**Mishy Harman (narration):** Hey listeners, it's Mishy. So as you know, during these incredibly difficult days we're trying to bring you voices we’re hearing among and around us. These aren’t stories, they’re just quick conversations, or postcards really, that try to capture slivers of life right now. We’re obviously not the only ones doing this kind of work. Go to our website, IsraelStory.org for a list of other projects collecting wartime stories and testimonies.

You know—this war has forced many people who thought their identity and political sensibilities were set in stone to reevaluate things. And that's especially hard because there isn't that much space for complexity and nuance in these raw moments of shock and pain.

Today, however, we'll hear from someone whose opinions are complicated: aren't the norm. And that might be challenging for some, or reassuring for others. In any event, here's our producer Adina Karpuj with Mor Maisel.

**Adina Karpuj:** So can you start by introducing yourself?

**Mor Maisel:** Sure. My name is Mor Maisel. I’m 37 years old. I was born in Tel Aviv, but grew up in Canada, and currently live in Efrat in the West Bank. I grew up in a home that is Islamophobic, homophobic, very afraid of the unknown, or very afraid of the other. And that kind of mindset in a very homogenous bubble—of everybody thinking the same thing, turns into hatred.

When I moved to Israel I was 18 years old. I had finished high school. And one of the things my mother told me is: “be careful of the Arabs, they have blue eyes,” which means they'll buy you with flowers and with nice words… and to me it wasn't even relevant because I wasn't even like thinking about Arabs in that way. I only thought about them anytime there was a war.

That narrative—it lasted. And it made sense until it didn't make sense to me anymore. Through talking to residents of East Jerusalem, finding out everything there is to know that I didn't get a chance, or that I wasn't told, I went through a paradigm shift. People think I went from one extreme to another extreme. And maybe in a way I did. Today it's harder for me to relate to the Israeli flag. As someone who used to be right wing and a right wing activist and bought and painted caravans on hilltops in settlements, now I'm a volunteer in a group called the *Yerushalaymi Miduberet:* Palestinian women and Jewish women get together to learn each other's languages. I am currently director of the political group, the elephant in the room, it's called, I kind of came out of the closet politically.

**Adina Karpuj:** So you mentioned these two different sides of you and kind of your shift from one to the other. Tell me how that's been playing out right now.

**Mor Maisel:** People can’t understand how I can come to understand the other side, if we're talking right now about actual current events—they say that I'm betraying my side. And my Facebook turned into a warzone of people that I didn't expect: my own family, my own extended family. I got feedback like: “you're the black sheep in the family…”; “hey, you need to go to Aza (Gaza).” And I think they just created a bandwagon and they all jumped on it: so cousins and aunts—aunts who loved me and fed me Tahdig every Shabbat when I came over (they’re Persian, they're from Iran). All these people turned on me. And my Auntie even sent me in private, you know,…there was one of the peace activists, a woman, she was kidnapped by Hamas. She sent me a picture of that, and she said: “Soon by you.” And that's extreme, that's extreme.

**Adina Karpuj:** Tell me a little bit about what last Saturday was like for you.

**Mor Maisel:** Last Saturday was the weirdest day that could ever exist because we had planned a trip for Friday—me and some friends from Al Azaria.

**Adina Karpuj:** Which is a Palestinian village.

**Mor Maisel:** It is a Palestinian village: correct. We planned a trip up north, right next to the Jordanian border: there's like a hotsprings there. We went up there and then we slept over in the Kinneret, next to Tiberius.

And you wake up in the morning to videos of Hamas infiltrating Israel, which looks like it came out of a movie. You just don't believe that your, like, safety could be so compromised here in Israel. And here I am enjoying my day with like Palestinian friends. Let's just say I felt like a traitor. I don't think it was a correct feeling, but I think it's hard not to feel that way. I don't think I made sense of anything. I saw quite a few videos. I saw the massacre at Be’eri; the people shot by the bus stops…just people in their flowery dresses—like one woman who was wearing like a green dress with yellow flowers. Like she didn't deserve to die: nobody did.

But I saw the pictures and I was like: “Guys, put everything away, like we're not dealing with any of this right now. We’re in Tiveria, we’re by the Kinneret, we're just going to enjoy our day.

And one of the people with us is a Bedouin who is also a soldier in the army. Which is amazing…the group of friends that we have, which is really diverse: seeing like Palestinians from the West Bank talking and being friends with like a Bedouin, who was a soldier in the IDF. And it's huge, to me this is huge. So the fact that we're all friends is quite miraculous. And he kept getting notices, notifications about sirens, and his phone kept ringing. I was like: “Guys, just put it all away; we'll deal with whatever mess this is when we get home.” And that's what we did. And we just spent the whole day in the sun, in the water. And it was like having the best time, and that…I mean, you could see it, you know, the beach and the blue skies, and there was not a siren in sight or in sound. And we just felt like it wasn't touching us. A blessing today to think back on that moment of sanity that we had.

When we came back, we came back through Jericho: everything changes. You go from this sunny day to this darkness. Jericho is clearly closed. We stopped at Al-Auja, which is also like a Palestinian city. And we sat down to eat and every car that passed by I just expected it to be like someone with a Kalashnikov. Whether it's Jews or Arabs—at this point people were taking revenge on each other. Like the fear in your heart is gripping. But I've learned to take fear and just to alchemize it into like action that opposes fear— which means just sitting; just siting and doing…accepting your fate, whatever it may be.

And then we went home. What does it mean to go home? We went to Azzanah. They were afraid to cross into Jerusalem

**Adina Karpuj:** Your friends.

**Mor Maisel:** My friends drop me off. And they said: “You know, go to Ma’ale Adumim, wait for a bus, if there are no buses we'll figure out a way to get you home.” The streets were empty. There were soldiers coming out trying to catch like hitchhikes to the bases because they were all called in for reserve duty. And I couldn't get home. I called my place of work, I work in a hotel in Jerusalem, and I ask them if there's like even a dirty room I can sleep in just so I can get somewhere. And they said: “Come, come.” And I've been living in the hotel ever since. It's been like a week and a half. I don't want to go back to Efrat.

**Adina Karpuj:** And as this war has progressed, have you been able to keep those bonds with the Palestinian friends you were out with on October 7th? Has anything changed?

**Mor Maisel:** The bonds have only deepened. It's only the Palestinians that came and asked me how am I doing, how's my family. Many of my friends who are Jewish, who were in these coexistence groups with me have blocked me, have said things like…one of the girls in the WhatsApp group that we run, she came back into the group just to say: “I hope your wives and children are murdered and raped the way you did to us,” and then left the group. So a lot of the people who were like trying to become more moderate in their way of thinking just went back to their natural safe place of, like, us or them, and I can understand that. It's not okay what she said, but I can understand.

Everybody needs their, like, blankie, their teddy bear, or something to make them feel safe. And sometimes I wish I had that. Sometimes I wish I can go back to that life, like if we carpet bomb Gaza everything will be fine again. But I don't have that luxury or that privilege. I know too many people who have family in Gaza. There’s not a one size fits all message right now. I don't even think we want to hear it right now, and that's okay. We just need to settle in our pain for now and support each other. Even if it means each side supporting their own till we feel safe again.

So today I have to just make space for everybody. And one heart can't do that. But if there's something that I think that I was given as a gift by God naturally, it's that place where I can like be the calm voice for other people when everything else is going to shit.

And that's what it feels like right now. It doesn't mean it doesn't hurt.Doesn't mean that it's not painful to lose my family. But I know that I can do that for other people.

**Adina Karpuj:** Thank you so much Mor.