**Shira Masami:** In Sderot this is the best life we can build, even we had a terrorist attack.

**Zev Levi:** Wouldn't the best place to live, you know, not have rockets and terrorist attacks?

**Shira Masami:** You know, in Israel I don't think that there is a place that they have no terrorist attack. As a Jew, we all the time fighting our life, everywhere. We feel like we are living in Gan Eden.

**Zev Levi:** Heaven.

**Shira Masami:** Heaven. So sometimes there is a war and we deal with it and we keep going,

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Hey listeners, it's Mishy. So as you hopefully know, we're in the middle of our annual listener drive. If you haven't yet done so I really hope you contribute. But we're also continuing with our Wartime Diaries. Before we dive into today's episode, however, I want to say something: we do our best to try and feature diverse voices in different views in this series. These aren't necessarily our voices or our views, but rather a representation— obviously just a partial representation of what we're hearing among, and around us. These aren't stories, just quick conversations, or postcards really, that try to capture slivers of life in Israel right now.

More than 200,000 Israelis from both the south and the north have had to leave their homes since the start of the war. Some have relocated to hotels or kibbutzim; others have opted to move in with family or friends, or even just rent a place in an entirely new surrounding. we've aired several diaries about initiatives that cater to the evacuees in terms of education, or housing, or culture. In fact, Israel Story itself is such an initiative with our Sipur Yerushalmi project, which goes to dozens of hotels and sets up pop up recording booths and live storytelling events.

But today we're going to get a glimpse from the inside of what life is like as an evacuee; what a day looks like far away from anything familiar. Shira Masami is one of nearly 30,000 residents who have left the southern city of Sderot. A city which suffered a horrendous attack on October 7th and who are now dispersed around the country. Zev Levi went down to Yeruham where Shira and her family have temporarily settled to talk to her. Here she is.

**Shira Masami:** My name is Shira, hello. I am from Sderot. I am 35 years old. I’m a teacher. My husband is Dvir. And I have five kids. The oldest is 11 years old, and the little one is three.

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

**Shira Masami:** The seventh of October we was at home. We wake up to the rockets, and there was *tzeva adom* (red alert). There was a siren and it's not stopping. And we're thinking: *okay, what is going on?* Nobody from the government, from the city tell us: “Stay in your home, don't do anything.” We don't open these phones at all. We don't know anything. And we think it's holiday now, it's Simchat Torah, so we need to go to the shul. That's what all the time in our mind: *we need to go to the shul, we need to go to the shul*. We don't understand; we don't realize what happened.

The terrorists was in all the streets around us. All the streets was full of terrorists people, and we thinking: *okay, there is a terrorists in the city, but one hour, two hours they going, they diecannot be here for all the time*. So after a one hour, I telling to my husband: “Okay, you can go into the shul now.” So he take a knife and I tell him: “What you taking a knife? the terrorists had a gun, what do you will doing?” And he said: “I prefer that from nothing.” And he take a knife in the pocket and is going and neighbors call him from the windows and tell him that there is a terrorist. So the neighbor saved him. A few streets from us the terrorists killed people that go to the shul.

And in the end when we open the phones we realized: and it was darkness; it was shocked…I was very weak in this moment. I cannot do anything. And that what it is. You have no one, nobody. And you realize that you're waiting for your death, that's what the feeling. So we was 13 people in the *mamad* (shelter) at night. My husband mother was sleeping on the chair, and all the kids together with the two mattresses—together everybody, and I was sleeping on the…my children doobie…

**Zev Levi:** Teddy bear.

**Shira Masami:** Teddy bear, and everybody we just trying to sleeping. But it was…it's not a fear, it's...I don't know if there is this word in English, maybe…

**Zev Levi:** Dread.

**Shira Masami:** Dread, I think it dread, yeah.

**Zev Levi:** How does that end? So the next morning...

**Shira Masami:** So it was morning, and we suddenly feel: *Okay, now it's okay, now there is a sun in the sky. So now it's morning, now it's not fear anymore.* Even though…the city was full of terrorists. So we decided to go out from Sderot. We say: “we don't stay here anymore.” So I started to package clothes.

**Zev Levi:** When you are packing a bag for you, and your husband and your five kids, what do you pack? You know this one needs to sleep with this toy, and in the daytime I think this will…

**Shira Masami:** I don’t think about toys at all. I'm thinking: *I don't know how much time we're going out.* Because I don't know it will be going to be cold at night because we don't know where we going. We don't know when we come back and I take few things that I sure it we will need: it’s Shabbat clothes, and little sweaters for every kid, and clothes for three days. That's all, just three days. And I go to my family in Netanya.

**Zev Levi:** Were the kids ever annoyed that they had to wear Shabbat clothes every day.

**Shira Masami:** So they have a lot of complaint, the kids. But we tell them you cannot complain about this:

“I don't like this shirt.”

“Okay, that's what you have, okay.”

“I don't like this skirt.”

“Okay, this is what you can wear now because you have no other clothes.”

So maybe they complain, I even don't remember this complaint. They complain they have no school, they complain they have no friends, they complain that they don't like this place that they are in. They have a lot of complaints. The fact is that they usual to this kind of world that they packaged for a few days and they need to be okay with what they have. So we tell the kids: “Look, Hamas gave you a present, and we have a trip now, and you have no school, and we going to visit place, and visit family, and we're going to have a fun.

But when the municipality…call us to offer hotels, so we go because how much time you can be guest.

**Zev Levi:** So the municipality calls you and says like, we're putting everyone in hotels and you go. Where do you go? What's the hotel?

**Shira Masami:** It was Oasis Hotel in Yam Hamelach (Dead Sea).

**Zev Levi:** How was that?

**Shira Masami:** So we have a room in the first floor and the fourth floor. So we are not together all the time and you need to sleep with the kids: you don't give to children to sleep in the hotel alone, yeah. So I'm sleeping in one room and my husband sleeping in the other room. And it's very difficult. You have no family life in this situation.

You know, okay, it's now morning, we going to eat; now it's lunch, we're going to eat; now it's evening, we're going to eat. All the time eat, eat, eat. And they see movies and eating. That was the start of the days in the hotels: no friends; no community; no, just no. That's what you have: a big big no. It's fun for three days. Every family that going with the kids to hotels, after three days, the parents want a weekend by yourself. So we was a month with this situation; a month with the kids in the hotel. The hotel is…I feel like it's a hospital, a big hospital of people that have no home, they have no house, they have no things, they have no clothes, they have nothing. It's very tough. We… it's not usual, it's not family life. We want a family life. We want usual life. So we thinking and decided we're going to get apartment. We want kitchen. We want to cook. And we found in Yeruham a little apartment that we can live there. So we’re here now.

I never never imagined that I will miss to cook: never. I never imagined that I would miss to clean up, miss to clean the clothes. I hate these jobs. And now I cannot find a word for what a feeling—how much I wanted to cook, I want to clean the clothes, I want to clean the house. And now I love it. I want to control. So we come here, even it's hard, it's not easy.

**Zev Levi:** You're renting this place?

**Shira Masami:** Yeah.

**Zev Levi:** How many rooms does this place have?

**Shira Masami:** Two sleeping room. It's four kids in one room and the little with us.

**Zev Levi:** And this place came empty? You had to buy everything.

**Shira Masami:** Yeah, every day we going and buy things to their apartment. We buy the couch, we buy the television…every time we going and make it to be home. But it just different, we are not ourselves. We are not who we are now because we are different: the kids are different; we are different; the situation is different; everything is different. And it's get changed all the time: we are now in Netanya and now we are in Yam Hemelach and now we are in Yeruham—it's all the time change, and we need to be okay all the time with the changing of the situation, and I hope it will be finished and for the last time now.

**Zev Levi:** Do you have a plan for how long you're going to be in Yeruham?

**Shira Masami:** I want to be in Yeruham until the war is end, okay, but I deal with my kids that they don't want to be here. They all the time missing their friends. They want to go to hotel that their friends there. And we fight with them all day about that. I hope they started to be okay here and we can stay. That's what I'm trying to do. I believe it's take time, it's take a few months at least. It's not a short time to be here. So we hope it will be short, but I know it’s not.

**Zev Levi:** And when it is all over, what do you want to see…like Israel controlling Aza (Gaza) again, like Gush Katif?

**Shira Masami:** Yeah, of course that what we hope will be—that what need to be. Because only Israeli…settlement in Aza (Gaza)—that's the only way this is not happening again.

**Zev Levi:** Okay, so let's say the war ends, Israel destroys Hamas, there's still going to be two million Palestinians in Gaza.

**Shira Masami:** Two million terrorists in Aza (Gaza): everybody, everybody. No one stop this. No one say it's not okay to kidnap children, it's not okay to kidnap women, it's not the Islam religion to rape women okay. Nobody say nothing. They say: “Okay, we have kidnap, we have a victory.” That's what the Palestinians, two million terrorists, Palestinians, in Gaza say.

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 when they grown up. So I don't care about them. I think they not deserve to the life; they don't deserve to anything. Maybe they can go to Canada, to Europe.

All the people that thinking: *oh the poor Palestinians—* take them, take the poor Palestinians, take them. We don't want to live close to them anymore. Never again. Maybe there's few people that wants to be live in peace or something, okay, come. But now in Gaza there is Israeli army. Who of them that want to be okay with us can come and say we are support you. We are giving you your kidnap; we are giving you information about Hamas terrorists, but they don't.

**Zev Levi:** So if Israel doesn't control Gaza at the end of the war, will you not go back to Sderot?

**Shira Masami:** I don't know. It's a big big question. We thinking about this all the time, all the time, every day. I thinking about that. From the one side we are going to go back because this is our home and if we don't come back it will be the victory of the terrorists. But from the other side, if we going back it will be happened again. I don't know. I don't want to deal with this question. I want the worries ended, when there is no question like that.

**Zev Levi:** *Toda lach* (Thank you).

**Shira Masami:** *Bevakasha, l’hitraot* (You’re welcome, goodbye).