is trying to sum it up....'Nana Banana' is my personal summary, and I think that I want to take you into my bubble, to my most personal place over the past year."



EuroVision Song Contest logo from 1999 competition in Israel

Source: Sa'ar Ya'acov, National Photo Collection

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