**Sarah Tuttle-Singer:** My great-grandmother came here at the turn of the century. She was an unmarried woman in her late 20s, early 30s, from Galicia, Poland. And she came to help her great-uncle, who was building different communities around the Old City. And while she was there and supposedly helping with his kids, she actually went off and had a love affair with an Ottoman official on a rooftop in the middle of the Old City.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Ah the rooftops. The rooftops.

**Sarah Tuttle-Singer:** Yeah. So you can imagine how well this went down with her religious family, and so when they got wind of it, they sent her as far away from Jerusalem as they could, not back to Poland, but all the way to Chicago, where she met my great-grandfather, and they got married and had my grandmother, who had my mother and and here I am. And so that part of our family history really resonated deeply with me as I was off looking for my own love affairs on rooftops in Jerusalem.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** And how did that go?

**Sarah Tuttle-Singer:** So my partner is a Christian, Palestinian citizen of Israel with some Armenian heritage, and I'm Jewish and proud of it, and that's sort of at the forefront of my identity.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Hey, I’m Mishy Harman and this is Israel Story. This week marks what we can only hope will be a turning point in life here. There are different narratives around the ceasefire agreement - pain and joy, victory and defeat, redemption and surrender, excitement and fear. It’s hard, almost impossible, to hold all these feelings at once. But in today’s “Wartime Diary” we bring you the story of someone who has to hold conflicting feelings and different narratives *all* the time, within her own living room.

A few episodes back we shared the story of Anwar Ben Badis, a Muslim from Jerusalem, who - together with his Jewish wife - is trying to understand how to be both a partner and a parent in a mixed family during these fraught times. And our episode today is, in some ways, the flip side of that story. Not of Anwar’s family, but of Sarah’s.

**Sarah Tuttle-Singer:** I'm Sarah Tuttle-Singer, I am a mother who lives in Jerusalem and writes stories.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Sarah is an author, journalist, blogger and social media guru who writes, among other places, for our partners at *The Times of Israel*. She sat down with our producers Jennifer Cutler and Mitch Ginsburg to describe the complicated reality of her life. Here she is.

**Sarah Tuttle-Singer:** I grew up in Venice Beach, California. I made *aliya* officially in 2010 when I was almost 30 years old, and I fell head over heels in love with Israel, but specifically with Jerusalem, and with the different sort of mosaic of faith and peoplehood that we have in this special city. And so I decided I wanted to live in the Old City in each of the four quarters, and some days were really fraught and painful, but while I was living in the Old City and getting to know different people, I got a message on Facebook from a guy who wrote to me and said, “you know, hi, I really liked your article. And I'm a musician, and I have a concert in Bethlehem. Would you like to come?” I thought, ‘OK, he wants me to write a story about him.’ I thought he's cute, but I had no intention of actually writing that kind of article, and I was busy at the time, but we kept in touch. And then about a year later, I noticed that he had gotten a tattoo on his arm in Aramaic of the *Shema* and the *V'ahavta*, and he had gotten it at Razzouk Tattoo, which is the same place where I get all of my tattoos. So I took another look at him. I thought, ‘wow, he really is cute, you know? He's got nice eyes. He has kind eyes.’ So I sent him a message to say, “*mabruk* on your tattoo, congratulations. How's it going?” And he said, “oh, I'm fine. I'm studying for my tour guiding license. What are you doing? Do you want to go have sushi in Bethlehem?” OK, those are two words I never thought would appear in the same sentence - “sushi” and “Bethlehem.” “Sure. Why not?” And so we went out, and it was another world altogether. And I felt some trepidation, but I was also really interested in learning more, and I felt safe with the guy next to me. And so we went out, we talked about all sorts of things, including something he said that really moved me. He said, “I know Jewish people are really interested in building a Third Temple,” he said, “but I think you already have.” “Oh, really, where? Is it in Tel Aviv, I don't think I've been.” He said, “no, the State of Israel is your Third Temple, and you should protect it and be good to it.” And that wasn't what I expected to hear, and I liked that about him. He wasn't what I expected to fall in love with but… but I did. And here we are, all these years later. Our son was born in 2022 and it's an adventure, for lack of a better word, and a challenge, but also kind of deeply moving to be raising a kid that has been blessed and burdened with different facets of… of Jerusalem. Our son, like the city, is sort of a mosaic of all our different pieces. And this gave me like a kind of a twist on the kaleidoscope, and made me look at this place in a different way. And it was really eye opening for me, and being with my partner in general has been a learning experience, and I think for both of us too.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** And then, how does October 7th like intrude on this? Or where you were, where he was, were you together?

**Sarah Tuttle-Singer:** Mhm. So on October 7th, we hear the sirens. He says, “oh, it's… you know, it's just a siren.” And he goes back to sleep, but then there's another siren and another siren and another siren, and then he wakes up. So we live in Armon Hanatziv, it's a neighborhood right on the edge of southeast Jerusalem. And meanwhile, across the street from us, through the windows, we can see our neighbors who live in… in Tsur Baher and Jabal Mukaber are sending off fireworks. And we hear the sounds of celebration, and this is just surreal, eerie, feels catastrophic, like the end of the world. And I think we were in a state of shock for quite some many hours. And a few days later, middle of the night, I'm preparing a bottle for the baby, and I hear the sound of tinkling glass that reminds me of wind chimes where I grew up in Venice and I thought, “oh, that’s so pretty.” And then I see this burst of light right outside the window of flames licking up towards the glass, and I realized, like, we're getting hit with Molotov cocktails. Yeah. Our neighbors from the village across the street have come to throw, you know, explosives at our house. And my partner is also a volunteer police officer, so he shouts out the window, in Arabic, words that are probably not fit to air. And he says “I have a gun.” They continue to throw, we continue to hear the glass breaking. So he shoots in the air, and then they take off running. And he wants to put on his police volunteer vest and go chase them. And I'm saying to him, “don't you freaking leave the house, stay with us.” Meanwhile, I'm on the other line with the police, and the police show up and they see the people who were throwing bottles at our house have left behind a bucket with more explosives that they were going to throw. And like, there were maybe 12, 13, 14, other bottles in there. And we're right on the gas line. So he saved, he saved the building, really. They told him like “that was heroic, what you did, thank you.” And so that was how the war literally came to our window that night.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** And then it came back again later, didn’t it?

**Sarah Tuttle-Singer:** Yeah, so 4am one night, I woke up to a text and it said, “don't worry, I'm not home. I'm in the police station, but I'm OK.” So the last time I had seen him was when I went to bed and he was in the living room, all right? Like, how… how did he get from the living room to the police station? Well, it turns out that he was selling his clarinet. He was selling it to a friend of his, another Christian guy from the Old City. And they were downstairs chatting, and while they were talking, the guy's car was parked on the side of the street, and another car tried to drive through, and there was enough room for him to pass, but he stopped the car and he yelled, “you need to move.” “Well, why do… why do we need to move?” they asked, “like, there's plenty of room.” And then the guy gets out of the car and he starts cursing them. He says, “you…” (am I allowed to say these words?) “you fucking Arabs, you fucking Muslims. Fuck your Ramadan, fuck your mother fuck your...” Like, feel free to blurt me out on this. And then he starts beating them with nunchucks, because we live in 1980 and it's a Chuck Norris movie or something… So he's hitting these two guys with the nunchucks. He's hitting both men. Luckily, the friend is filming, so we have documentation. And my partner calls the police while they're being hit, and the guy is out of his mind, and he's continuing to hit them even as the police show up. So they were able to arrest him, and then he had to go down to the station for questioning, but that? That was pretty awful, and it made us feel unsafe, because the man who attacked them is a neighbor, is a Jewish neighbor, who's angry about the war, angry about the situation, and he doesn't live far from us.

**Jennifer Cutler:** So you’re getting it from both sides?

**Sarah Tuttle-Singer:** Yeah. Look, while we love our building, where everyone comes from these different worlds, and we're all sort of squeezed into the same stairwell during the… the Iran attack, or when sirens go off, we are also faced with other people in the neighborhood who can be pretty horrible for whatever reason - prejudice, racism, anger, fear, extremism, it's really… is all part of this kaleidoscope of living here.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** And, I mean is that true for you, too, in your own home?

**Sarah Tuttle-Singer:** One of the challenges for me, as I navigate the news in Israel, in Hebrew and in English, is he's navigating the news in Arabic through Al-Jazeera and through these other, you know, news stations from around the region. And sometimes I'm seeing things I don't want to see, and I make him turn it off. And sometimes he's seeing things that he doesn't want to see on my end, too. And some days we can't talk about the war, because it's too painful.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Hmmm.

**Sarah Tuttle-Singer:** Yeah. For many reasons, Israeli media does not cover the destruction and devastation in Gaza. And believe you me, Al-Jazeera is not covering anything on October 7th, except to discredit what is true. And having to navigate these two news cycles in the same living room at the same time, is incredibly challenging. Look, this whole thing is, you know, I can't stand the word triggering, but it is triggering. It's… especially when it comes to violence against women, I… I take it personally. And when he's hearing from his media sources that Israel lied about the sexual assaults, I have to then go in and explain to him how that's not true, that women and men did endure this. And here are the stories, here are the accounts, here are the pictures. And he, to his credit, he's willing to listen. He looks at it, he takes it all in. But it's a lot of emotional work to do that, and it creates sort of a chaos in the head to have all these different pieces that all are true and make sense individually, cut and scrape and… and burn you as you try to hold all of them together. And I think all of us right now are feeling some degree of uncertainty, certainly on the national level and on the personal level, every time the phone rings, every time there's a WhatsApp, we feel that sort of dread settle into our stomach. And certainly I feel that with home life as well, I don't know what's going to happen. But we both love our son, and the stakes are very high in raising our child and in making sure that our son grows up to be safe and feel not just physically safe, but feel emotionally and spiritually, psychically safe in a fraught world. And so we are doing our best to… to raise our son to be a essentially a Jewish-Palestinian child. And it's a struggle. Look, any relationship, any co-parenting situation, is going to be a struggle, whether you grew up right next door to each other, or whether you grew up on different planets that are still in proximity. But also it provides opportunity for… for real learning, for… for connection, and even for actual hope. Like if we can do this, if we can make it work, even if we can just sit in the same room together, maybe, maybe others can too.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** So Sarah what’s your hope for the future? For your son?

**Sarah Tuttle-Singer:** October 7th broke something in me that I’m trying to repair and I refuse to stop trying to repair it, and that is my faith in people doing the right thing. So I want him to be part of that. Part of the *tikkun* that this world desperately needs. I also want him to sleep through the night, get through potty training, and to wear his glasses and, you know, stop throwing toys at the television, but… yeah.

[**End Song]**