**Sivan Avnery:** This Sukkot, okay, it was the first Sukkot I didn't build a sukkah in here at home. And I built our sukkah at the junction next to Yuli Edelstein house. The main thing we shouted was—”50 years ago, in October ‘73 we had a disaster”…and what we wanted to say is: Let's stop the 2023 disaster before it happens. And what is unbelievable is that on Thursday evening we went home from sukkah and on Shabbat we had the biggest catastrophe we could even imagine.

**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.

For months, Sivan Avnery, a physical therapist from Kfar Shmaryahu, was active in the *mecha’ah*—the demonstrations against the judicial reforms. That's why he built his sukkah outside the house of Yuli Edelstein, one of the senior members of the Likud party and the chairman of the Knesset’s Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. Like hundreds of thousands of other Israelis, he felt he was fighting for his home, for the nature of his country. He had no idea how true that was about to become.

On Saturday morning October 7th, Sivan received a message which is every parent's worst nightmare. His 18 year old son, Tal, was—unbeknownst to him—at the Nova party at Re’im and was now fleeing for his life. Without a second of hesitation, Sivan knew exactly what he needed to do. Our producers Yael Ben Horin and Alexandra Moller bring us his story. Adina Karpuch edited this piece.

**Sivan Avnery:** My name is Sivan Avnery. I'm 50 years old. We have five kids. As a soldier I was at the paratroops and since then, in last 29, almost 30 years, I was serving the reserves army.

**Yael Ben Horin:** Can you walk us through the events of Saturday.

**Sivan Avnery**: We were here at home. Tal, our son, told us that he's going camping with friends. He didn't tell us anything about a party. We woke up…it was a couple of minutes before eight o'clock. We got a telephone from Amit—Tal’s oldest brother; he was dancing in another party. And Tal called him and told him that there were shootings around the party he was at. Amit didn't understand. He called us. Tal didn't call us because he didn't tell us first that he's going to a party. So he called his brother and Amit woke us up.

At the first minutes we thought the Tal is imagining, you know. Orly, my wife, told Yal, “Tal, you're imagining, there's nothing is going around, everything's fine.” Since there were sirens, Orly told him something might be explosive in Gaza. I asked Tal to send us his location. And when we saw where he was, we were sure that he heard something from the Gaza Strip or from the border. And we couldn't believe that someone was shooting at him. I call the police. The policeman sent me like a link to the police site to upload Tal’s location. And he said we will take care of it. It took us another couple of minutes texting Tal to understand that something bad is going on. We had no idea how bad was it—no one had.

Since then I understood that no one can help him. I knew that I have no other option. I just knew I have to…ten minutes later I told Orly.

Okay, so I'm jumping into the car, driving south, getting closer to town. I took a helmet, some water, a backpack, and I took my gun. With my shoes in my hand I ran to the car. I thought there was like a terror attack or something on this camping site he was supposed to be at. I was driving like crazy. I'm still waiting for all the tickets to get from the highway. And then he called me, told me, the Hamas found them and started shooting in them again. Whoever got out of this place…they ran all over. From this point Tal was all alone. He asked me: “Should I keep running? Should I hide somewhere? Should I…?” I didn't really know what to tell him. I felt like under such a pressure. I knew that I have another hour…more than hour until I will get to him. It was like I was so stressed. The only thing was in my head…I should get to him before they will. I told Tal: “Tal, listen, it's going take me some time, you must find a place and hide.” I told him: “Find a bush or find something, scroll under it and don't get out until you hear my voice.”

When I got to Netivot I met some policemen. It was such a surrealistic picture to see like six policemen standing with their guns, with their pistols in their hand looking west to the Gaza Strip and like waiting for the Hamas to come. I went to an officer over there, I told him: “My son is inside. I must get there.” He told me: “Listen, you're not going anywhere. There is a war out there. You can join us. Stay here.” He asked me to park my car at the parking area and join them or something like that.

I jumped into my car and started driving west to the area Tal was. Since I am, or was, a warrior helped me, okay…it was not the first time I was being shooted at. It was not the first time I was running when there are bombs falling around. As I got closer I heard shooting. Kassam was falling all around. Kibbutz Be’eri was burning. Like the sky was full of black smoke. And I understood that something big is going around, but I was so focused about Tal. Everything around I moved it to the side. I didn't think about anything beside getting to the place he was.

I saw a guy on the side of the road—injured. I told him: “Wait here I'll be back to take you,” and I drove like another two or 300 meters, stopped the car. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know if I can horn with a car or shout…I didn't know where the Hamas is. Since I sent Tal my location, as well, like live location, so he saw that I arrived. First he saw my car, but he was not sure it's mine, since he saw the Hamas with the pickups and the jeeps. Only after I got out of my car and started running, he went out of the bushes I won't forget this moment till the last day I will live. He was so cute. He went out you know with a hat on his head and a backpack just like he went to a trip in school when he was eight years old. I hugged him. I hugged him for like two seconds and then throw him into my car and say: “Let's go.” Tal says it was the longest hug he ever had. But we understood we have to get out of there.

We jumped into the car and ran to the injured guy to pick him up and take him with us. After two or 300 meters, we saw hundreds…hundreds of people walking in the fields…injured people dragging each other. It was an awful picture. It was…I couldn't believe. Like the fields were full of hundreds of people, you know, dressed up from a trance party. It's the Negev; it was hot. They were out of water.

When we got to Patish—Patish is a religious village. There was no one out on the streets. We met one guy, I told him we need help. We asked him to open *beit ha’am* and to open the minimarket to bring some water to take back in with us. We knew that there are like hundreds of people on the way. Since it was Shabbat, people were getting out of the synagogue. We asked for some help. We asked for people who has pickups to bring their cars and when we got back to the area we saw a lot of people coming running and walking out of there.

The guys from Patish were like putting on their trucks 20, maybe 30 injured people on each one of them. And an hour later, *beit ha’am* was like full of people. The people of Patish brought out of their houses…brought food and water. And two medics who lives there, they open like treating corner. It was only citizens taking care of everything. It was unbelievable the way they were full of sirens around, you know, like every five minutes everybody's laying down. And a couple of minutes afterwards getting up and keep on working.

We got home at the afternoon. Everyone was here: all the family. And since then, all of us thinking how lucky Tal was, and we were, all of us. And how bad it could have been for us, and how bad it is for so many other people and families. The kids knows like dozens of people who got killed. At the first week we were sitting here, all of us, running from funeral to funeral.

I think it's very important for Tal to know that daddy came to save him. Orly, my wife, she says that the only thing that she could think or say on this morning of Shabbat was telling Tal: “Abba is on the way.”

Tal is 18. He's joining the army in like six weeks. He saw horrible things. And we are asking is it right, is it good for him. So we went consulting with a psychologist about the way Tal should handle, we should handle with him. And Tal says that he wants to go to the army: now. He thinks that it will be good for him—to get a sense of safety, to get self confidence.

**Alexandra Moller:** Have you gotten any help since that day?

**Sivan Avnery:** I went to meet a psychologist from work: I work in a hospital. After two hours she told me that I'm okay, that I went through trauma. And the way out of it is not easy. I find myself crying 50 times a day. I think today maybe it was 45, so I'm getting better