**Mishy Harman:** Hi, can I ask you what you're doing?

**Unknown adult1:** I'm preparing vegetables for sandwiches. We finished the onions, now we're on the tomatoes.

**Mishy Harman:** *(in Hebrew)* How old are you?

**Unknown child:** *(in Hebrew)* Ten.

**Mishy Harman:** *(in Hebrew)*: And what are you doing?

**Unknown child:** *(in Hebrew)*: I’m preparing sandwiches.

**Hedai Offaim:** This is the biggest pile of chuma, which is a spread made of hot peppers and garlic and olive oil, that I've ever seen in my life. I don't know if you understand, this is about 40 kilos of that, and that's some spicy stuff. So I hope the soldiers like spicy food.

**Mishy Harman:** How many tomatoes have you cut?

**Unknown adult2:** Wow. I think maybe…thousand, I don’t know.

**Mishy Harman:** What do you do in normal times?

**Unknown adult2:** Teaching math for students.

**Mishy Harman:**  And how did you think of volunteering here?

**Unknown adult2:** I felt bad with myself that I’m doing nothing to help. And then I searched for all kinds of volunteering. And I like this cafe, Meshek Ofaimme, and I wanted to make something nutritious for the soldiers, not only junk food. So I like the idea.

**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, what fills me and many, many others with hope during these dark times, is, of course, the way in which Israeli civil society has risen to the occasion. Tens and hundreds of thousands of ordinary people of every possible social group have dropped everything, and are each in his or her own way, big or small, trying to pitch in to volunteer, to help. Yesterday we heard from Ofer Tamir, who came down from Nahalal in the north—to Kibbutz Kissufim on the border with Gaza, in order to evacuate cows. And today we'll hear from 44-year-old Hedai Offaim: a chef, a farmer, and a truly inspiring social entrepreneur.

**Mishy Harman:** Okay, hi, good morning.

**Hedai Offaim:** Good morning.

**Mishy Harman:** Can you introduce yourself.

**Hedai Offaim:** Sure, my name is Hedai Offaim. I'm one of the founders and co-owners of the Offaim model farms for sustainable agriculture. We grow from seed to table:anything between free range organic eggs, to dairy products of organic goats, fruit, vegetables. We make our own jams, olive oils, honey, and everything. And we also own the farm stores and the farm cafes and restaurants in which we sell our produce.

**Mishy Harman:** And where are we now right now?

**Hedai Offaim:** We are in one of our locations in Jerusalem. It is called the Hansen House, which was a lepers colony about 150 years ago. And we operate a cafe and a farm shop in it, as well as a bar. This is one of our larger locations so we are currently operate it as a relief kitchen, as a relief center for families of victims, for families of kidnapped, for soldiers in the front, and medical teams, volunteers, and anyone who needs fresh, healthy food from this operation, supported by almost 750 volunteers. A lot of people who are bringing in anything from onions to money to support the effort. And we've been doing it from October 8th—so meaning from Sunday right after the war broke.

I woke up on Saturday morning from the sirens—waking up my kids and going down to the bomb shelter that we have in our house. At the beginning we thought it was just, you know, another harassment. But slowly, slowly, because we have a lot of friends in the area that surrounds Gaza, we started to understand what's going on. At 11, I already called the unit, nobody answered me at my army unit. I discovered after that they were all involved in the fighting because they are a reconnaissance unit, so immediatel they were the first ones to arrive at the fighting area. And unfortunately we lost six members of my army unit in the first couple of hours. And then I started calling anyone I know and I said: “I'm coming. Where should I come?” They said: “Wait home.” And then they said: “We have so many younger, and more trained people than you at this point.”

**Mishy Harman:** You were disappointed that you weren't called up for reserve duty?

**Hedai Offaim:** You know, when a war effort begins, or when there's an attack, you immediately think of the first thing needed, which is immediate protection. And immediate protection is with the army, or with security forces. I was a soldier for quite a long time in an elite reconnaissance unit. And I was an officer and I served over six years to begin with, and then reserves all those years. I have since stopped doing reserves because I got older and I was less needed.

And I also in the daily life in Israel, I did not feel comfortable with a lot of my—or not feel comfortable is an understatement—I opposed a lot of what my government has done on my behalf with regards to controlling another people, and with regards to the efforts that were made not in the right direction, not in the direction of peace. But then again the minute something like this happen, which is so immediate, which is so straightforward, which is so black and white, you know, I do not have any equivalence, I do not have any symmetry in this, I do not see them as freedom fighter, I do not. This is pure fundamentalist ideology and evil. Then, you know, then I will do anything needed to protect my immediate family; it's my immediate circle of friends; it's my immediate community. So yes, so I was hoping to be recruited. But then I decided I'll pull my weight somewhere else. And I do feel that currently what we are doing probably at least equals what I would have done in the army had I gone.

So Sunday early morning we just came into our shops and restaurants and started taking out all of the things that we already had prepared, and pack them and process them and send them to soldiers—just as a grassroot initiative. And we started really with our own team who all just jumped into volunteer. And then we understood we're going to need infrastructure. So we built a volunteer organization, and we have an NGO to collect funds etc. And we're building it day-by-day, hopefully not for long.

I have to say that like us, there are hundreds and thousands of initiatives. And we all work together. The level of sympathy, and collegiality between the organizations, and between the people—who some of them I've known for many years, but many of them are from a completely different section of the Israeli society: these are people that I wouldn't have met in any other way. Everybody's doing something and we just know that we need to pull our own weight. Nobody else is going to do it for us. We are the state…there isn't a state and us, there isn't a government and us, we are not here to wait to be served. But then again, we are only making food: people need weapons; people will need shelters; people need humanitarian support; people need psychological support; we are the fuel but we are not the essence. And we all work together.

**Mishy Harman:** And where is the food going?

**Hedai Offaim:** Almost everywhere: starting with evacuated communities which are dislocated into hotels or villages across the country; families that are sitting *shiva,* that are mourning, or families of hostages that are kept together in hotels…a lot of it is going to soldiers and reserve soldiers around Gaza and in the northern border. And a lot is going to volunteers that are doing days and nights in Magen David Adom hospitals, civil society volunteers that are operating a lot of the first command rooms, aid organizations. So we try and send everybody. We have demand which is three times or four times more than we can even produce.

**Mishy Harman:** How much are you producing?

**Hedai Offaim:** We are producing about well… 10,000 meals a day.

**Mishy Harman:** And what is a meal?

**Hedai Offaim:** A meal would be anything from, you know, couscous with fish balls and vegetables and a salad and tahini, and…there is a lot of sandwiches—healthy, big and nutritious sandwiches that also we send with some, you know, baked goods and pastries etc. So it depends what they need and where they are.

**Mishy Harman:** And do hear back from the people eating the food?

**Hedai Offaim:** Yes, constantly… we get I can show you on my cell phone….it's ridiculous. People are very heart warmed by this, and grateful. And we feel that is…look, we're doing it for two reasons: one, people need to be fed, but not less importantly, people need to make food. We need this at least as much as the people to whom we send the food needs this. You know, the rabbi from Kotzk said: “Words that comes out of the heart gets into the heart of others, but especially into the heart of those who said them.” So when we send something, when it echoes in the messages we get back from the people who receive them, it works back on our heart, and that's the story I think.

**Mishy Harman:** Can you show me inside?

**Hedai Offaim:** Yeah, of course. So right now we're in the main hall, which usually serves as the cafe. So these are the cafe tables that everybody's gathered around. You'll see about 30 people right now in here, and then there's more in the kitchen, and more in the packing room, and more into sorting of the produce that arrives. This group is making vegetable salads: fresh tomatoes, and cucumbers, and onions, and mint leaves, and whatnot with olive oil, and lemon. This group is making sandwiches with organic goat cheese. This group over there is making fricasse—which is a Tunisian sandwich with tuna and eggs and pickled lemons, etc. It's the food that I would make my children. This guy, by the way, is almost a doctor: he’s finishing his medical school right now. And because he's in between shifts they didn't need him at the hospital. And he came back here. He was a chef here…a cook here when he was a student some five or six years ago, and he just immediately just showed up and said: “I'm in the kitchen, whatever is needed,”and he's here 18 hours a day. And so many are like him. People have left homes, have left schools, have left work…

**Mishy Harman:** And everyone is a volunteer?

**Hedai Offaim:** Every single one.

**Mishy Harman:** It’s incredible.
**Hedai Offaim:** It is, you know what—it's what I would have expected. It's incredible and expected at the same time. We are an incredible people.

**Mishy Harman:** Hedai, how can people get involved? **Hedai Offaim:** Volunteering it's always good, but we do have many working hands, as you can see. I think the best way at this point is by funding it, is by supporting it with money. Each meal cost about 10 shekels, which is roughly two-and-a-half, three dollars, and any dollar helps, any shekel helps. So if anybody wants to join the effort, we'll put a link maybe.

**Mishy Harman:** Sure.

**Hedai Offaim:** And then people can just donate from there.