**Mishy Harman (narration):** In the first week of the war, there was a zoom call. US President Joe Biden wanted to talk to family members of missing and kidnapped Israelis who held American citizenship. One of those on the call was Sigal Steiner Manzuri from Hod HaSharon. Sigal’s two daughters - Roya and Norrelle - had attended the Nova Festival and hadn’t been heard from since 7:39am on the morning of October 7th. In those early and hectic days it was, you might remember, entirely unclear who had been kidnapped, who had been killed but hadn’t yet been identified, and who had survived and was perhaps still hiding somewhere. In the short period between the scheduling of the call and the actual conversation with the President, the body of Sigal’s younger daughter - 22-year-old Roya - had been identified. She was buried on October 12th. At the time of the zoom call, however, Sigal's older daughter, Norelle, 25, was still considered to be missing.

**Rachel Goldberg:** He wanted to hear everyone's story. And she stood up and she went to like the door of the room she was in.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** This is Rachel Goldberg. Her son, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, had also been at the Nova party, was kidnapped into Gaza, and spent nearly 11 months in captivity, before being murdered in a tunnel underneath Rafah in late August. Rachel was also on the call with President Biden, and she described to the Times of Israel’s Jessica Steinberg, how at one point, Sigal - Norelle and Roya’s mom - stepped away from the computer.

**Rachel Goldberg:** She was out for a minute. And she comes back in. And she's like, walking around, sort of like throwing her arms in the air. And she hits something on her computer, which was the mute button, which all of us had had our mute buttons on. And she says, “I have to interrupt. I have to interrupt.” And the President was speaking at the time. And he said, “yeah, go ahead.” And she said, “I just got the door knock that my other daughter is dead.” And she started screaming. And we all - twelve of us - started crying on the call. And he put his head in his hands and started sobbing. And it was so powerful, because we were so with her. And what was really amazing is he wiped his eyes. And he said, “I'm telling you right now, I have lost two children. And I know right now you're in unimaginable agony. But one day, you are going to need to be strong for the rest of your family. So scream, and you can scream to me as much as you want. And if you need me to, I'll call you tomorrow, and you can keep screaming at me.” He said, “but you're going to need to allow yourself to be there for your family.” And I just thought it was just a real human moment. And I know that it's very Western and very American and very touchy-feely. But you know what, it was a moment, it was a whisper of somebody getting the pain and that will always stay with me.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Hi listeners, I’m Mishy Harman and this is an episode of Israel Story that we never wanted to air. An episode that marks a year of war. A year of pain. A year since the day of ghastly violence, which led us into a nightmare that still has no end in sight.

A year has passed, but the trauma is still fresh. With all that has gone on since October 7th, 2023, we haven’t really had time, or opportunity, to pause. To reflect. To heal.

Immediately after that horrific Shabbat, our team gathered in our office in Jerusalem. Some were called up to reserve duty, others were involved in countless different volunteer initiatives - organizing blood drives, purchasing equipment for soldiers, finding housing for evacuees, cleaning bomb shelters, driving mourners to funerals, and on and on and on. But we didn’t really know what to do as a show. Staying silent during what was arguably the most dramatic moment in our lifetimes didn’t seem like a real option. But what stories *should* we tell? Normally our episodes are carefully produced over many months, and here the story was changing by the minute. We weren’t going to become the *New York Times* or *The Times of Israel* and start following the unfolding events, nor were we well-positioned to venture into some deep investigatory dive into - say - the intelligence failure that led to the surprise attack. We thought of embedding ourselves with troops, we set up dozens of recording booths in hotels and we were in close touch with many frantic families searching for their loved ones.

Ultimately, we decided to begin a series called “Wartime Diaries,” in which we tried to bring you some of the voices we were hearing among and around us. These weren’t exactly stories, but rather attempts to collect slivers of life during those incredibly difficult days.

At first these dispatches were daily, then weekly, then - as the stories became more and more complicated - a bit less frequent. We talked to families of hostages and survivors. To widows and reservists, doctors and singers, educators and farmers, chefs and archeologists, moms and dads, programmers and rabbis, poets and therapists, zoo keepers and dating coaches. We talked to Jews and Muslims and Christians, to Bedouins and Druze, to Israelis and Palestinians, Americans and Nepalese and Lebanese, right-wing settlers and left-wing peace activists.

We knew from the outset that this project would never be exhaustive. It was fragmentary by nature, an ongoing attempt to present as many angles as possible, while accepting the fact that it would never capture the full range of emotions people were, and are, experiencing. But as Rabbi Tarfon said in Masechet Avot: “*Lo aleicha hamelacha ligmor, ve’lo ata ben horin lehibatel mimena*.” “It is not your responsibility to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to desist from it.”

All in all, we’ve released more than 60 “Wartime Diaries” in the past year.

Our episode today is a moment to step back and reflect. It’s not a news hour, and doesn’t follow the rollercoaster of events we’ve experienced since October 7th. Instead, it’s a collage of the dozens and dozens of people we’ve heard from throughout the year, alongside others whose episodes haven't aired yet.

It will, we hope, offer an emotional journey. A picture of what it has been like to be here this year.

Pain is still pervasive. But as Rachel Goldberg said, all we can hope for, with this hour of radio, is that it be a whisper of someone understanding. Here we go.

**Mishy Harman:** So we're here with Sasha. Sasha Ariev. Hi Sasha.

**Sasha Ariev:** Hi.

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

**Katherine Leff:** I'm Katherine.

**Agi Mishol:** I'm Agi Mishol.

**Tzvika Mor:** My name is Tzvika Mor.

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** My name is Ibrahim Abu Ahmad.

**Faiz Abu Sabehan:** I am Faiz Abu Sabehan.

**Lihi Lapid:** Hi, my name is Lihi Lapid.

**Sharon Gutman Gilor:** My name is Dr. Sharon Gutman-Gilor.

**Walter Bingham:** I'm Walter Bingham.

**Omer Ohana:** My name is Omer. Omer Ohana.

**Katherine Leff:** AndI got married this Monday in the middle of war.

**Tzvika Mor:** We're parents of eight kids. Eitan, who is kidnapped, is our elder.

**Issa Kassasiyeh:** I'm the first Santa Claus in the Middle East and from the Holy Land.

**Sharon Gutman Gilor:** And I'm a military physician.

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** I’m 31. Born and raised in Nazareth, and I'm a political activist and a peace activist.

**Walter Bingham:** And a week or two ago, I celebrated my 100th birthday. I feel good on a good day. I feel like forty on a bad day, like fifty and today is a good day.

**Sasha Ariev:** And I have a little sister. This is me. This is how I want to present myself.

**Zev Levi:** Can you walk me through your experience of October 7th?

**Sivan Avnery:** We were here at home. Tal our son told us that he's going camping with friends. He didn't tell us anything about a party.

**Tzvika Mor:** Eitan knew that he's going to be in this festival as a security guard, but he didn't want to tell me, because he didn't want me to be sad, especially before Shabbat, before Simchat Torah.

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

**Tzvika Mor:** No.

**Yarnin Peled:** We woke up, and since we went to sleep very late and more than one glass of wine, so we decided to take our time. Usually, Daphna is out the door about 5:30-5:45, and I'm about 6:15 outside the door. And this time 6:30, we start walking, and then all hell broke loose.

**Shira Masami:** There was a siren, and it's not stopping, and we're thinking, ‘ok, what is going on?’

**Adam Ben Shabath:** Right away, I went to telegram and start checking what's going on, and I just couldn't believe it. And my initial reaction it was to send those videos to my friends, my Arab friends in the village.

**Yochai Maital:** Why was that your initial reaction?

**Adam Ben Shabath:** Because they are my best friends, like they are my brothers. And the people who I talk to every day, they say, like, “it's fake news and it's not possible, and where's the army?” They were shocked.

**Noam Tsuriely:** So we went to the synagogue, *Simchat Torah*. And right before the *tefillah* start, the *gabbai* went up and said, “there’s a war. All the soldiers, go home. Open your phones. Get ready.”

**Charlene Seidle:** I felt like I was somehow transported back in time, you know, seeing scenes that I had only read about. You know, in… in history books.

**Tzvika Mor:** I came back from the shul. I open the door and all my family was crying.

**Gidon Lev:** I didn't think such a thing can happen again.

**Sivan Avnery:** As I got closer, I heard shooting. Qassam was falling all around.

**Louish Rijal:** Bippin Joshi threw back the grenade, and he saved all friends. Because of his courage, remaining six friends are alive.

**Hai Ashkenazi:** So the only thing you can do is just lay on the ground and hope it doesn't hit you.

**Sivan Avnery:** Kibbutz Be’eri was burning. Like the sky was full of black smoke.

**Yarnin Peled:** Since you are inside the safe room and everything is closed, you don't see outside, so you just get these messages. And they get worse by the minute, “they up my stairs,” “they try to break the door,” “go and save this house.”

**Shay-li Atari:** And then I asked him, “Mami, are we going to die?” And he said, “we're not going to die today.” But not long after, we heard shootings.

**Hugo Wolaj:** Whispering, “please come to us. I'm at my house,” and describing “my mother died and my brother is urgent. Please come. Why nobody's coming, why nobody's coming?”

**Yarnin Peled:** Please send the army. Send the army. Someone come and save me.

**Sivan Avnery:** “Tal, Abba is on the way.”

**Shay-li Atari:** And they opened the iron rail of the window. Me and Yahav were standing. I was behind him. I was with the baby in my hands. And a big hand of a terrorist came through the iron rail and shoved it. And then we didn’t have time because the hand of the terrorist was already inside our bedroom.

**Lihi Lapid:** And he calls the whatever big chiefs of the army. And he realizes that something is happening. And then he came to the living room. And I told him, “listen, there are forty people dead!” And he looks at me and he says, “much more, much more.”

**Yarnin Peled:** There is no one to come and save you.

**Shay-li Atari:** If I could say what his eyes said in that specific time, it’s not like a long goodbye, a dramatic one. It’s more like, “sorry honey.”

**Yarnin Peled:** She said, “OK, I'll die in here.”

**Noa Hanuka:** And he starts to say, “please take care of Roei. Please make sure that you are OK. My parents won’t leave you.” *Ani kazeh*, “shut up. You’re not going to die. I’m pregnant. You have a baby. You have me. I am not allowed you to die.”

**Omer Ohana:** It all happened, like, really quickly. I told him, don't be a hero. We're getting married in two weeks.

**Sivan Avneri:** He went out of the bushes. I won’t forget this moment till the last day I will live. He was so cute. He went out, you know, with a hat on his head and a backpack just like he went to a trip in school when he was eight years old. I hugged him for like two second and then throw him into my car and said, “let’s go.” Tal says to everyone it was the longest hug he ever had.

**Sarah Tuttle-Singer:** We hear the sirens. He says, “ah, it’s… you know, it’s just a siren,” and he goes back to sleep. But then there’s another siren and another siren and another siren. And then he wakes up. So we live in Armon HaNatziv. It’s a neighborhood right on the edge of southeast Jerusalem. And meanwhile across the street from us, through the windows, we can see our neighbors who live in Tsur Bahar and Jabel Mukaber are sending off fireworks. And we hear the sounds of celebration. And this is just surreal, eerie, feels catastrophic, like the end of the world.

**Doron Krakow:** By 11 o'clock in the morning on that terrible day, he had gotten his *Tzav Shmoneh*, he'd been recalled to active duty, and I immediately booked a return flight to Israel. He and I came to an understanding, which was, as long as it was necessary for him to give 100% of his focus to the job in front of him, I would make sure to give 100% of mine to looking after his family. And our deal is that that's what I'll do until he comes home.

**Yochai Maital:** Bottles, diapers…

**Doron Krakow:** Yeah, all the good stuff.

**Jon Polin:** And we made the decision by Saturday afternoon, October 7th, that we weren't going to wait around for the Israeli government or the US government or anybody else to take action on our behalf. We said, “we're taking matters into our own hands.”

**Mor Maisel:** 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 it’s gripping.

**Alon Shalev:** I found myself spending the night sitting next to the door of my parents' bomb shelter, where my wife and children and my sister and her children were sleeping, armed with a hammer.

**Omer Ohana:** Sagi got a mission to… to extract all the families from the Kerem, which is the street on Be’eri’s fence. And he was leading his team from one house to another, extracting families. The house were burning. The street were filled with bodies. It was like just a shit show. Sagi extracted childrens from shelter. He covered their eyes so they won't have to see their parents be slaughtered in the living room. We had an agreement that, because both of us were very busy, to send a heart to each other on WhatsApp every round hour, just to know that the other one is OK. We didn't really had the time to talk with each other, so every round hour, two hearts, one from him, one from me. And then he stopped responding.

**Amit Halivni Bar Peled:** OK, how it was? So they rang at the bell, then I went downstairs, and I saw the soldiers, and they were like two very tired soldiers that are, I don't know, going from this house to another house. I think I was feeling sorry for them. They come and they tell you, “oh, your husband is dead.”

**Omer Ohana:** I collapsed. I… I started to throw up. The thought that Sagi’s dead, my body couldn’t suffer the thought.

**Sahar Vardi:** I texted him on… like after I was told that he was killed. I don't completely know why, but I guess there's a side that didn't kind of want to believe it.

**Sasha Ariev:** The last time we spoke was the seventh of October at 6:30am it was a phone call, and the last message of her was on 7:40 on WhatsApp. It was the last time she… She called to say goodbye. She called to say that she loves us and that if she won't live, so we will continue our lives and do not sink in sorrow. And she asked me to keep my parents together and safe.

**Yarnin Peled:** We still don't know who's missing because the body haven't been identified yet and who is been kidnapped.

**Adva Gutman Tirosh:** I still don't know what my sister condition is, but I decided that for now, I will act like she's alive and captured, because this is the only thing that I can affect on and change. And if we'll get the bad news that she is… she was murdered, I will cope with that when it will come.

**Louish Rijal:** And just we are chanting, we are missing you. We are quite happy, but we are not fully happy, because we are missing you.

**Yarnin Peled:** Two days ago, we got the message that my sister is… has been kidnapped, and she's in Gaza. Her husband is missing. Her mom is dead.

**Yochai Maital:** I know from our previous conversations that it's kind of this ongoing struggle for you, what tense to use when you talk about her. Is it hard to hold out hope?

**Adva Gutman Tirosh:** It's very hard. But, you know, I don't really know what I prefer. She's a young, beautiful girl, and they raped women, they cut organs, and they even killed the animals. They killed the dogs and the cats and the rabbits and the goats in those villages. And you know, who does that? Why? So those monsters, if they have my sister, I don't know if it's better for her to be alive or dead. I really don't know. I'm changing my mind from a minute to a minute. Yeah, sometimes I prefer her to be alive, and sometimes I'm saying I hope she would rest in peace and won't need to suffer that.

**Hai Ashkenazi:** The hardest thing for me in the beginning was the smell.

**Itai Kramer:** I saw a body with no head of a young, young lady. I saw a body of a child burn, his parents tied… horrible things.

**Hai Ashkenazi:** So my first day was, like, you… you drive in a convoy with the army to the kibbutz. We went to Nir Oz. A quarter of the population was either murdered or kidnapped. And actually, when you get to there, it looks a bit kind of pastoral, so the birds are singing and the grass is still green, only when you look a bit better, you can see something is wrong.

**Adina Karpuj:** An oven, just like tossed on the side of the yard, completely burned, pillow, somebody's pillow, there's a washing machine and what seems to be like a chanukiah. A barbecue… Tons of like wires and wood and parts of… that make a house. You can still tell that it was paradise.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Ofer, why don't we go over here? I see this is the dairy shed that was bombed. And unfortunately, I think this is the area where the manager of the dairy shed was ambushed and killed. I saw before there were even like grenades on the ground here. Some kalashnikov magazines. Oh, man.

**Hai Ashkenazi:** Until now, they found about 10 missing people.

**Zev Levi:** The bodies.

**Hai Ashkenazi:** Well, you can't even say bodies, because it's really like remains of bones. Sometimes it's just teeth, sometimes it's other other jewelry and stuff like that that you know they wore before the attack.

**Mishy Harman:** Hi. Can I ask you what you're doing?

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

**Mishy Harman:** *[In Hebrew]*How old are you?

**Volunteer:** *[In Hebrew]* Ten.

**Mishy Harman:** *[In Hebrew]* And what are you doing?

**Volunteer:** *[In Hebrew]* Making sandwiches.

**Hedai Ofaim:** 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 forty kilos of that, and that's some spicy stuff. So I hope the soldiers like spicy food.

**Mishy Harman:** What kind of role do you have as an artist in these kind of times?

**David Broza:** I make myself available to the situation. I have no no pretensions to have a role. If I was a chef, I'd cook you a great meal, and I'm the performer who performs well. This is all I can do. Most of the shows I do now are just emergency shows. And I do three-four-five-six a day. I don't wait for anybody to call me. I call everybody and just tell them “I'm coming down.” And everybody who's around, wherever they gather. It could be a hundred people, it could be two or three, like here's three hundred and you play, if you play to please the audience, you know the kids. It's a mixed thing, because this is about diversion. To let them… their minds off everything that's going on.

**Agi Mishol:** You know the poet Leah Goldberg, she wrote that during war, poets, they must... Don't just have the permission, but they must write about love, about nature. They have to remind people that there is beauty.

**Tomer Oshri:** It took us, like, only five days to build a school from kindergarten to 12th graders. I was back in my house trying to figure out who needs help, and I reached the person that's in charge of all the schools in the Ministry of Education, and he told me, “take with you a small bag and a sleeping bag and a tent, and just go and try to figure out how we can help the people that left their houses from Sderot and the municipality of Eshcol in the hotels of the Dead Sea.” And when I came here, I think the first community that I came it was Kibbutz Be’eri. Wow. It was a big chaos. I asked, and maybe it was a mistake, “are there any people from the kibbutz that can help?” And they said that one, one of them got murdered, the other one, her parents got murdered.

**Agi Mishol:** I volunteered to write eulogies for those who were murdered in Be’eri, in Kibbutz Be’eri, because there were like seventy funerals in one day. I didn't know it was like touching something sacred to write this thing about people I don't know personally. They send information about their characters and who were they, and what they liked to do, what they grew in the garden. I didn't know them in the morning, but in the evening, they were just like friends.

**Chaya Gilboa:** I have in my iPhone, like *ptakim* - notes - and I constantly, constantly wrote there moments, small moments of ‘human beauty,’ I called it, of anonymous people that I encounter. I needed it for me, I needed to remind myself, you know, this war, what happened is that we saw the most ugliest place in human being. What happened down south with the Hamas, it's not just a war, it was cruelness. And, at the same time, we saw the most beautiful, generous, kind aspect of humanity. People supported without asking questions. They were so amazing. And I kept ask myself, how those two elements can live together. How humanity can be so mean and so kind?

**Matti Friedman:** I mean, I think that's what will remain with me from this experience, is this incredible dichotomy between a place that's peaceful and a place that isn't. I mean, the idea that a place on earth could be just torn apart by violence, while another place could be absolutely peaceful, you know it’s true, but we were really experiencing it.

**Katherine Leff:** As we were leaving to go to the wedding, to go to the *chuppah*, the siren went off, so we hopped into the shelter, and everyone's like, “oh, there's a bride in here. Like, wow, that's so cool. Mazal tov!” We waited ten minutes and headed out, and then I was hearing live music. And I look to my left and I see this… just they transform this tiny park that I pass by every week into this beautiful, little wedding dreamland. From Saturday morning when I woke up, I had felt nothing but dread and sadness like everyone, but the moment that I was allowed within all of this sadness to be a bride, for a moment, it felt like I was, I was like protected, like I was being shielded from everything around us.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** How did your family like, how did your wife react when you said you're joining up?

**Itai Kramer:** Very complicated.

**Aliza Raz-Melzer:** It was very clear to me that he is, pardon me, too old to be in combat. But within minutes, he was like, “ah, you know, here I am. Here's my bag. Take me.” And I was, “I am changing every single lock in his house if you go, because you do not go, you cannot.”

**Mitch Ginsburg:** But then he did.

**Aliza Raz-Melzer:** Yeah.

**Itai Kramer:** It's really strange because at regular times you think about life. You think about education, you think about future. You think about building, about hope. When the fear is so high and the anger is so high, you switch for surviving.

**Amit Halivni Bar Peled:** A couple hours later, I remembered that before you bury your love, you can ask to do sperm extraction. I called the same soldiers that were giving me the notice and asked them to come quickly and sign me the papers so we can do it. At first, I thought, I'm going to use it, and then my psychologist told me that on the first year, no one really lets you do hard decisions that you may or may not regret them.

**Noga Friedman:** I desperately wanted to talk about sex during my eulogy for Iddo. But even within the depths of the madness I was experiencing while writing it, I realized it was inappropriate and that it wouldn't be well-received. But fuck it. It's no secret that our relationship was sexual. We're adults, and we have three kids, so everyone understands that we slept together. Why then can't I publicly mourn the loss of my sexuality when I lose my lover? What I'm about to say is more or less the least feminist statement ever, but I deeply regret each and every time Iddo wanted to sleep with me, and I wasn't into it.

**Amit HaLivni Bar Peled:** I was very upset because I wanted another brother or sister to Jon Jon. I just wanted, like, to extend my family like we… Yuval and I want to do.

**Omer Ohana:** Sagi was so he was so handsome, he was so smart, he was the whole package, you know.

**Shalom Weil:** Mostly, we were soul mates and very good friends. I miss him. “To be honest, I just simply miss him.

**Amit HaLivni Bar Peled:** In some traditions like widow supposed to not color their hair and wear only black, and they don't supposed to be like happy, and I don't know, full of life, but I'm young, and I want to live my life.

**Anwar Ben-Badis:** If you are going to talk about October 7th, for us as a… as a house, I say it wasn’t surprising because we are inside the Palestinian society a lot. We know and we feel. You cannot, I mean, just be surprised and say, “wow it was a surprise.” No. I mean things are very, very bad since long time. Maybe not for the Israelis. But, if things are very bad for Palestinians, I mean. So smart people like Israelis, should expect that you cannot be all the time in the good side of the thing. Life is good, you can do anything you want. At the same time there is next to you a big jail. I mean, no, closed place, let’s call it. Jail is for bad people.  
**Shira Masami:** Two million terrorists in Azza. Everybody, everybody. No one stop this. No one say, “it's not OK to kidnap children. It's not OK to kidnap women. It's not the Islam religion to rapes women.” OK. Nobody say nothing. They say, “OK, we have kidnapped! We have a victory!” That's what the Palestinian, two million terrorist Palestinian in Gaza says. So I don't care about the children of the enemy. I don't care because these children of Hamas now will be the killer of my children, where they go to grown up. So I don't care about them. I think they not deserve to the life. They don't deserve to anything.

**Faiz Abu Sabehan:** The seventh of October caught us all by surprise. We were sitting around. It was a Saturday, and I will say that it was a horrible, really horrible Shabbat for us as Bedouins and Arabs. Nineteen Bedouins were killed both by rockets and by gunmen. In Kibbutz Be’eri and in Re’im, Bedouins were killed by Hamas. What can I tell you? The rocket that comes flying out of Gaza is blind.

**Mitch Ginsburg**: I'm just imagining like you in that stairwell with these conflicted emotions, sort of surrounded by Jewish Israelis…

**Amira Mohammed:** Jewish Israelis talking like about Palestinians and Arabs saying, like “*yimhak shemam* - may they erase their name, erase their name, like those Arabs. We don't want them. We live so close to an Arab community, we don't want to be close to them. I hope they don't come. We need, like, guard dogs. We need this.” And I'm sitting and no one knows that I'm like, Palestinian, like I'm not. That's also a privilege, in a way, like I can be quiet in the corner. No one knows what I am, who I am, but others like, I have a friend who wears a headscarf, and I remember she was locked out of a shelter.

**Jennifer Cutler:** Ughhh.

**Amira Mohammed:** They closed the door on her and left her outside.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Wow.

**Amira Mohammed:** During a siren like they wouldn't let her in.

**Sahar Vardi:** Update - our house, where I and my family live, has been totally destroyed by American-made F-16s. It is a place of memories with my late father. I am extremely sad and feel pain deep inside my heart. Tears don't stop dropping off my eyes. I can feel my heart burning. I can feel my soul being suffocated by this. I want to scream to wake up.

**Hai Ashkenazi:** Like a storm, a storm of death and sorrow.

**Sarah Tuttle-Singer:** For many reasons, Israeli new… media does not cover the destruction and devastation in Gaza. And believe you me, like, Al-Jazeera is not covering anything on October 7th except to discredit what is true. And having to navigate these two newscycles in the same living room at the same time, is incredibly challenging.

**Riyad Ali:** You know, because we are not Jew, there is a difficulty of living inside Israel in a Jewish state. You know, we are loyal to the Israeli state because we do believe that we we both are sort of minorities in the Middle East. The Druze community share the same memories like the Jewish people. But despite the fact that we are part of the country, despite that our youth right now are fighting side by side with the other Israeli soldiers in Gaza to protect this country, the Israeli state always rejected us.

**Adina Karpuj:** How has life changed since then?

**Anonymous:** It has really changed. Now I’m unable to have a permit to work. The movement is so hard. The army closed all the roads, they kept only the roads for the settlers.

**Maryam Younnes:** So I really grow up, you know, understanding both points of view and I always saw myself as a bridge. It’s a struggle to understand both points of view and both worlds and just to see how the communication is just like lost in translation.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** While in Gaza, did you also treat Palestinians?

**Sharon Gutman Gilor:** Yes, we were in an humanitarian passage that we were in charge of. And there was a lot of old people that were with no medication, and we treat them. We gave them water and we gave them food and we gave them the medication that they had. And it was really important for me to say them that, in Arab, “*ana doctura*,” because I took an oath to treat people no matter what.

**Anwar Ben Badis:** I have a brother. He’s a doctor, and now he’s in Gaza. He’s a volunteer doctor with ‘Doctors without Borders.’ And when Sari heard from him that he decided to leave Haifa - a big hospital in Haifa - and to volunteer in Gaza, in the same time, her brother-in-law is a soldier also went to Gaza. And the idea of going to Gaza, Palestinian who is going to Gaza to work and to help Palestinians there, and at the same time an Israeli guy who went to Gaza in order to be a soldier there. I said that my brother is going there to help people, and her brother-in-law, he went there to… and you can find the verb to use it… I mean, he went there to… soldier. Soldier is killing. So she said, “no, both of them are in Kamikaze mission.” Which means, both of them can be killed there.

**Mor Maisel:** Many of my friends who are Jewish, who were in these coexistence groups with me, have blocked me. One of the girls in the WhatsApp group that we 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. And I can understand that. It's not OK what she said, but I can understand everybody needs their like blankie, their teddy bear, something to make them feel safe. And sometimes I wish I had that. Sometimes I wish I can go back to that life where, “oh yeah, 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.

**Maryam Younnes:** The fact that I have relatives on the other side is just… you know, it’s life. Like, I have… I have my family there. Like this is my story. This is what I have to go through every war. Being Israeli doesn’t eliminate my Lebanese identity and being Lebanese doesn’t eliminate my Israeli identity. And it just normal to mix them but I do understand that it’s very conflicted to many. It’s not easy.

**Faiz Abu Sabehan:** I mean, we're between a rock and a hard place. Why? Because large parts of our extended family live across the border. See, I come from the Tarabin tribe, and 70% of our tribe live in Gaza all the way from the north of the Strip down to Rafia in the South. Some of them were killed in the Israeli bombings. Even though they have no affiliation with Hamas, they're just innocent people sitting in their homes, and then a missile comes and destroys them.

**Adina Karpuj:** I can imagine that this time has been very lonely. Having to, kind of, hide your true beliefs and being stuck in the village. How are you coping with that?

**Anonymous:** It is really hard. With my people I can’t share that I’m worried about people from the other side to be killed or hurt by these missiles in the sky. The last Iranian attack, you know, when the missiles were in the sky here, everyone was happy in, in my place. And saying, “yeah! Kill them. Destroy it,” you know? But I was crying at the roof of my house looking at the missiles because I have people in Jerusalem, Israelis, that I really care about.

**Ibrahim Abu Ahmad:** If I think of the word Gaza alone, I will have a twitch in my heart, yes. And I think part of that is also because we are part of that peoplehood as a whole. In ‘48 you know, my family went to one place, and they became Israeli citizens for that decision, not knowing the meaning of that decisions, while others went to other places, including Gaza. So I do know that, you know, I could have been born there, if my grandparents just went on the other side. Instead of marching north, they marched south. Who knows?

**Michael Vivier:** What shocked me was the reaction from the world. Everyday people on October 7th and October 8th, people posting “did you think decolonization was going to be chocolates and rabbits and flowers? This is what resistance looks like,” while they’re still picking up bodies in Kfar Azza.

**Angela Buchdal:** I used the story from the Talmud about conjoined twins, two heads, one body. And the way that you can tell if it's one or two people is you pour hot water on one head, and if the other head screams, then you'll know if it's one body, and it is a very strange analogy, but I guess there was something that even the ancient rabbis understood, that sometimes when things are going well, you don't feel like you need the other. You can ignore the other, but you're really… the true test is, if that other head is crying out in pain, do you really not feel anything? And I guess what we learned is we do.

**Doron Krakow:** When the chips are down, we have a very strong sense of responsiveness and reaction. And I think in this instance, it's been coupled by the fact that North American Jews are finding themselves under some duress. In other words, the assault was not simply the horrific massacre of innocent Israelis on the 7th of October, but the reaction of the wider world, which was not simply dismissive of Israel's need to pursue Hamas and to eliminate their ability to wage that kind of brutal assault on Israeli civilians in the future, but in so many places, it was coupled with a celebration of the Hamas freedom fighters themselves.

**Shai Davidai:** I am a dad. I have two beautiful children, and I'm talking to you. I'm speaking to you as a dad, and I want you to know we cannot protect your children from pro-terror student organizations because the president of Columbia University will not speak out against pro-terror student organizations because the president of Harvard University…

**Gidon Lev:** This horrific attack that took place, the way it took place, did absolutely… me an 89-year-old survivor of the Holocaust, remind me of that period. It almost feels like the Hamas had German Nazi instructors. What to do, how to do it, when to do it, where to do it.

**Shai Davidai:** People are sending me pictures from Auschwitz. They are calling me a baby murderer. They're calling me a genocidal maniac. Everyone in academia, both people that I work with, but also people that I collaborate with, are seeing this. They can't not see this, and they are not saying anything.

**Idit Ohel:** When I was in Berlin, I met this woman, it’s amazing woman. She's 102 years old. She came to the concert right for Alon, and she survived the Holocaust, and she's 102 and she's talking to you like she's 16, and she takes my hands and she says to me, she cannot believe what's happening. It's like Auschwitz all over again. That's what she said. But then she looked at my eyes, right through my eyes, and she comes really, really close, and she said, very quiet, “hope. You need hope. This will save us. hope.”

**Mishy Harman:** Can you describe what life is like at the moment for your family?

**Sasha Ariev:** We feel that the time has stopped, but our earth is spinning and the sun comes up and the moon goes up.

**Rachel Goldberg:** It is a slow motion, stretched out, agonizing, continual way of being. I actually only feel comfortable physically when I don't feel comfortable. Like, I don't want to feel good, because I know he doesn't feel good.

**Hugo Wolaj:** The first week, it was really hard, and then it was harder than that, and it's… it's breaking our family. It's breaking lots of families.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Can you talk a bit about your… your daughters and how they're doing mental health-wise?

**Hugo Wolaj:** Wow, you know, my daughters, they're too young. Tamar… *wow mamash kashe li, mamash kashe li ledaber al ze.* I don't know it's too much for me.

**Ariel Markose:** I'm starting to understand what it means to be the sole mountain of strength for the emotional health of four little people. And I'm getting there.

**Tomer Oshri:** One of the suggestions I got from a friend of mine, my neighbor, which is a psychologist, he told me, “don't ask people how they're doing. Just do!”

**David Broza:** Nobody's talking so in a month or two, it's gonna erupt, and then we're gonna have, wow, thousands of people, totally dysfunctional. It's coming.

**Sapir Bluzer:** Her partner have decided to go to the war, protect his country, do what he's supposed to do. And she said, “he came back home, he’s quiet, does not speak, and he doesn't want to be with the children. And he slapped my face. What should I do now?”

**Hai Ashkenazi:** I think in the beginning, what I felt is like anger, anger and helplessness. And since then, I think my anger changed into sorrow, like I'm so sad, like it's the saddest month of my life.

**Sivan Avneri:** I find myself crying fifty times a day. I think today, maybe it was forty-five so I'm getting better.

**Anwar Ben Badis:** Her teacher, she asked the pupils in the class to draw something. How do they feel about what they hear from the news or parents, etc. So many kids drew different things, and my daughter draw two persons on the same paper. One with a hands on the ears…

**Adina Karpuj:** Covering their ears.

**Anwar Ben Badis:** Covering the ears. And the other person is with the hands covering the mouth. And when the teacher asked her if she can tell who is this, so she said, “the one who’s covering the ears is my Jewish friends, and those who are covering the mouth are my Palestinian friends.”

**Yael Ben Horin:** When did you first hear that she was going to be released?

**Moriah Cohen:** Well, the truth is that when they started talking about a deal to return the hostages, I didn’t think there was any chance she’d be released. I mean only two weeks earlier she’d finally been sentenced to 12 years in prison. And then one day someone sent a message in the neighborhood WhatsApp group saying that the lists of Palestinian prisoners who would be released in the swap had just been published and that she was on the list. I recognized her name. And I called my lawyers and I said, “wait, is this real? Does this make any sense?” And all they said was, “look, if her name is on the list that was published then yes.” I couldn’t believe it, and I said, “what do you mean ‘yes’? Aren’t they supposed to notify me about this? That the woman who attacked me, and who lives right in front of my house, is being released?! Like, does it make sense that I walk out my front gate in the morning and just see her outside my house? My attacker?!”

**Shalom Weil:** The students ask very true and authentic and direct questions, questions which we find hard to hold. “Where is God?” “Did Yossi do a good thing or a bad thing about being in the IDF?” “How can I carry on with my life?” “Will I be killed too?”

**Adva Gutman Tirosh:** I think that I cope good in pressure situation, but it's hard. You need, you need to process it. And I'm thankful for being women, because I think we are better than you… than men in coping and in talking about feelings, and I think it helps.

**Rachel Goldberg:** My normal way of being when people say there's fight, flight or freeze, I'm a freezer, usually. But I've never been in this situation before, and this is just primal. The scariest thing on planet earth has happened. So I don't care getting up in front of 300,000 people in DC. My voice didn't shake. I don't care. I don't care getting up in front of the UN, up in front of the Pope. I don't care.

**Ronit Farm:** The people that started coming were very, very fragmented and very broken and frozen, and their eyes were hollow. It was… they were like walking dead.

**Rachel Goldberg:** To be known for something horrible, is horrible. The role of being the family of a hostage, that's like an indescribable place to be. We keep trying to describe it in different ways of… You know, sometimes I'll say it's like trying to talk to someone who was born blind and has never had vision, and trying to explain to them what purple is, you know? But even that, it's not pain, it's something else. It is pain. But I mean, pain is the *pshat*. Pain is the, you know, surface. There's such a deep existential existence. That's mostly what's challenging is that it's an existence.

**Idit Ohel:** A week ago, you know, open this, they came to my house and they brought me this key, and they said, “you see this key?”

**Yochai Maital:** It's for Alon.

**Idit Ohel:** Yeah.

**Yochai Maital:** Yeah.

**Idit Ohel:** So when he comes, there's a room set up for him. They're so kind, you know they didn't have to do this. You know they could lead their lives and find an apartment for three, but they didn't. They found an apartment for four.

**Mishy Harman:** So it sounds like you’re sad about your backyard, you’re sad about your kibbutz, you’re sad about the dream of who you are and what you believe and what motivated the a lot of the major decisions in your life, and you’re also sad about the future.

**Robbie Gringras:** Yeah, but apart from that everything is fine and dandy.

**Yael Ben Horin:** So how do you see the future?

**Maryam Younnes:** I look at it and I’m like, this is my place. I’m a Middle Eastern. I’m a Lebanese. I’m an Israeli. This is my place. I don’t want to leave. And I don’t want to leave because of radicalism. I don’t want them to use this terror techniques thinking, “oh, they will leave.” No, no, no, no. After 7th of October I think that I want to stay more than leave. So yeah, I’m staying here *[laughs]*.

**Adam Ben Shabath:** We are having meetings every week trying to figure out what we are thinking and what we can stand behind, together. And if we will solve it between ourselves, we can represent something to the outside, because my generation is the first war at this scale that that we experienced. So this is now our time to… to show up and change, to evolve. I’m torn apart. This is the saying?

**Yochai Maital:** Yeah.

**Adma Ben Shabath:** *Ani karua.* Because I grew up in a Zionist house. My father really pushed me to go to the military, because the first thing that we need is defense. I understand the meaning and the importance of the… of the military in this area and in this country. I know all… all the things that the Jewish people went through. And I understand it that we need a house for the Jewish people. This is one part of me. But the other thing is that I know what this military is doing, and I think this war really brought me to a hard identity crisis, because all the open question that I had just opened up more after the seventh of October.

**Hai Ashkenazi:** I'm not a pacifist, but I think really, Israel has no other option but to hit back. And I know that hitting back is we kill a lot of civilians, and it's also in my name, and it's really hard for me, and I'm really sad about it, but I don't think there's another way right now.

**Gidon Lev:** I hope we get these guys and finish it off, but it's a very, very big problem to do this in a way that doesn't harm innocent people, and there are many of them.

**Sahar Vardi:** Even if we manage to completely annihilate Hamas which no military personnel thinks is possible, even if we manage to do that, we know that what’s going to happen afterwards is a vacuum that no one will fill. It’s like, what we are currently offering is not only killing thousands of civilians, it also literally has no horizon. The only situations in the history of this country where the security of Israelis has actually increased have been peace accords. We know that is what the solution is. We know it’s the only solution. We know that every military solution that was ever tried is going to fail. And I get people want to know right now, right now what are we going to do. So, my thing is, right now, don’t kill people. Just don’t kill them. As simple as that. And then let’s talk about what yes.

**Shira Masami:** Only Israeli… *hityashvut?*

**Zev Levi:** Settlement.

**Shira Masami:** In Azza. That's the only way this is not happened again.

**Datya Itzhaki:** First of all, clean Gaza from terror. Second of all, take all the people out, the Arabs, out of Gaza region, and resettle them. Put them in a place of their own. Sinai is open. There's a lot of place there. Take all the money of the world, and I don't care, you know, build them the most beautiful houses there is. And third, build back the communities that's supposed to be there of Jews.

**Faiz Abu Sabehan:** No one is going to wipe out the Jews and no one is going to wipe out the Palestinians. No one is going anywhere but to endlessly bomb and bomb?

**Adam Ben Shabbath:** When you carry within yourself two narratives, it's… it feels unpossible like every day I'm trying to find answers. The only thing that I came up with is I want the other side, the Palestinian, that lives with me, to have this identity crisis. And this is when I will know that we are partners.

**Tzvika Mor:** 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 this state. So if we want to continue to live here, we have to sacrifice.

**Faiz Abu Sabehan:** Let's look at ourselves as human beings and not as you being a Jew and me being an Arab. We have to live together. There's no other choice. We have no other land, not you and not me.

**Walter Bingham:** Look, there were the Roman Empire, the Greek Empire, the Chinese Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the British Empire. Where are they? All gone and what we are here.

**Chaya Gilboa:** We could be that place. We could be that place. We don't need to agree. We don't need to marry each other, but we can, you know, coexist. Why we believe those who said that we should hate each other?

**Idit Ohel:** We have to open the hearts of everybody, if it's politicians, the government, if it's Hamas, if it's whoever, to open their hearts and think about what it is to be human.

**Amira Mohammed:** The end goal is for a reality where everyone lives in dignity and peace. That's the end goal. And my anger is not going to bring that. It's dialogue and conversation that's going to build that. If the war ends tomorrow, if the war ends this week, and all we go back to is the 6th of October, then we all lost. We all like failed tremendously.

**Gidon Lev:** We don't have to be lovers or friends who can just exist next to each other, and if that ever happens, this entire area will change and become a haven for everybody.

**Hugo Wolaj:** We always describe Be’eri like 99% heaven and 1% hell. And now it's like really hell, but we know that one day, we will be back here, home sweet home. So welcome home.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Is your sense that the kibbutz will be able to rise back up after this?

**Ofer Tamir:** You know, it's hard to be in the place they are being now. But as I believe, there are strong people, and I don't think they see other ways. We must sit here. Nobody will give up. In one year, you will see people running here, and it will be back, I hope. And you know that the life is keeping - twenty meter from us people was killed, and we are here with a heavy feeling, but the life must be keep on, and this is the reason that we are here.

**Yarnin Peled:** Daphna is saying I'm never coming back unless the situation is completely different than it was. Because as it was, it cannot go on. It has to be different. For me, it's my house, my home for my whole life, or so. I don't see any other option.

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

**Tzvika Mor:** Oh yes, every day, every day… The call, 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.

**Issa Kassasiyeh:** My message this year, it's a special message - hope, love and peace from the heart of the world, Jerusalem, in the ho-ho-Holy Land.

**Mishael Zion:** The seder night ends with “*L’shana habaa b’Yerushalaim habnuyah,”* next year in Jerusalem.We have to end this year’s seder with hope. Not a naive hope. But a deep belief that if we hold onto the values that are most important to us we will be able to tell this story for many more years.

**Sasha Ariev:** There will come the morning. You know, maybe the sun is going through the window the light, but we feel this emptiness inside. It's so hard to… it's so hard to eat and do any basic stuff. But… but we try to stay strong and to continue to be optimistic, and don't let someone to break our spirit. Because, you know, the hope it dies last.

**Mishy Harman:** Rachel, Jon, thank you so much, and of course, we're with you in every way, in every prayer.

**Adina Karpuj:** Thank you so much, Mor. I really appreciate it.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Itai, *ani ohev otacha*, thank you for this.

**Yael Ben-Horin:** I think this is amazing, thank you so much.

**Daniella Zeltzer:** Thank you.

**Zev Levi:** Thanks for coming mate.

**Michael Vivier:** Yeah. Thank you so much.

**Jennifer Cutler:** Thank you so much.

**Yochai Maital:** Thank you so much.

**Adva Tirosh Gutman:** Thank you, Yochai.

**Yochai Maital:** All right, we'll be in touch.

**Adva Tirosh Gutman:** Bye.

**Yochai Maital:** Bye Adva. Bye bye.

**Yochai Maital:** I always ask this at the end of the interview, but is there anything that I didn't ask that you wish that I did ask, or something else that you want to that you would like to add?

**Idit Ohel:** Yes, yes, there's something very important.

**Yochai Maital:** OK.

**Idit Ohel:** You know, I've been talking and sharing my story and Alon’s story, and I want to ask whoever is listening to do something. Do something good. Giving. Something that's good for somebody else. But think about the hostages when they're doing it, even one hostage. Think about Alon. Think about Hersh, whatever. It doesn't matter what age you are. Do something that makes you feel like you are doing something meaningful and important, to bring the hostages back home. And it starts with small things, and then it depends on each one of you what you can do, but you have to do. It's not enough just to listen. You have to do something. So do something. Do something nice.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** This hour was produced, collected, and culled by Yochai Maital, with help from Adina Karpuj and Zev Levi. In fact this is a good time to mention all the incredible members of our team, who have been working tirelessly - day in and day out - to bring you “Wartime Diaries.” Hussam Abu Diab, Yael Ben Horin, Liri Carmel, Jennifer Cutler, Elik Fromchenko, Mitch Ginsburg, Adina Karpuj, Hadas Kidron, Lily Lieber, Zev Levi, Yochai Maital, Ali Moller and Rotem Zin.

We hope and pray to end this series and go back to our normal fare of love stories and adventures and everyday tales. But we are still very much in the thick of it, and will continue with the series till it feels possible to move on.

I’m Mishy Harman, and we’ll end with a song which expresses our deep wish for the new year. May it be a quieter year, a calmer one, a year with less pain and suffering and more peace and hope. May the hostages return home, and may we all know better days to come. Amen. Shana Tova.

[End Song]