**Alon Shalev:** If you were to meet me on the street I don't think the first thing that would come to mind is well, that guy must be a veteran of a special forces unit. So this is a radio show, but I'm four-eyed, nowadays slightly chubby nerd. Nothing about me screams fighter.

**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.

Many people as you've heard again, and again during these Wartime Diaries sprung into action since October 7th, and yet, at the very same time, many Israelis feel lost. Not everyone knows what to do; not everyone feels useful or capable or relevant. And that feeling—it resonates with Alon Shalev from Tzur Hadassah. Zev Levi brings us his story.

**Alon Shalev:** I’m Alon Shalev. In my day-to-day life I'm a would-be intellectual. I write on issues of philosophy and Jewish thought and the like.

I've lived in Israel almost my entire life, since I was three years old. I am what you might call a veteran. It's not a word we use in Israel so much because everyone here does the army at some stage or other. But I served in the unit called Maglan: it's a special forces infantry unit…boots on the ground counterterrorism. My unit… the current regulars, were amongst the first to arrive on the scene, and to respond before we even had a clear idea of what was happening. Which is why we have quite a lot of fallen soldiers of my unit from the first days.

But I was released from reserve duty about six months ago. Which is why I find myself in an unusual position in this round since I have not been called up.

On Saturday, October 7th I was celebrating the holiday at my parents together with my sister, and there was a barrage of rockets. We were in the bomb shelter.

And my brother-in-law, who is younger than me, was called up. And I stayed.

I can tell you that on the night of the October 7th,

after we started—we're observing so we didn't

open the phones or television, to catch up on the news until the Sabbath came out—and we started to get an idea of the degree of what was happening…still just the beginning, but we knew there were a lot of terrorists who infiltrated Israel. Where my parents live is relatively close to the southern border and there was talk of infiltrations, reaching practically as far as where my parents live. And 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

in case, by any chance, it reaches as far as where my parents live.

Since I have not been called up…and dozens of people I know here have been…and we've organized as a community…and we've each assigned a family to a family of somebody where one of the partners has been conscripted, most cases the father. We've taken upon ourselves one of these families.

We've been making them meals. But there's a very difficult feeling. It's a very difficult feeling when everybody gets called up and you're desperate to do something and to be involved. And you know, I mean, when I was a reservist I spent many days waiting for the day that I get discharged from this duty because it's a cumbersome duty. I mean several times a year I'd be called up for training, or for some sort of say mundane security activity.

You know, could be for a week of time, two weeks at a time, a month at a time. And I never expected for war to break out five minutes after my tenure was done. I imagined myself, you know, in my 50s being worried about my son—who's now currently in the army. But you know what, we're at war. And when you're a soldier, you have a very clear purpose at war, you fight in the war. And when you’re not a soldier what are you gonna do? I call it: “the members of the NDF” the non-drafted fighters. And you can see them roaming around Israel… searching for something to do for the country; trying to rediscover their purpose and war. There is a sense of… something akin to survivor's guilt which accompanies this particular experience. It's difficult. Other people are out there: my friends. I know what they're doing now.

They're training all day in harsh conditions, or already carrying out all sorts of operations and risking their lives chasing down terrorists who were infiltrated. They're sleeping in the cold, on field beds at best. And you know I'm sleeping in my warm bed with my family beside me. I am not at risk. So yeah, so there is a sense of guilt, and a sense of shame even for being here. It's heavy.

I'd like to think that if I had the opportunity to jump ahead and volunteer, even if I hadn't been called up, I would take it. Even though there is not a single fiber in my body which craves to be at war. For me there's a duty and a harsh one. But the army has what it needs and there are a lot of things to be done, you know, over here. Especially in this event where the homefront has been hit harder than I think ever in our entire history. There's never been an event as catastrophic, as horrendous as what happened on October 7th. It's insane. Really is. It is unfathomable. No matter how many times we hear the stories, God forbid watch documentation, I do not. I implore anyone

who does not need to see these images to avoid seeing them. If there are people out there who for some reason are not yet convinced that Hamas is an evil that must be eradicated, then maybe these images are for them, but not for anyone else.

My family is clearly pleased that I have not been called up. They seem proud of my efforts to do something as part of the home front, and they themselves—you know, my son, God bless him…second day of the war when he came back home and he's saying: “Oh maybe I'll go to the homes of people who've been conscripted and I'll walk the dogs or…I'll make them pancakes,” which he did, he made, I don't know seven batches of pancakes which we then delivered to people.

But there's also something about this experience…since my children are somewhat older, and they understand somewhat more, they have questions, and they're scared and anxious and I need to calm them down. But I also don't want them to be complacent and take risks.

And I caught myself the other day, you know, talking to my son and explaining to him how we should think about this whole situation, how we should deal with this situation, and I realized that I'm imparting all this knowledge to my boy which I really hoped I never would: stuff I learned as a teenager and now I have to teach my teenage son.