**Mishy Harman:** Hi Alex!

**Alex Osnaya:** I am hearing absolutely nothing on the earphones.

**Mishy Harman:** OK.

**Zev Levi:** Ah, correct. Sorry, that’s all me.

**Mishy Harman:** Hey hey hey, hey hey hey hey.

**Zev Levi:** Hang on, Mish. I’m gonna call you back real quick.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** I spoke to Alex last week, on what was one of the blistering days yet this July.

**Mishy Harman:** OK, can you hear me now, Alex?

**Alex Osnaya:** Yes, I can.

**Mishy Harman:** Hey, how are you doing?

**Alex Osnaya:** It’s a bit hot out here, but overall I’m doing good.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Unlike Alex perhaps, Israel was not doing so well. Corona was once again spiking, with nearly two thousand new daily cases. Literally as we were FaceTiming, the Israeligovernment was deliberating whether or not to impose new lockdown measures.

I was at home, safe and sound. But Alex? He was on the frontlines.

**Mishy Harman:** Can you introduce yourself?

**Alex Osnaya:** With pleasure. My name is Alex Osnaya. I am twenty-four-years-old. I am originally from Mexico City. I am a new immigrant here in Israel. I’ve been here for three years now, and I live in Nesher, right next to Haifa.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Alex is a soldier. A lone soldier, actually. His family is still in Mexico, but he made *aliyah* in 2017 to join the IDF.

**Alex Osnaya:** I am a squad leader in the Rescue Brigade from *Pikud Ha’Oref*, from the Home Front Command. On day-to-day basis we are in battlelines, mostly in the Judea and Samaria.

**Mishy Harman:** And where are talking to me from?

**Alex Osnaya:** Right now we are in Ramot, *Yerushalayim*.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** So what, you might be wondering, is a combat soldier who's usually stationed in the West Bank doing in the middle of a sleepy residential neighborhood in Jerusalem?

Well, you see, back in March - when Corona first hit Israel - the government thought that the army was well suited to try and stop, or at least slow down, the spread of the virus. Here’s another Home Front Command soldier. An officer actually, a Major.

**Mishy Harman:** Hey Yochai!

**Yochai Maital:** Hey Mish, how's it going? You look cozy in the closet there.

**Mishy Harman:** Yeah, talking to you from the closet. You look a little bit more comfortable in the recording studio.

**Yochai Maital:** Yeah, I'm in Sela Waisblum’s amazing space here, *[Mishy laughs]* surrounded by lots of musical instruments.

**Mishy Harman:** Nice. I am in my closet surrounded by my shirts and *[Yochai laughs]* a few pillows to muffle the sound a little bit. *[Yochai laughs].*

**Mishy Harman (narration):** That, of course, is Yochai Maital. You know him as the co-founder of our show, our senior producer. But what you perhaps *don’t* know about him, is that in his reserve duty, his *miluim*, Yochai’s a Platoon Commander in the Home Front Command.

**Mishy Harman:** So Yochai, there's this idea that the pandemic is a grand equalizer. That we're all in it together. In fact, I don’t know if you’ve seen it but there’s this clip of Madonna that went viral in which she’s talking about just that.

**Madonna:** That's the thing about COVID-19 it doesn’t care about how rich you are, how famous you are, how funny you are, how smart you are. It’s the great equalizer, and what’s terrible about it is what’s great about it.

**Mishy Harman:** So what you don’t see, since this is obviously a podcast, is that Madonna was delivering those inspirational musings from her bathtub, filled with rose petals… *[Yochai laughs]* But is she right?

**Yochai Maital:** In a way, yes. But also in a way that sentiment couldn't be more... more wrong, really. I mean, on the one hand, of course, the virus doesn't see race or gender or any of those things. It does see age.

**Mishy Harman:** Emm hmm.

**Yochai Maital:** But on the other hand, socio-economic factors are directly tied to living situations and habits. And those in turn have an incredibly strong correlation with how susceptible you and your community are to the virus.

**Mishy Harman:** Right, right.

**Yochai Maital:** For example, in America, there's a lot of research that came out showing that African-American communities are dying of COVID as much as three times the rate of caucasians.

**Mishy Harman:** And what was it like in Israel? Were there any groups that were hit particularly hard?

**Yochai Maital:** Yeah. So in Israel, there was one group that was definitely hit much harder than the rest of the groups and that was the Haredi community, the Ultra-Orthodox community.

**Mishy Harman:** OK, and why was that?

**Yochai Maital:** Well, first of all, I should say, when... when the pandemic started, it was really seen by them, by everybody really, as a sort of something that was a foreign entity. It was coming from the East, it was coming from China. And the Haredi community, they saw themselves as basically in a really good position because they're such an insular community, they have no connection to the outside world by design. In they're thinking they were, you know, pretty safe from this virus. They weren't really in any kind of serious threat. And that reflected itself in how they went about their business. They took it pretty lightly. There are also a lot of other factors that have to do with how insulated they are from the media. So things didn't really trickle down to them. Things that were on the media, on the news, on social media, on Facebook, just didn't really make it through to the Haredi community.

**Mishy Harman:** Emm hmm.

**Yochai Maital:** Many of them don't even have, you know, smartphones. They’re not on any kind of social media in a meaningful way. They stick to their own sort of media, media outlets. A major way of reading the news, or getting the news in the Haredi community is actually through *pashkevilim*, which are sort of these bulletin boards where they literally paste, you know, written pamphlets with, with sort of the news of the day.

**Mishy Harman:** Emm hmm.

**Yochai Maital:** So it really took a lot longer for them to get all the information that the rest of the country was getting. And remember, the information was coming fast. Things were changing on a, you know, daily, even hourly basis.

**Mishy Harman:** And I remember that there were also some major rabbis who said that the best protection against getting sick was coming to... to these mass prayers.

**Yochai Maital:** Right there were... there were a bunch of big mass prayers in the beginning. Some rabbis also declared that schools should go on, that the *yeshivas* should go on.

**Yanki Kanievsky:** *[In Hebrew]* He asks if people should be worried about coming to hear a *Torah* lesson, or shouldn’t worry at all.

**Raphael Zerr:** *[In Hebrew]* Nothing to worry about.

**Yanki Kanievsky:** *[In Hebrew]* Nothing to worry about. And will they, as a result, get health and help from G-d Almighty?

**Chaim Kanievsky:** *Ya ba*.

**Yanki Kanievsky:** *[In Hebrew]* Amen.

**Yochai Maital:** That was the sentiment in the beginning. But I mean, pretty quickly, they found out that they were very very wrong.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** And indeed, early on, many of the COVID-19 epicenters were in Haredi - or Ultra-Orthodox - communities. So soldiers like Alex were mobilized. They left their weapons behind and were deployed on an unusual mission...

**Alex Osnaya:** Coming out to the Haredi population and making sure that they know how to protect themselves from COVID-19.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** They recited social distancing guidelines, told people to wear masks and - ultimately - also enforced curfews. But if you imagine soldiers and policemen just chatting away with Haredimon street corners telling each other Yiddish jokes, think again.

Hey, I’m Mishy Harman, and this is Israel Story. Our episode today is something new for us. Kind of an experiment, really. It’s an attempt to cut through all the layers of mediation and editorializing that have characterized the coverage of the Haredicommunity during the pandemic. Instead, we’re going to try to give you a taste of their own experience, as *they* saw it, and in their words.

As you just heard in that snippet a moment ago, there were sadly many confrontations between law enforcement and local Haredim. Some of them turned quite violent. And the media, of course, reported extensively on these clashes, and on the skyrocketing number of COVID cases among the Ultra-Orthodox.

**Mishy Harman:** And this negative media coverage, did that have an effect on what the general public thought? Did it sort of spill over?

**Yochai Maital:** Well, I was actually wondering the same thing. So I reached out to Aweke Zena - the National Anti-Racism Coordinator for the Department of Justice - and I asked him just that. He was expecting to sort of be out of work, because he thought everybody's at home, so what kind of complaints could they have about discrimination? But he was really surprised to receive really a huge amount of complaints from... from Haredim.

**Mishy Harman:** Emm hmm.

**Aweke Zena:** We received three times more than the regular time, you know?

**Yochai Maital:** More than three times the amount of complaints for the equivalent timeframe last year.

**Mishy Harman:** Wow, that's interesting. So what what kind of complaints was he getting?

**Yochai Maital:** Everything from people sort of avoiding them on the street to really, you know, blatant discrimination like Haredim being put in separate wards and hospitals, job discrimination, Haredim losing their jobs. There were stories of Haredim not being served at stores and businesses.

**Mishy Harman:** And Yochai, we keep on saying Haredim. Can you just explain for our listeners who don't know what that is *[Yochai laughs]* what we mean?

**Yochai Maital:** Well, I mean, that's a really good question, Mishy, because they're not one cohesive group. Haredim are Ultra-Orthodox Jews, they tend to be much more conservative in their interpretation of Judaism. But aside from that, aside from that, the fact that they're very orthodox Jews and their Judaism is sort of the central part of their identity, it's really hard to put them in one group, so it's kind of hard for me to answer your question. I mean, some of the groups are Zionists, some of them are Anti-Zionists, some of them are sort of Zionist tolerant, maybe you could say...

**Mishy Harman:** Emm hmm.

**Yochai Maital:** It's hard to bunch them all in one group.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Over the years we’ve obviously told many stories of Haredim on our show. But most of them were about Haredimthat belong to the more open-minded parts of the community. Folks who don’t mind interacting with, and opening up to, the outside world.

**Yochai Maital:** Yeah, that's true. I think maybe one thing we should say is that the word Haredi, it comes from the word fear. What they fear is they fear a loss of tradition. They're very protective of the old way of life. To that extent, you know, the outside world - and we represent secular media to them - is very circumspect. It's very... They're very suspicious about people like us.

**Mishy Harman:** Emm hmm.

**Yochai Maital:** Because we represent a world that's, you know, that's modern and changing, and everything that they are, you know, sort of know trying to fight against.

**Mishy Harman:** Emm hmm.

**Yochai Maital:** So it's not easy to get these people to talk.

**Mishy Harman:** And you spoke to a lot of these people during lockdown over the phone.

**Yochai Maital:** Right, right.

**Mishy Harman:** How did you reach out to them? How did you talk to them?

**Yochai Maital:** So while we were in quarantine, Marie Röder and and I, we reached out through all kinds of leads anything we could find, really. So NGO, there were a few NGOs working within the Haredi community that put us in touch with different Haredi people. I talked to Haredi reporters who put me in touch with their contacts. You know bit by bit, we got to all kinds of interesting people who are willing to talk to us.

**Mishy Harman:** Yochai, lastly, this is a different kind of piece for us because it's not really a story with the central character and a plot, but rather it's really just a collage of voices of Haredim telling their experiences during lockdown.

**Yochai Maital:** Yeah, it's true. This is... I mean, we always say that we're a non-political show. And it's true. We do, we do try and sort of, never explicitly take a stance on different political issues. But the truth is that we do have, we do have our, our beliefs and our ideology as a show. And that belief is that every human perspective is important. And every voice is important and we want to we want to really bring those voices especially when those voices are harder to hear. When they're softer. So when this pandemic hit and the community was ridiculed and blamed for it, I really I really felt that we have a kind of obligation to help bring their story from their perspective.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** So without further ado, here is Yochai and Marie’s **“Gevalt.”**

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*[Cell phone ringtone]*

**Ruli Dikman:** Hello?

**Marie Röder:** Shmulik?

**Shmulik:** *[In Hebrew]* Yes.

**Ruli Dikman:** *[In Hebrew]* I’m with you.

**Yochai Maital:** Hi, thanks for... thanks for talking to us.

**Marie Röder:** I am a journalist for Israel Story, we’re a radio show...

**Naomi Brinner**: Yes, OK, so what do you want?

**Yochai Maital:** Could you introduce yourself?

**Haim Titelbuim:** My name is Haim Titelbuim.

**Ruli Dikman:** *[In Hebrew]*My name is Ruli Dikman.

**Tova Hennig**: I am a psychotherapist. I have a master's degree in art therapy. I have thirteen children. Eight are married already.

**Menachem Toker:** Menachem Toker, celebrating twenty-five years of Jewish media here in Israel. I have a daily radio show in *Radio Kol Chai*.

**Shai Glik:** My name is Shai Glik. I am CEO of *Betzalmo*. *Betzalmo* is human right organization in spiritual Jewish.

**Menachem Toker:** In the beginning the Haredi community they didn't really actually know what's going on over here, because they are not exposed to the main Israeli media.

**Shai Glik:** People say “is not us, is not connection to us. We are closed community in closed places. We not have connection to this.”

**Menachem Toker:** The whole culture is to be together at weddings, and synagogues and *yeshivot*.

**Shai Glik:** All the *shuls*, all the synagogues, was open, and very very crowded. And then people say “something getting very strange - we listen to the rabbis and we got sick!”

**PA Announcement:** *[In Hebrew]* Keep your souls away from danger.

**Shai Glik:** Then something started to change. A lot of rabbis came and he said, “you have to listen to the doctors, you have to listen what the Health Minister saying.”

**PA Announcement:** *[In Hebrew]* We shall multiply our prayers, and act cautiously. And G-d says he who defiles should not…

**Shai Glik:** Close the *shuls*, close the schools. You have to close everything.

**Menachem Toker:** To tell a Haredi not to go to the *shul*, to the synagogue, to *daven*, to pray. This is… it never happened. Even in the Holocaust they didn't stop praying.

**Shai Glik:** But it was already a little bit late. The government said we have to take control about it, and they bring the IDF soldiers to the Bnei Brak.

**Ruli Dikman:** Bnei Brak, where I live, was the first city in Israel that was put under full lockdown.

**News Broadcaster I**: Israeli Police put up metal barricades and roadblocks on Friday.

**News Broadcaster II**: This is one of the most dense places in Israel.

**News Broadcaster I**: Thirty-eight percent of Bnei Brak's 200,000 residents have fallen ill.

**Shai Glik:** Bnei Brak is the capital city of the Haredim community in Israel, and in Bnei Brak was hundreds of people sick. The community was in very very big crisis. And because of that people was very very hate Haredim and hate Bnei Brak. All the Haredim - guilty.

**Menachem Toker:** It became so bad the *lashon har’a* you know?

**Shai Glik:** And then the media came.

**Rina Matzliach:** The Haredim need to understand that they have to accept the state, for better or for worse. Let me finish. I would like to say that it *is* most of the Haredim.

**Haim Titelbuim:** They always talk against us, everything bad.

**Shai Glik:** One guy said “we have to take all the Haredim and throw them back to Polin (Poland).”

**Hani Zuveyda:** Here we have the rule of law, and you obey the law of the land, this doesn't suit you? Goodbye. Go back to the *shtetl* in Eastern Europe.

**Haim Titelbuim:** It’s real antisemite, what I hear. It's like in Germany, they talk.

**Lior Shlien:** They humiliate women on the street, on buses. They don't work because the state just hands them money. So what do we expect now, with the corona?

**Razi Barkai**: Bnei Brak, Mea Shearim, Mount Meron, the Haredis have gone wild again. They don’t give a damn about the law or the guidelines. They spit on police officers. But we’re just gonna keep supporting them, keep giving them the best medical treatment, keep serving in the army instead of them, we’re the asses of these messianic crazies.

**Shai Glik:** And the Haredim was feeling like you know.. Let’s say like what the black people feeling now.   
**Ruli Dikman:** There’s this really uncomfortable underlying feeling, as if we're all lepers. As if the virus is our fault. They patrol the streets and enforce the curfew as if we were in the Spanish Inquisition or something. It’s just not a nice feeling. Anybody would find it uncomfortable.

**Anonymous:** People look at us with fear in their eyes. You know, when they pass us on the street they sort of keep their distance.

**Menachem Toker:** “They’re sick. You can’t get close to them. If there is a Haredi come you just run away.”

**Shmulik:** When I walk in the street, I see people are walking away from me. And it's not that I’m not wearing a mask and gloves.

**Anonymous:** I can't even describe how horrible it feels. Here? In our country! It’s... really, really hard. **Shmulik:** A real feeling of humiliation.Just before Pesach, during the peak of this crisis, there was a serious egg shortage. And people need eggs for Pesach. So we heard about a place in Kfar Saba that was selling wholesale. I rushed over there, waited in line, and I was simply ignored. As if I wasn’t there!

**Ruli Dikman:** I decided to organize a virtual prayer service during Pesach, because all the synagogues have been closed. So I took the initiative to put together a holiday prayer livestream. We set up and started praying, and all of a sudden the police showed up. The officer climbed onto the roof of our building and jumped down onto our porch and barged in - like some special ops mission. One of the guys that was filming the prayer was so shocked that he burst in tears. There’s no doubt in my mind that Bnei Brak was one of the places where people most obeyed the restrictions.

**Judah Sabiner:** A week or two after the outbreak, the all *minyanim* was cancelled. People was *davening* from the house. Or they made, you know, *minyanim* through porches. It was very, very special, you know, to experience it all the neighbors went to the porch, and everybody had *minyanim* through a couple of buildings in the porch.

**Shmulik:** During the holiday, all the families with kids went out to their balconies and sang *ma nishtana*, so thatthe young couples (those without kids), or the old people who were stuck at home alone could hear it too.

**Shai Glick:** Haredim changed they mind, and they changed they act.

**Menachem Toker:** When they start something, it's all the way. When the *rabbanim*, when the rabbis, say something to do, they will do it.

**Haim Titelbuim:** I never let my children go into my house, because I was afraid. Not about me. I was afraid it can be the worst thing - that a child can kill his father.

**Yochai Maital:** So you don't miss people? You don’t miss going to the *koilel*, going to *shul*?

**Haim Titelbuim:** I don't need to meet the people. I have books. I can, I can be here day and night, I can look my books, the best friends are the books.

**Yochai Maital:** And you’re not lonely?

**Haim Titelbuim:** No. The time is too little for me. I learn *daf yomi*. You know what *daf yomi* is?

**Shai Glick:** They start to wear masks and they start to have gloves. They stopped... they closed all the *shuls*, all the schools, and the hate still continued. This was the big problem. The Haredim say, ‘oh now why you hate me? I changed my mind, I changed my life. I now in a big crisis myself, my community. I have people sick and you hate me now when I sick? I need your help. Give me your hand.’

**Menachem Toker:** The Haredi people they have big minuses of course, they're not perfect. You could criticize the Haredi crowd. But when you come with hate when you come with anger.

**Shai Glick:** When you see somebody in the sea that is not breathing and is almost dying you not tell him ‘oh, you don't know how to swim, so why you went in?’ You take him out from the water. The Haredim was in a big shock why the hate is not going away.

**Marie Röder:** What is it like being a mother of thirteen in lockdown?

**Tova Hennig**: It’s hard. Hard. The children don't go to school. Also in terms of employment. There is no work.

**Menachem Toker:** Every house has like seven, eight to nine people with two-three bedrooms. People are very crowded, very *tzafuf*. How do you say *tzafuf*?

**Anonymous:** Let’s just say it isn’t easy to be with six kids at home. It's really difficult. But G-d bless!

**Naomi Brinner:** I am simple, as you hear me?

**Marie Röder:** Yeah.

**Naomi Brinner:** This is the way I am. We live in *Ramot Polin*, if you know it. It’s a very cheap apartment. And we are really poor people. We don't have extra not thousand, and not five hundred also. And it is very very hard for us. And this is what I wanted to tell you.

**Yehuda Shalit:** It’s really scary. We don’t know when it’ll end. And there’s a lot of tension and arguments at home because of this fear.

**Anonymous:** So during Purim my son went to visit family in Bnei Brak. And when he was walking on the street, he saw police officers beating up a Haredi teenager. So he took out his phone and started filming. And three seconds later the police officers came up to him and started beating him up too. Really pounding him. One of the officers grabbed him by his *peyes*, and he yanked one of his side curls out. To rip out a Haredikid’s *peyes*? It’s something that hasn’t been touched since his childhood. It's like part of his body, like an organ. It’s unfathomable. It's robbing him of his innocence**,**his belief in humanity. And it changed him. He’s not like he used to be. For me, as a mother, it’s… What can I tell you? I hear many stories about the police, butI didn't believe it.

**Yehuda Shalit:** I’m really afraid. Even when I just go out to buy some milk or bread, as soon as I hear sirens, I hide in the store. I’m afraid that they could catch me and beat me up.

**Marie Röder:** Is there anything else that you would like to tell or to say? Something that I didn't ask you, and you feel like it’s important?

**Ruli Dikman:** *[In Hebrew]* Eh, Yes!

**Shai Glik:** I want to say one thing.

**Anonymous:** I have this dream that we’ll just stop using all these stereotypes - religious, secular, Haredi. In the end we’re all... we’re all human beings. All equal.

**Shai Glik:** We have to look with the good eyes, you know in Hebrew we say… we call it *ayin tova* - good eye. We have two eyes, look with the good eye not with the bad eye.

**Ruli Dikman:** We don’t see eye to eye on everything. We can agree or disagree on things. But at the end of the day we live together. The fact that we’re different doesn't mean we have to be at war with each other.

**Menachem Toker:** The Haredi community will stay the same nice kosher community. What will change is that they have a bit more open to the social media now, to the Internet.

**Ruli Dikman:** I just want to wish us all one thing: That we all make an effort to live in peace, show more love and compassion towards one another, and live to see the coming of the *mashiach*.

**Judah Sabiner:** I want to wish everybody a *refuah shlema*. Should have, you know, a complete recovering from this disease.

**Marie Röder:** *[In Hebrew]* Thank you very much again!

**Ruli Dikman:** *[In Hebrew]* With pleasure!

**Menachem Toker:** Bye. G-d bless you. *[In Hebrew]* Thank you very much, friends, pleasant listening.

**Shmulik:** Thank you very, very much. I wanted to take this chance to say thank you for acknowledging us.

**Ruli Dikman:** *[In Hebrew]* Have a fun hot summer, and a healthy one. I wish you success in all your endeavours.

**Tova Hennig:** *[In Hebrew]* Shalom, Shalom!

**Marie Röder:** Thank you.

**Yehuda Shalit:**  *[In Hebrew]* Good luck.

**Marie Röder:** Toda, Shavua tov!

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**Mishy Harman:** So Yochai, what was working on this piece like for you? What… what did you learn?

**Yochai Maital:** First of all, I learned how difficult it is for a community that's so tight-knit to separate itself, all of a sudden, like that, and what a valiant effort they did to actually do that once they realized what was going on. And the prices, the heavy prices they paid. I learned how lockdown affects people very differently. Lockdown is not the same for, you know, a young couple with one kid or a bachelor living alone, or with some roommates, as it is for a mother of, you know, six, seven, thirteen kids. Another thing I learned is, you know, these people are very positive. Even when I talked to them and I talked to... remember I talked to people who had very strong complaints.

**Mishy Harman:** Emm hmm.

**Yochai Maital:** That's that's how I reached them. Even those people at the end all of them felt it was very important to end with a positive message and a hopeful message that we can all learn to get along better and you know…

**Mishy Harman:** Emm hmm.

**Yochai Maital:** They'll never... they'll never just complain, they'll say, “you know, it's very, very hard but *baruch hashem*, *baruch hashem*.” So that was that was really inspiring for me, being myself stuck with three kids at home and very much full of, you know, self-pity.

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**Mishy Harman (narration):** That story was produced by Yochai Maital together with our amazing production intern Marie Röder. Ari Jacob wrote and performed the original music.

We don't usually thank the interviewees in our stories. But this time’s different, since for many of them, talking to the media, especially to non-Haredi media, isn’t a trivial matter. So thank you Ruli Dikman, Tova Hennig, Judah Sabiner, Haim Taitelbaum, Yehuda Shalit, Menachem Toker, Shai Glick, and many others who preferred to remain anonymous. A special thanks to Aweke Zena, the National Anti-Racism Coordinator for the Department of Justice, who was incredibly helpful throughout the process of putting this piece together.

Before we sign off, let’s check back in with Sergeant Alex Osnaya, the Home Front Command squad leader, patrolling the streets of Ramot.

His assignment - like that of many other soldiers - was, really, a bit strange. After all, Haredim don’t, by and large, go into the army. In fact, some of them are quite hostile towards the army. So Alex wasn’t sure how it would all go down.

**Alex Osnaya:** I thought I would be getting things thrown at me or, like, getting shout at from the other side of the street stuff, like ‘what is the army doing here?’ ‘Get out of this place!’ I can tell you that as soon as they see us coming, they’re like “oh, oh,” and they put on the face mask, or they go to another place.

**Mishy Harman:** So what do you do, do you go and knock on peoples’ doors or… How do you convey this information?

**Alex Osnaya:** No, no, no. We do not go into peoples’ homes. We are going close to supermarkets, to hospitals, to clinics.

**Mishy Harman:** And how to the Haredimreceive the soldiers?

**Alex Osnaya:** So far, so good. We have not had any problems like what are you doing here or why is the army coming into our neighborhood. Not at all.

**Mishy Harman:** You’re not Haredi*,* right?

**Alex Osnaya:** I am not. I am a secular Jew, I would say.

**Mishy Harman:** And is this the first time that you’ve had significant interaction with Haredim?

**Alex Osnaya:** Yes! And I can say that it’s nothing like I would have expected. I… Not at all, they like for real are taking us the way we are, and letting us do what we are intending to do which is to help them. And they are cooperating also, which I think is fantastic.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** In order to ease communications, the army even issued a Hebrew-Yiddish phrasebook.

**Mishy Harman:** Do you know Yiddish?

**Alex Osnaya:** I took three years of German in high-school. I would not say I speak German, but I may understand a couple words from Yiddish, like *ich spreche Deutsch, ich… ich spruche Yiddish.* It’s like similar, but not the same thing, I would say.

**Mishy Harman:** In Mexico City there are some Yiddish schools, right?

**Alex Osnaya:** Well, I can tell you that my late grandma was a Yiddish teacher.

**Mishy Harman:** Wow. And do your parents speak Yiddish?

**Alex Osnaya:** My mom does, but I never heard her speak, other than *oy vey zmeer,* or *oy mayer sheyn. [Mishy and Alex laugh]*. I have a *Yiddishe Mama* at the end of the day.

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**Mishy Harman (narration):** This episode was the third in our COVID-19 miniseries “**Alone, Together**.” You can hear the previous two episodes of the series, and *all* our past episodes on our site, israelstory.org, or by searching for Israel Story on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, or anywhere else you usually get your podcasts.

And while you’re at it, don’t forget to sign up for our newsletter, so that you never miss an episode. Of course, I’m reminding you once again to join our members-only Facebook community, where the conversation never ends. We have great debates, we discuss episodes, we share behind-the-scenes extras, and mainly we just have a good time. Joining is, of course, easy - go to Facebook, search for ‘Israel Story Community’ and join.

If you want to sponsor episodes of Israel Story email us at [sponsor@israelstory.org](mailto:sponsor@prx.org). It’s a unique way to both advertise your organization or your company, and - especially during these extremely challenging times - also support the work we do.

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Israel Story is produced in partnership with Tablet Magazine. Our staff is Yochai Maital, Zev Levi, Yoshi Fields, Joel Shupack, Skyer Inman, Sharon Rapaport and Rotem Zin. Abby Adler, Marie Röder and Carly Rubin are our wonderful production interns. Jeff Umbro, from The Podglomerate, is our marketing director. I’m Mishy Harman, and we’ll be back very soon with part four of **“Alone, Together.”**

**Avigail Beer:** When I answered the phone I told him, “Daddy, this is Friday night! Why are you calling?” He wasn’t really breathing well, so he was... really hard for him to say the words, so he started crying and he said that he loves us.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** So till next time, stay safe, *shalom shalom* and *yalla bye*.

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