**Adam Ben Sabath:** When I was drafted to the military, it was a really difficult time in our friendship, because from their eyes I was a traitor of the idea—like how do you talk about peace when you're holding the gun and wearing the uniform? And I can understand because it hurts them. I'm torn apart.

**Yochai Maital:** Yeah.

**Adam Ben Sabath:** Because I grew up in Zionist house. My father really pushed me to go to the military, because the first thing that we need is defense. Like I understand the meaning and the importance of the military in this area, and in this country. I know all of the things that the Jewish people went through, and I understand that we need a house for the Jewish people from all the world to come here and to be safe. 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 do a hard identity crisis. Because all the open question that I had just open up more after the seventh of October.

**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. As has been said many times in the past, identity is like an onion. There are layers of our family and our favorite soccer team, our country and religion, our political persuasions and musical preferences, and on and on and on. For me at least, and I imagine for many of you, the place I'm from, in my case, Jerusalem, looms large, and plays a major role in the way I see myself and the world.

That's definitely true for Adam Ben Shabbat, whose childhood community is—as a result of the war—being torn at the seams. This war has forced many people, including the people of Adams’ village to question long held truths. Some have shifted their views; others continue to hold firm, or have even doubled down. Our senior producer Yochai Maital spoke to Adam about his beliefs—which are just his and his alone. Okay, here's Adam.

**Adam Ben Sabath:** My name is Adam. I'm 23 years old. I'm doing video. I'm editor and a cameraman. And I also have a YouTube channel. I live in a special village called Neve Shalom/Wahat as-Salam, just between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. I lived there my whole life. It’s a village that Arabs, Palestinians, and Jewish-Israelis are living together, and came in order to live together and to educate their kids in the same school; to teach both languages; and to talk about the conflict and have a partnership together. I'm really attached to the idea and I really believe in it, and like my group of friends are Arab Palestinians. So I know their narrative pretty well, and they know mine. And this is like a big part of my life.

**Yochai Maital:** The things you're describing—they're quite an anomaly in Israeli society. Is that fair to say?

**Adam Ben Sabath:** Yeah, it's fair to say: it's really, really unique. The first thing that I always hear it's: “No but they are Christians, right, there's no Muslims there.” And I say: “Yeah, of course, there is Muslims. We have everybody.”

**Yochai Maital:** Take me maybe back to your October 7th, where were you? And how did that play out for you that Saturday.

**Adam Ben Sabath:** I was at my girlfriend's house and we heard the sirens. And 6:30 in the morning went to the shelter of course, and I started seeing the videos on Telegram. Like right away I went to Telegram and start checking what's going on. And I just couldn't believe it. Of course I thought it's fake news at first. And my initial reaction was to send those videos to my friends, my Arab friends in the village, to show them like what's going on, like, what is it.

**Yochai Maital:** Why was that your initial reaction? **Adam Ben Sabath:** Because they are my best friends, like they are my brothers and the people who are talking to every day.

**Yochai Maital:** Not because they’re Arab, just like someone sees something shocking, you send it to your friends.

**Adam Ben Sabath:** Yeah, both, both, it's they are my friends and also I want to see their reaction because we are talking about the conflict. Every day, every time like when we sitting together in a bar, and just having fun and chilling, we are talking about the conflict. Or even when we are like, wasted, and three in the morning, we are talking about it still.

**Yochai Maital:** I find that so interesting, you know, because in my family, we have divided politics. And we all get along really well in our family. But I always say like our secret is that we never talk politics, because we know it's just a recipe for disaster.

**Adam Ben Sabath:** You know, we live it; it's part of our lives. And part of our mission I guess. And our friendship is so good, like a brother, you know, it's your only friends, like the best friends. So you cannot break up because of some argument. Yeah, I feel that it's a deep, deep, deep understanding of both sides that we carry. You know, when you carry within yourself to narratives, it feels impossible. Like every day, I'm trying to find answers to those questions. And that 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.

**Yochai Maital:** So you're seeing these videos, and you sent them to your friends.

**Adam Ben Sabath:** And they're shocked as well. And they cannot believe it, even after it happened. They say like, it's fake news. And it's not possible. And whereas the army, and like, you know, like we had…the Israelis had this reaction as well, but they took it like, they were shocked. I can see their faces, and they're shocked. And it affected our talks a lot. And also I knew that what's going to be in Gaza will be hell. And this is so sad. We were really sad. Because our whole dream just went down. And it will be really hard to rescue it now again.

**Yochai Maital:** Take me into those conversations, what were they like?

**Adam Ben Sabath:** I think it was hard to convince them that this really happened. And I remember there was a big discussion about the kidnapped, and the rape, and even when it wasn't so like confirmed like it is now it was really difficult for me to tell them that it happened like this. And it was like a massacre. Now it's different, but at the time it was really hard to convince them, and I had to look for horrible, horrible footage just to convince them.

**Yochai Maital:** Did it somehow unsettle your friendship in any way?

**Adam Ben Sabath:** No. I think I think we are really strong. Now, I don't know if more than before, but I see them. They are afraid of what their people can do and what they did. And yet they see our side as well and also torn apart. I think that they showed empathy for the Jewish people after what happened. And afterwards they felt the pain of the Palestinian, of their families that in Gaza. In Israel—we all knew what's going to happen. And it happened. And a lot of people died and a lot of innocent civilians died. So now we are really trying to solve it between us and to go further and beyond.

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 for this generation is the first war at this scale that we experienced. So this is now our time to show up in change, to evolve.

**Yochai Maital:** I wanted to ask you, Adam, outside of your little microcosm with your group of really close friends. What is the atmosphere in general in Neve Shalom?

**Adam Ben Sabath:** Yes, so it's really important for me to say that I'm talking for myself and everything that I say in this interview it represent only me. And I'm talking about my friends because I know what they're thinking really well. But the whole village, it's really complicated. We have a lot, a lot of opinions: every family, or every individual thinks differently. And there is, yeah, there is a lot of conflicts between us, and a lot of things that we didn't address. But we are talking, we're trying, we are talking to each other.

My father went to the Gaza Strip to do barbecue to the soldiers on the border line. And this was really difficult for the people of the village because how are you talking about peace, and how do you see this partnership going if you're going hurting our people.

Like one of my best friends have 62 people have his family dying from Israeli bombing… airstrikes in Gaza. So it's complicated. And for some people, you cannot take both pains. And you cannot feel both pains. It's too much pain for one person to carry around. It's too much, you know. But when they are your best friends you have to do it, you don't have another option. Like when your friends telling you about 62 people that have the same last name as him, that he knew—died. And you also know a lot of people that died, either in the party or in the military, or that are serving now: they are going to the war. You have to carry it. And it's just some times you feel like you want just to be on your side.

And there is a lot of voices that I hear that wants to to leave the village in order to feel more of their side. I think that in the village, not between my friends, but in the village we are in a breaking point. And you hear a lot of voices that are saying, “I cannot support this anymore. Like it's too much for me.”

And this is my first identity, I guess, before I'm an Israeli, before I'm a Jew, I'm from Neve Shalom/Wahat as-Salam. And this is the only place when I can feel fully understandable. And when I see people saying this, it makes me feel sick and pain.

**Yochai Maital:** I'll just tell you also, I wanted to tell you, frankly, I originally I wanted to do this episode…I wanted to do two interviews: I wanted to interview a Jew and an Arab from Neve Shalom and see how it's going. But I couldn't find any Arab from Neve Shalom who is willing to talk to us.

**Adam Ben Sabath:** Yeah, you know, from the beginning of this war, when Palestinian Israelis and Arab Israelis start talking and expressing the pain there was arrested in the same moment. And my friends and all the people of the village are really, really afraid to say their opinion, and to post on social media, and talk on the street, and talk Arabic on the streets. This is crazy that we in a democracy, a country that saying that it's a democracy, that people cannot talk and cannot express their pain even or to say their political views. So this is why they don't want to come and express and say…and I feel like I need to represent them because they just can't, and they are afraid.

And I saw so many cases that people just posted things in Arabic, even though it's nothing, yet there is just something from from the Quran in seventh of October, and they was all fired…arrested. You cannot say anything right now. They're really afraid, and for a reason. They are not safe in their own country. I think that they never felt safe, but now even more. And I'm trying to do everything that I can to bring this place to a better future and to support dialogues and to do as much as I can and be creative and think differently. To bring us together, yeah, and this is …I'm fighting for my house, for my village.

**Yochai Maital:**Thank you man.

**Adam Ben Sabath:** Yeah, you too.