**Adina Karpuj:** Okay, so I just clicked on the link.

**Raz Newman:** Okay.

**Adina Karpuj:** And it immediately takes me to WhatsApp and it says: “Hi Ezra”—which is the bot—”I'd like to volunteer or to ask for help”. So what do we want to do?

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Let's ask for help.

**Adina Karpuj:** All right, that's a little egotistical…but…(in Hebrew): to ask for help. All right, let's see what it says: “Nice to meet you. People are volunteering, all kinds of help: babysitter; donation of equipment; transportation; hosting people, or even just talking to other people—for what I imagine is psychological help. Someone is looking for helmets for a group in the army. Someone else is looking for medical equipment. Someone else is looking for transportation of food in the Gedera area.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Okay, Raz, so why don't we try and see if we can host a family from the south that's been forced to leave their home.

**Raz Newman:** All right, sounds good. Let's try it.

**Adina Karpuj:** Okay, we have a match.

**Raz Newman:** And then you just communicate with them.

**Adina Karpuj:** Amazing.

**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.

Israel, of course, has branded itself as the startup nation. And Raz Newman, well, he's the classic Israeli tech entrepreneur. He's 32, lives in Rishon LeZion, has two daughters, and spends most of his time researching AI and meeting with potential angel investors. On October 7th, as people began thinking about how to best contribute, Raz turned to his laptop. Our producers Adina Karpuj and Mitch Ginsburg went to talk to him. Yochai Maital edited this piece.

**Adina Karpuj:** Can you start by introducing yourself?

**Raz Newman:** So my name is Raz Newman, and I'm an entrepreneur. I believe in the power of community. And for the past decade I've been researching what community is. And right now I'm a part of an amazing team. And together we built Ezrabot. And what it does is that it's connecting between people that need help and those who can help.

**Adina Karpuj:** Take me through the steps…how did you start thinking about this?

**Raz Newman:** So I have a startup, it's stealth mode, and it was about to come public, and then what happened happened and everyone try to figure out how they can help. And then I said—okay, so my idea basically is how to create communication between people that they don't know each other, but they might have relevancy.

So Saturday morning, you know, many WhatsApp groups were created, and I was in one of them. And the title was: High-Tech How Can We Help, something like that. And then I wrote: “I have an idea, I think we can create a bot and it can match make between people that need help, and people that can help.” Like there were a lot of projects that were appearing, and everything was like forms, right. So you fill up a form, and then someone needs to manually go over the form, that's a bottleneck. So you're not going to be able to match in like real time, good enough time. So I said: *okay, so let's build that bot and this could help with that.*

So what happened was that brilliant people just came in and said: yeah, I'm gonna give…I don't know, like straight forty hours and code or whatever, and we built things really fast. And in the real world, if that wasn't the case, these kinds of people would have never…joined up. Like many people in that team are CEOs, CTOs, like very high end figures and yeah and we didn't sleep. It’s a work of like, I don't…like half a year I guess, with many more programmers than what we've had, but people just didn't sleep. We kept working around the clock.

**Adina Karpuj:** Are you ready to try it?

**Raz Newman:** Sure. So basically, the experience is you go, you start speaking with Ezra. Ezra is like help in Hebrew, right. So you're speaking with Ezra and first you know, it says: *verify yourself*. You verify yourself. And then it just asks you, *do you need help or can you help with somethin*g, and then you just write. You don't need to go through an endless form… just write. And then immediately you get matches.

**Adina Karpuj:** So what's an example of something? Let's say, I can cook, I really cannot cook, but let's say I'm really great at cooking and I want to be able to feed families who have been moved from their houses in the south, what would I do?

**Raz Newman:** Yeah, so basically you just say, I cook, and then the other side is just gonna say, we need food, right. And then if you say, I need someone to take it over, so we will know not to connect you with the one that needs the food, but with the one that can make the delivery. If you say you can go, we're going to connect you automatically to the person itself.

They're amazing stories. Like there's this one family that they were evacuated from Sderot, and they found a place in Natanya due to Ezra. And that's just one story; there are many more stories. So hopefully this is our contribution. We're hoping that this could really help…

**Adina Karpuj:** Islike the big scare that this can be used possibly by terrorists?

**Raz Newman:** Well that's the worst nightmare. But it doesn't have to be terrorists, it could be also bots, right. So if you look at Twitter… if you look at any other social media, bots right now are destroying the space. Here it cannot happen because it's like one ID, one user.

I don't know if that's a good time to say, but if you guys are interested, you can find us on Ezra at Ezrabot.org. We have a website. It looks bad, but it’s just for people to find it. And they can also write as Ezrabot I guess on Facebook and Instagram and there's a link to it.

(Talking in Hebrew)

**Mitch Ginsburg:** That was your brother who was in the army?

**Raz Newman:** Yeah.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Going back to…

**Raz Newman:** Yeah, to where you don't wanna go. Like where the action is… I served in the canine unit, and he's also serving in the canine unit.

**Adina Karpuj:** Thank you so much.

**Raz Newman:** Thank you guys. Thank you.