**Mitch Ginsburg:** So Tzvika, just a few days after your son Eitan was kidnapped from the Nova party, you went on TV and you said, and I printed out the exact quote here: “If I must choose between the love of my son and the love of my nation then I choose the love of the nation, and also, quote: “If the sacrifice must be sacrificed, then we shall sacrifice. We must raise children who are willing and up for what this land demands of them.” And it struck me…

**Tzvika Mor:** Correct. Look. Thousands of soldiers that came to the war are saying that we care about the State of Israel more than we care about our lives. Okay. So I'm part of them. If everyone from us will say that his life is the most important thing. We can close our state.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Hey, listeners, it's Mishy. So as you know, we're continuing our series of Wartime Diaries, which is our attempt to collect slivers of life during these difficult days. This is our 50th wartime diary.

47-year-old Tzvika Mor is from the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba near Hebron. His son Eitan, was kidnapped from the Nova Festival, where he had been working as a security guard. In fact, Eitan was only kidnapped in the afternoon of October 7th.

After spending nearly nine hours evacuating injured party goers to safe locations nearby. During that whole time, Eitan heroically returned to the festival grounds again and again and again under fire to save complete strangers. At around 3:30pm he was himself taken by terrorists and driven into Gaza, where he's remained ever since.

His dad Tzvika is an outlier among the families of the hostages. As campaigns across the country and throughout the world call on the leaders of Israel and the Hamas to reach a deal that would release the hostages, Tzvika believes that the Israeli government should keep on fighting and not agree to any ceasefire, even if it comes at the cost of his son's freedom. Perhaps even his life.

He established a small group of like minded relatives of hostages, which called itself Forum *Tikvah*, or the Hope Forum. They stress the importance of the nation and the state over the life of any individual, even if that individual happens to be your loved one. And in that, ironically, their right wing position echoes the left wing socialist and collectivist sentiments that were dominant in the early days of the state.

What can I say? Israel's a complicated, complicated place. Anyway Mitch Ginsburg and I spoke to that speaker in our studio in Jerusalem, here he is.

**Tzika Mor:**My name is Tzvika Mor. I am married. We are parents of eight kids. Eitan who is kidnapped, is our elder and will be 24 after Independence Day. And we have a little girl, five years old. And we're living in Kiryat Arba. My wife is a kindergarten and special education teacher for 25 years. And I'm a therapist for teens with ADHD.

**Mishy Harman:** And that also relates to Eitan.

**Tzvika Mor:** Yeah. Eitan was a typical ADHD. It was very hard for him to sit all these hours in the school, especially in the religious school. He is a child of the jungle. Okay. And in 11th Grade Eitan decided to leave the yeshiva high school. Eitan thought for years that we're disappointed in him because we're religious and he is not.

I think that two months before October 7, we were sitting together and I saw that something is not as usual. And I told him: “Eitan look this is your life. I love you and it doesn't matter what you are doing. And you cannot disappoint me, try me. I asked him to try me.

And I think that Eitan knew that he's going to be in this festival as a security guard, but he didn't want to tell me because I think that he knew that if he will tell me—that I can be sad. He didn't want me to be sad, especially before Shabbat, before Simchat Torah. Okay.

**Mishy Harman:** Would you have told him not to go?

**Tzvika Mor:** No, no, no…he's 23 years old. He has his life, his values. Yeah. So on October 7th in the morning, I went to the shul. I’m a *gabai*. And I came with candies for the kids, for Simchat Torah. And my phone was in my house. And that is the reason that Eitan called to my brother, okay, and not to me, because he knew that I don't have a phone on Shabbat.

And about four o'clock afternoon, I came back from the shul after davening and I open the door, and all my family was crying: my wife, my children. And I asked: “what happened, what happened?” And they said that Eitan is missing. And I remember that I took my two girls and I told them that Arabs took Eitan and they give him a room and a bed and food, and they want to exchange him with Arabs that we have in our jail. That’s it. And now we have to wait. We have to be strong. And we have to pray for Eitan. And we will see Eitan.

To my elders, I told that we have a responsibility. We have a role, a special role. We have to teach the people of Israel because after decades of Western liberal thinking, the default will be to think only about the hostages. But we are in a war, we're talking about the life of all the State. So if we want to continue to live here, we have to sacrifice, okay.

My responsibility is not only for my family, and my relatives and my friends, but for all my nation. Look, when I went to the second Lebanon War, I told to my wife: “Please, if Hezbollah kidnaps me, do not release terrorists for me.” And Eitan told us the same thing less than one year ago.

**Mishy Harman:** Really?

**Tzvika Mor:** Yes, we were sitting at the Shabbat table. And my kids asked me about Shalit deal. And suddenly Eitan told us that if he will be taken hostage he is not allow us to release him for terrorists.

**Mishy Harman:** So, Tzvika let me ask you, I am sure you pray every day that Eitan comes home safely and lives a full and healthy life. That obviously goes without saying and Amen.

**Tzvika Mor:** Amen

**Mishy Harman:** But just to ask: you would prefer to sacrifice Eitan’s life for a success in winning this war?

**Tzvika Mor:** Look, all this thing that Israel is negotiating with terrorists. It's crazy. Okay. In the 70s it was very, very clear that Israel did not speak with a terrorist. Okay. Savoy Hotel, Sabena airplane, Entebbe. But now it came a default that Israel negotiating with terrorists. And I think that it's terrible. The hostages should come back before any deal with Hamas about the war. And it's ridiculous that you're in a war, you want to make your enemy weak, and you are paying to him.

**Mishy Harman:** Tzvika, so very shortly after you learned that Eitan was kidnapped, you were in shul and heard the story of Abraham going in and agreeing to sacrifice Isaac. What did you feel when you heard that story being chanted in the synagogue?

**Tzvika Mor:** First, the end of the Isaac sacrifice was that Isaac is alive. All the purpose of Isaac sacrifice was to build in the Israeli nation the capability to sacrifice the life for the meaning of our lives. And the highest meaning of our life is the lives of the Israeli nation.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** I was just going to ask..what's your wife's name?

**Tzvika Mor:** Efrat

**Mitch Ginsburg:** She's totally with you on this?

**Tzvika Mor:** Yes, of course,

**Mishy Harman:** Really?

**Tzvika Mor:** 100%. We have the same approach, me and my wife. Okay. We have to be closer than ever.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Is that something, sorry to interrupt you, but is that something that you said to your wife immediately? That's something she says to you: “we must be closer than ever before”?

**Tzvika Mor:** Yes, we spoke, and I told her that we have to keep our relationship closer than ever.

**Mishy Harman:** So Tzvika, can you talk a little bit about how your message resonates or doesn't resonate within the community of the families of the hostages?

**Tzvika Mor:** Look, we have a great relationship with all the families, except two or three families that we tried. And they don't want to talk with us.

Some of them blame us that all of what happened on October 7th is all because of us. Because we are living in Judea, and all the army was in Judea, instead of being in the south. And some of them told us in the first days that we're sacrificing our loved ones, and they don't want to talk with us because we are fanatic, we are crazy people. And we saw that their values and the messages are not according to our values at all. So we established *Tikva* Forum.

And in the beginning, we were only three families. Now we are about 32 families. But in the TV and the radio, you can see and hear only four or five because most of the families don't want to speak. Some of them are afraid about their loved ones.

Because my approach is not what Hamas wants to hear. Okay, Hamas wants to hear that the Israelis are afraid. Okay. And in the stress. And I'm saying something else, something different.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** But is there concern among the hostage families that that sort of statement will perhaps poorly influence your loved ones?

**Tzvika Mor:** Yes.

**Mishy Harman:** Do you ever imagine the moment that he gets released?

**Tzvika Mor:** Oh yes, every day, every day. The call in the middle of the night that we have a surprise, we have good news. Eitan is waiting for you in Kerem Shalom. And we wake up our kids: “We're going to see Eitan. Eitan is alive. Get dressed and to the cars.” The first kiss, or the first hug; the first point that I can see him.

**Mishy Harman:** And Tzvika, on the very off chance that Eitan can listen to this podcast episode, what message would you like to send to him?

**Tzvika Mor:** Eitan, we are missing you very very much. We're speaking about you every day, every hour and I'm carrying your picture with me—because I'm traveling every day all over the country, and you are with me, in my car, and in my heart. And I know that you are a tough guy, you're strong, you know that you have to be strong not only for you but for all your friends, all of the hostages that are probably with you. And we are waiting to see you as soon as possible, especially for your birthday after Independence Day.

**Mishy Harman:** Thank you Tzvika.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** *Toda Raba.*