**Aliza Raz-Melzer:** I never, ever considered myself a maiden in distress. I wasn't the maiden in distress. I don't sit around waiting for a phone call. I'm very independent. And I, you know, I don't sit around thinking, *oh, I need my husband to understand what's going on*.

I guess, you know, we're equal, we need each other. And after October 7th, I really, really needed him to make sense of it for me. It's like me being left behind, and him doing what he wants to do, which is not something I need or want.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Hey listeners, it's Mishy. So as you know, we're continuing our series of Wartime Diaries, which is an attempt to collect slivers of life during these difficult days. So we talk a lot about the home front during this war. The home front, as in what goes on here in Israel, as opposed to what happens on the battlefield, in the streets and alleyways of Gaza. But of course, there's also the home front—like the home front— and there are many, many different kinds of home fronts: some are stoic, others less so. Some are somehow managing; others not at all.

Our producers, Anat Korol Gordon and Mitch Ginsburg, sat down with Aliza Raz Meltzer, whose 50-year-old husband Amiad volunteered to go fight—much to her dismay. Aliza gave us a glance into her home front, a home front that's conflicted, proud and supportive on the one hand; divided and even furious on the other. Here she is.

**Aliza Raz-Melzer:** So I'm Aliza Raz-Meltzer. I live in Jerusalem. I've been living in Israel from age one. I'm a translator; I'm a literary editor; and I teach literature. I have a daughter and two sons: the oldest is in the military right now in her mandatory military…she's in combat. And my husband, Amiad, is a school principal: high school. And we've been together for a really long time. Happily.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** How long?

**Aliza Raz-Melzer:** He’s my first boyfriend. So since age 21. And really all I can say is that we are very, very, very close friends. And we've maintained a friendship for a really long time. And, you know, we sit in the evening in our backyard, and sometimes you don't have to say anything. And a lot of times, it's oh, this is what I'm reading right now….oh, look at that, this reminds me of dot, dot, dot. We can get into political arguments, but it's just…it's the kind of life where sometimes I tell myself, I'm living a really good life. You know, we're a perfect couple. We have a really good family. And as I'm sitting here, I'm thinking, Oh, my God, you know, please don't let this be an interview where I'm thinking I shouldn't have said that because what if he dies.

Perhaps this is the place to state that my husband is a bereaved brother. He lost his brother, Oren, in 1991, in Lebanon. So really he volunteers to do reserve duty because if you're a bereaved family you always have to volunteer every time you go to reserve duty. And he did. That was hard. I remember myself in the first years talking to Oren’s picture and saying: please, please, please, please don't take him… leave him around: please, please, please, please.

**Anat Korol Gordon:** And then what happened this time?

**Aliza Raz-Melzer:** October 7th, Amiad was on a trip with friends. He was scheduled to come home that evening anyway, and his flights were canceled. And then it took him I think three days to get home. And the whole thing was so terrifying. And I just felt like, I cannot make any sense of it as long as, you know, he's away I can't understand anything. But he may be able to give me some kind of, I don't know, narrative I can understand.

And so he got back, but then his narrative was nothing that I wanted to be part of, because it was—it was very clear to me that he is, pardon me, too old to be in combat. But within minutes, he was like: *Ah, you know, here I am. Here's my bag: take me.* And I was…“I am changing every single lock in this house if you go because you do not go. You cannot.”

**Mitch Ginsburg:** But then he did.

**Aliza Raz-Melzer:** Yeah. And then paralysis…just, you know, like a parachute, it just took over in our home and that was it. That was like, *okay, this is our new life.*

**Mitch Ginsburg**: And do you know where he was stationed?

**Aliza Raz-Melzer:** So this is the thing, every time I start getting anxious about anything, that's when I start telling myself he's definitely in the northern part of Gaza where there are no Hamas anymore. And it's kind of like nice and sandy and beaches, and they just sit around like, you know, writing all these philosophical feelings he has…thoughts and reading. Anyway, he wasn’t. He was in the southern part. And I lie to his parents. They're wondering why they can't get a hold of him. And we tell them: “Oh, his phone is off.” And then: “They have a not-smart phone that he gets once a day.” And so the last time he called I did a conference call with his parents. So we made believe it was okay. But you know, they're not amateurs: they know. But they do need to sleep at night.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** And what about you?

**Aliza Raz-Melzer:** I am the maiden in distress, sitting at home waiting for a phone call. He couldn't call for the past time. And so I'm just sitting there waiting for my phone call. And every day the female officer who is in charge sends us a message saying: “Everything's okay.” But then, when the message doesn't come, it's like really hard. It's my only connection to what actually is going on there.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** What's it been like for your kids?

**Aliza Melzer:** It's hard for the kids, it's really hard for the kids. They…I feel like they too, are a little bit paralyzed. It's an effort not to think of it: not to be scared. I mean, this is their father. I've never been in a situation where their father is in immediate danger and they know it. They don't sleep much; they don't wake up. And it comes out at home a lot with a younger son. Last week, for instance, he just came in and said: “This war is a catastrophe to our home.” And I feel guilty about thinking of myself as the spouse, and not the mother of my children.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Yeah.

**Aliza Raz-Melzer:** You know, focusing on the fact that this is my friend and my spouse and the person I'm most connected to, because what I should be thinking about now is mediating it for the children who know less than I do, and are feeling very alone. And I should be the person who keeps it together and makes sense of it. And nothing makes sense.

**Anat Korol Gordon**: And where is he now?
**Aliza Raz-Melzer:** Well, actually, at this moment, he's home. He came home for a week. But then the kind of thing that's been happening a lot over the past three months, which is they tell him he gets to stay home and then they just call and say: “No, Come back now.” And they're talking about letting the reservists go at the end of the month, but they're also talking about this war being very, very, very long. So I think we all know…they're sitting around waiting to be called again.

**Anat Korol Gordon:** And then when your husband is called back to the reserves, how is this transition like for you two?

**Aliza Raz-Melzer:** We all—the household—gets ready for the departure, which is always kind of difficult, always surprisingly difficult. And you know, his bag is just sitting there full and folded. And, you know, his cute little uniform nicely ironed, and his shoes polished. And it just stands there, and it's monstrous. And it stands in the middle of the room. And then we just sit around waiting. And I honestly dread the phone call when he just says: “Oh, they just called me and we go back.” Because then it's just like we have to switch from citizen, you know, father or family member making sandwiches in the morning. And then he's just gone—and that's like, automatic. And we used to have huge fights every time he'd leave. Huge: like if we weren't in a hurry to get him to the base, you know, I would just like stop on the way, get a divorce and go home. And like it was just so brutal. We said things that I don't think we ever said before to each other.

The last one we had, it happened Friday morning. He was supposed to stay for the weekend, and we had invited family over for dinner. Maybe this is the part where I mention that he cooks. And as soon as he told me that he was going back, it was…I couldn't believe that was happening now because Friday night dinner is a big deal, and hosting people is a big deal. And that would mean that I would actually have to talk to them, and perhaps about my emotions, which is not what I wanted to do at the time…or not about my emotions, which was also not what I wanted to do at the time. And so the whole way, the fight was about, you're not seeing me, I'm anxious, and I'm sad, and I'm angry, and I'm upset. No, I'm anxious, and I'm sad, and I'm angry, and I'm upset, and you're not thinking about me, and you're not…it was nasty, really nasty. And I stayed in the car after I let him off and we kind of said, “bye.” And then I started thinking: What if this is the last time? What if these are our last words? What if…what if? So I called him back. I said: “You know, we didn't say goodbye properly.” And so he came back and we said goodbye. But, just for the record, we hugged each other in the end, that was the last thing we did.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** And then a few days ago, he came back. How was that? Did he surprise you?

**Aliza Raz-Melzer:** I asked him not to surprise me anymore, because that was part of it in the beginning. It was like: *Hey, I'm here. Surprise, I'm home.* And I feel guilty because I should be really, really happy now. But you know, I have a life and then all of a sudden, it's like, drop everything, the soldier is home. It's still strange. It still is. It still takes a really long time to get…just to get him talking again. To get me talking again, to tell each other what our day was like; to pretend we have some sort of normal routine, when it's just so crazy around us. He's quiet. And well, it's a little bit of a shock.

But he told me this time, he said: “You don't realize how scary it is until you cross the border back into Israel. Because when you're there, you're just there. But it's war,” he said, “it's war. It's never quiet. The terror is really strong.”

I wish I didn't know that. I did ask him to tell me. I feel like he should. But I'm gonna forget about it next time he goes in. But I think this time he also managed to convey what it was like fighting a war, an actual war. This isn't…we didn't face this…our ancestors did, but we didn't. Our parents, other people's parents…and then it just happens. And I think that was the first time I actually realized how difficult it is for him. Mysteriously, I didn't see it till then. I used to only think about how difficult it was for me because I have this vision of, yeah, you know, all that criticism…they go out there, they fight and they sit in the evening, and they have their little coffee and talk about girls. And I forgot to remember that this was really hard for him too. I totally cut him out of the equation. He should have been, I thought, concentrating on me. He is not feeling sad right now. He's leaving me behind. And in all honesty, I mean thinking about it now it's weird, but I sat there sobbing, and the thought of him suffering right now did not enter my mind, did not enter my mind at all.

And he said things that were really mean, and he had never said before. And I couldn't believe that this wasn't…I went home and told my friends: “You know, the army ruined him. That's it. He's a soldier. He's a commander. That's how he talks to me now.” I didn't think about what it is for him to be at the supermarket, get the call, go home, drop the groceries off and say: “I gotta leave now.” For me, since then, I really…my eyes opened.

**Anat Korol Gordon:** And what do you see now?

**Aliza Raz-Melzer**: Now when I think of his choice

and what he did? I know he would do it again. I know

he doesn't regret it. He sees. He knows the prices he's

paying, we're paying, his school is paying. He knows

it. He's not…he says it, in so many words, and he's

upset about it, but he would do it again. And I think he also knows I'm proud of him. I mean our family is. I think we're in a similar situation, in that we really need this war to be over. The only difference is I'm thinking, we really need this war to be over, but not with you fighting. Not with you in it. And that's obviously not what he's thinking. I understand that. I do. I get it. And so what changed is that I see him, I see how difficult it is for him, and I try to not make it harder.