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An Israeli singer and AI entrepreneur dares to visualize peace in the Middle East — Taylor Swift included

Yoni Bloch's video for "A Happy Ending" starts with the release of the hostages but does not end there.

By [Philissa Cramer](#) January 14, 2025 9:03 am



A party on the Temple Mount is depicted in the music video for Yoni Bloch's "A Happy Ending." (Screenshot)

After the hostages return to Israel, peace takes hold in the Middle East. Army recruitment offices are shuttered; Israelis shelve the second passports that let them live abroad; and trains run uninterrupted from Egypt to Syria. Soon, Israeli and Iranian judokas embrace, and Israel advances in the World Cup. Ultimately, Taylor Swift takes the stage in Tel Aviv.

The sequence of events exceeds even the wildest ambitions of most Israelis, who know from experience that peace, when it comes, is tenuous and often cold. But it's all visualized in technicolor in a new music video by the Israeli singer Yoni Bloch.

Best known for pop songs released over the last two decades, Bloch is also an AI entrepreneur and used video-generation tools to make the music video for his new song, “Sof Tov” or “A Happy Ending.”

The video, released last week, has quickly racked up hundreds of thousands of views among Israelis who are desperate for a dose of optimism 15 months into a grueling war, with nearly 100 people still held hostage in Gaza.

The wife of one of those hostages, Aviva Siegel, cried as she watched Bloch’s video in [a clip posted by her daughter](#). Wearing a shirt featuring her husband [Keith, an American-Israeli who was abducted from his home on Kibbutz Kfar Aza](#), Siegel — who herself was held captive for 53 days before being released in a temporary ceasefire in November 2023 — cries as she watches kidnapped posters being torn down, yellow ribbons being cut off and Israelis cheering the hostages’ return.

“It’s moving to such a degree that I cannot describe it at all. I cannot imagine it,” she says in the video. “It has to happen. It simply has to happen.”

Among the dozens of people who commented on the video of Siegel is Bloch, who wrote, ending with an emoji of a broken heart, “I’ve watched this video so many times and I can’t stop crying.”

In 2023, Bloch stood out among a slew of Israeli artists who put out new work after Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack on Israel for reaching beyond reality with his lyrics. At a time when new music mostly lamented Israeli losses and even embraced war, his song, [“Between the Sea and the River,”](#) uniquely acknowledged Palestinians in Gaza and imagined a far-off peace.

The new song and video do not contain any references to the Palestinians; a sign in the video envisioning “The Levant Trail” mentions Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Egypt but not Palestine or Palestinian territories. For some, that represents a glaring omission that mars Bloch’s vision.



In the imagination of the the music video for Yoni Bloch's "A Happy Ending," a new hiking trail unites Middle East countries but does not mention the Palestinian territories. (Screenshot)

“Amazing! And without a single Palestinian in the clip! Stunning! How wonderful!” one viewer wrote in Hebrew on Instagram, the comment dripping with sarcasm.

But the omission may also serve a practical purpose at a time when Israeli sentiment is far more united on a desire to return the hostages than about what should happen next, according to Shayna Weiss, the senior associate director of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies at Brandeis University.

“A song that includes a specific plan for what happens with Gaza is not going to be popular. Nor do I necessarily expect a musician to lay that out,” said Weiss, who teaches frequently about Israeli pop culture.

“But if we think about music as about desire and imagination, that’s where I see this,” she continued. “And this is the first thing that I’ve seen in Israeli popular culture that’s somewhat mainstream, not from the fringes, from a Jewish Israeli, that imagines an end to the war.”

(Weiss also noted that the Abraham Accords, recent peace deals between Israel and Arab countries, in some ways make the idea of a peace that sidesteps the Palestinians one of the video’s less fantastical elements.)

The video lands as a ceasefire and partial hostage release appears increasingly likely, but as no plan for postwar governance in Gaza has been laid out publicly.

Exactly how the war ends is not made clear in Bloch’s video, where CNN blares the headline “Leaders unite to end century-old conflict” to viewers from New York City to rural

villages around the world. But the video does offer an outline of the postwar future, quixotic as it may be.

It depicts the creation of a Middle Eastern Union — similar to the European Union — that allows for visa-free travel throughout the region. Largely omitting any depiction of religiously observant Jews or Muslims, it also shows the Temple Mount, the disputed holy site also known as the Noble Sanctuary that is revered by both Muslims and Jews, being used as a platform for what appears to be a communal party.

Bloch, who lived in New York for a decade until several years ago, declined a request for an interview. He told an Israeli news channel this week that he was heartened by the response his video has been getting, rejecting criticism of the events depicted as overly optimistic.

“I think if the video had been ... realistic, then it wouldn’t have worked,” Bloch said. “It’s clear to all of us that reality is much more complex. But the purpose of the song is not to describe reality, but to remind people that they shouldn’t stop dreaming.”

Many Israelis who have viewed Bloch’s video say it is delivering a vital message at a grim time.

“I got to the middle of the song and realized that I almost forgot what the horizon looks like, what hope looks like,” one YouTube viewer commented.

“We must know how to imagine it so that we can bring it to reality, even if right now it seems far off and unrealistic,” wrote another. “This should be our vision, and with this vision we should get up every morning and say, ‘This is the way.’ And even if we go through many more difficulties and suffering on the way — that’s where we’re going.”

But others said the video had ignited grief anew in them, and forced them to acknowledge the challenging realities Israel faces even if the current war ends.

“The truth is, I hate watching the clip. The chance of something like this happening is 0.0000001,” commented the Israeli singer Ori Ronen on Instagram.

“From my advanced age I cried in the middle because I know that it will not happen, neither in this generation nor in the next generation, and who knows when it will,” wrote a commenter on Youtube. “Maybe, maybe only maybe after our neighbors go through what happened to Nazi Germany and start to cleanse themselves of hatred and murder. And in the meantime we draw blood. How sad.”

Some scoffed at the vision Bloch laid out. “Charming — as long as the dream does not blind our eyes from recognizing the reality, where the constant dream of our neighbors is to destroy us,” one commenter wrote.

The song is hardly the first to imagine a brighter future for Israelis at a time of adversity. Naomi Shemer's "Machar," or tomorrow, composed in the early 1960s, similarly depicts a future of regional peace and an end to social strife, and has become an Israeli classic that is often used at official government events.

Another song, written after the Six-Day War in 1969, "Shir LaShalom," that became such an anthem that it was sung at the 1995 Tel Aviv rally where Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a right-wing extremist. Its lyrics were found on a bloodstained paper in his pocket.

Bloch's video shows the land adjacent to the Israel Defense Forces' Tel Aviv headquarters being turned into a recreation center called Rabin Park.

Weiss cited that moment among others in the video as bearing out "Sof Tov" as an exemplar of the power of art to imagine alternate realities.

"You could call it naive; you could call it childish," she said. "But there's a real sense of dreaming. ... Yes, it's very silly, but it's also deeply serious."

At least mostly serious. At the video's conclusion, Bloch takes the stage with [Swift, whose attitudes on Israel are a fixation for many Israelis](#), and the two singer-songwriters embrace to the applause of adoring fans. "I have the feeling," one commenter wrote, "that Yoni really wants to perform with Taylor Swift and that's why he made this music video."

For his part, Bloch didn't deny the ambition. But he said he would cede it — and so much more — if it meant the hostages would go free.

"I would give up all the dreams in the music video just so that the dream of them coming back would come true," he said.