**Mishy Harman (narration):** Hey Israel Story 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. Not stories, just quick conversations, postcards really, that try to capture slivers of life right now.

Yesterday we heard from Sasha Ariev, whose little sister Karina, a 19-year-old soldier was kidnapped by Hamas. And the truth is that most of the stories we hear these days are about those who had the terrible, terrible misfortune, some by choice, others not, of being in the wrong place at the wrong time: at the center of the horrific violence.

But today we want to shine a light on another segment of society that's been thrust into a new reality, a reality in which there's no school and no kindergarten, but there are frightened kids at home who are just trying to make sense of everything that's going on. Hey Ariel.

**Ariel Markose:** Hi Mishy.

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

**Ariel Markose:** Sure. My name is Ariel Markose. I'm a Jerusalemite, married to Noam. I have four kids: a nine- year-old, seven-year-old, a five-year-old and a

two-year-old. Not in these times, I'm the chief strategy officer of an organization called Amal-Tikva, which helps build capacity for organizations in the peacebuilding sphere, here in Jerusalem, cross border, Israel-Palestine.

**Mishy Harman:** Ariel, so I asked you to come in to talk a little bit about what your life is like now. So what is your life like?

**Ariel Markose:** So I'll start maybe from Saturday night. My husband got the call and he drove up north. And the next morning we went to my parents, and we spent the day just glued to the news, and doing a puzzle. Because we literally couldn't do anything else, and feeding the kids.

And over the last few days, I've started to map out the pieces of what it means to hold down the fort of my home…and my four kids for an extended period of time, with my main counterpart not available to talk. He’s up all night; he's in a locked *hamal*, or like a safe room kind of thing, and he does communications work. And he's not in any danger. And he's in Israel, but he's just not available. So I started to map out what it means to do this work, to hold…the kids, to take care of everybody without having my normal person to talk to and process with. That person who sits on the couch with me at the end of the day, and is just like this really calming presence…he's not there. So I'm processing alone. I'm figuring out, like what to do with the…how do you say *Pikud HaOref* in English, the Homefront Command, that message that came out that's like: you have to have 72 hours worth of water for every person in your house. I don't do that math, Noam does that math. Like, I didn't even know to take it seriously. Do I take it seriously? How seriously do I take it? Like, do I need to make a list? Now I didn't know—that person who helps me figure out that stuff, isn't there. And so it's like…in the last 24 hours, I've taken a really, really deep breath, and 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.

**Mishy Harman:** And what does it mean?

**Ariel Markose:** What to be the mountain of emotional health? I'm a very intentional parent, even in normal times, like, I pay a lot of attention to what comes out of my mouth for my kids. It doesn't mean that I'm not silly, and goofy, and tickling, and sarcastic, and we laugh a lot. Like all that, but also I'm very intentional. So two days ago we were at a friend's…two days ago…I know it feels like it's been a month. And my son, who is nine, who is incredibly emotionally intelligent, and articulate, and talks a lot, had like a breakdown. Everything came pouring out. “Why is my *abba* (father) the only abba who's been called to *miluim* (reserves) and all of my friends’ *abbas* are home? Why are we here? Why can’t I go to school? And why is everything so messed up? And I don’t understand..and falling apart. And it's those moments you have to be a mountain, right. You have to engulf him, and say: “Hey, babe, I hear you. Yeah, it's really hard. I miss *abba*, too. Yes. Not great that nobody else's *abba* was called up. But your *abba* is awesome. And he's a ninja. And that's why he's called up, and we're really proud of him…take another deep breath, Dini, breathe in through your nose, breathe out to your mouth, okay. I think you're hungry, can I make you something. And then after I make you something, I think you should do what we planned, which is go to your friend's house.” And then slowly you bring him down from that. But that means that your emotional state has to be able to think clearly enough to be able to recognize their distress and speak to their distress in that moment. So you have to make sure that you're on solid footing. And you have to figure out how to be on solid footing when the main person who holds that for you is not there. Like not even a phone call away most of the time.

**Mishy Harman:** And what's it like—four kids who are all at different stages of understanding what's going on, and experiencing what's going on?

**Ariel Markose:** It's a lot. It's just like, it's a lot of presence of thought—which is probably why I haven't had breakfast, and I'm just sitting having my first cup of coffee, because you wake up and it's like…each one comes at you with the different needs from the minute they wake up. If it's the two-year-old who comes in and like takes her pajamas off in my bed just to like be skin to skin, like you just have to not yell at her and say: “Why are you taking your pajamas off, that's so silly. Go put…” like, oh okay, you need this right now, I'm here, let me hug you.

And, you know, I sent my oldest today to his grandfather to play Risk, because somebody needs to hold all the words, and I'm kind of at capacity of holding all his words, and his questions. And I like redirected it, so I can get a break so that I can have… my other, my third who's five like really relies on my husband and really misses him. And trying to figure out every pocket of FaceTime that's possible so that she can see him, and make sure he knows that when she sees him, reassure her, send her love, send her hugs, like make sure *abba* is there, he's thinking about you, he loves you. What would *abba* do? Can I hug you like *abba* hugs you? You know, like those kinds of things.

And my seven-year-old, she's kind of amazing in that she thrives when she's not in routine. And on like, you know, novelty and stuff. So she was like: “Oh, cool, let's do that.” “Oh, cool, let's do it.”...”Oh, that's good idea.” You know, and so she seems to be really unaffected by it. So that's also crazy. Like they are each processing this in completely different ways. And you don't want to put or introduce stress, or anxiety or anything that they're not feeling. So it's like answering only the questions that they ask, not volunteering any information, making sure they don't see my phone, don't see me looking at the news, don't see any pictures, don't…bring in

anything—like there's enough anxiety, and stress, and terror present in the energy of the adults around them. We don't need to verify it with images, right.

**Mishy Harman:** And, Ariel, my last question is: people obviously are hearing a lot of stories and testimonies of survivors, and families who have lost a loved one, or there's someone in their family who's kidnapped or missing. But is there anything that you would like people to know about what it's like to experience this in your home, in your city—far away from the events themselves, but still your entire life is different and turned upside down.

**Ariel Markose:** I feel like I almost…I want to say: “I'm good,” like there are so many people struggling, and suffering so much more than I am. But I think people should know that all of their expressions of support are incredibly meaningful. Like I've had people reach out to me who just had one Shabbat dinner at my house, like three years ago, and they're reaching out, and it means so much to know that…the world is paying attention and that people are seeing our pain, and that our pain has meaning. And that we're gonna need, I feel like we're gonna have to do this for a while. And so it's easy in the first few days, but to kind of keep in mind that we need to have that in a sustainable way, those expressions of support…keep checking in, and what can we do, and we're thinking of you, it really means a lot that we don't feel alone.

**Mishy Harman:** Thanks Ariel.

**Ariel Markose:** Thank you so much for having me.