# **MEET THE HOSTAGES' PARENTS**

# **Facilitator Guide**

Hersh Goldberg-Polin and Alon Ohel were among those taken hostage from the Nova music festival on October 7. How can the voices of their parents inspire us to political and spiritual action for their release?

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# Info For Facilitator



# Target Audience:

High School, Young Adults, Adults



## Length Of Program

45-90 minutes for the activity, including listening to several short audio clips and discussion.



### Materials & Prep:

- Participant access to listen to the audio file clips provided <u>here</u>.
- Discussion questions (either orally facilitated by the facilitator or printed, for the participants).

### Note to Facilitators:

This session uses moving and powerful clips from two episodes of Israel Story's Wartime Diaries podcast series, and the facilitation guide offers offers a combination of clips from both episodes and discussion questions to frame the conversation—beginning with personal reflection and building towards a commitment to take action—as well as the lyrics to the song heard in the final clip. We recommend working through the five sections in sequence, but Section B or Section D might be omitted to accommodate shorter learning timeframes.

Facilitators are invited to listen to the two episodes in their entirety before facilitating the session with learners. Facilitators should also note that the two episodes were recorded at different times, and therefore represent snapshots of both families at a certain point in time. As of May 1, both Hersh and Alon remain in captivity and their families continue to be active on behalf of their sons and all of the remaining hostages. A Hamas propaganda video featuring Hersh was released during the recent Passover holiday, confirming that he is alive and in urgent need of medical care.

# FRAMING THE ISSUE

Everything in Israel changed on Saturday, October 7, 2023. During these incredibly difficult days, the team at the podcast Israel Story team is sharing the voices of those among and around them, in the form of quick conversations—or postcards, really—that try to capture slivers of life right now.

Using moving and powerful <u>clips from two episodes of Israel Story's Wartime</u> <u>Diaries podcast series</u>, we will meet the parents of two hostages—Hersh Goldberg-Polin and Alon Ohel, both of whom were abducted from the Nova music festival on October 7—and hear about the different ways in which they take action toward the release of their sons.









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# LET'S EXPLORE

All audio clips can be found here.

## **SECTION A: CLOSENESS**

Clip 1: "He's so close" (Rachel Goldberg and Jon Polin) Clip 2: "I've never been so close to him" (Idit Ohel)

Discussion questions:

- How did it feel to hear Hersh and Alon's parents speak? What is one thing you're thinking about already?
- Have you ever been physically separated from somebody you love for so long that it became unbearable? How did you deal with the separation?

#### **SECTION B: STORIES**

Clip 3: "From the moment he entered this world, he loved music" (Idit Ohel) Clip 4: "He's had this independence from the time he was two years old" (Rachel Goldberg and Jon Polin)

Discussion questions:

- How does it feel to "get to know" Alon and Hersh?
- Why do you think that Idit and Jon both recall stories about their sons as young children? How do you understand Rachel's concern about dwelling on stories about Hersh?

#### **SECTION C: ACTION**

Clip 5: "We're taking matters into our own hands" (Rachel Goldberg and Jon Polin) Clip 6: "So we have to fight" (Idit Ohel)

Discussion questions:

- What is one difference between how Hersh and Alon's parents describe taking action? What is one similarity?
- One might think of the action that Rachel Goldberg and Jon Polin describe taking in their clip as political action, and of the action that Idit Ohel describes taking in her clip as spiritual action (though it should be noted that both sets of parents have been both politically and spiritually active in pursuing their sons' release). Can you think of other types of action that we might take for the hostages?

#### **SECTION D: HOPE**

Clip 7: "Hope – this will save us" (Idit Ohel) Clip 8: "We've spent 51 days grasping anywhere for hope" (Rachel Goldberg and Jon Polin)

Discussion questions:

- Have there been moments since October 7 that you felt hopeful?
- Do you have to be an optimist to be hopeful for the return of the hostages?





This resource was created by Mikhael Reuven Kesher from The Jewish Education Project and Ali Moller from Israel Story.



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## **SECTION E: ONE SMALL THING**

Clip 9: "It's not enough just to listen, you have to do something" (Idit Ohel)

<b>שובי אלי</b>	<b>Come back to me</b>
אבישי כהן	Avishai Cohen
אם תלכי הלילה לבדך	If you go alone tonight
הכוכבים ילוו אותך	The stars will accompany you
רוח ים תלחש אל תוך ליבך	A sea breeze will whisper into your heart
תמלא את גופך	Fill your body
ואם תבקשי את חום גופי	And if you ask for my body heat
אני אצא אל הלילה	I will go out into the night
אחפש כוכב שיאיר דרכי	I will look for a star to light my way
(ואותי אלייך יביא)	(And it will bring me to you)
שובי אלי, שובי אלינו	Come back to me, come back to us
בשבילך, בשביל שנינו	For you, for both of us
שובי אלי, שובי אלינו	Come back to me, come back to us
בשבילך, בשביל שנינו	For you, for both of us

**Discussion questions:** 

- How did it feel to hear the song "Come back to me" and read its lyrics?
- What is one small action-political, spiritual, or otherwise-that you will commit to taking for the sake of the hostages?
- Who are two people that you want to share this call to action with?









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# **TAKE ACTION!**

In the spirit of Idit Ohel's call to action, we invite you to seek out the stories of more of the hostages—through podcasts, video clips, op eds, and anywhere else you get your stories. For each hostage, challenge yourself to make one small commitment to do good in the world in their honor.

Rachel Goldberg and Jon Polin have also issued calls to action since the recording of their episode, including requesting that you lobby your political representatives to prioritize the swift return of the hostages. Visit <u>oneminaday.com</u> to find phone numbers for your representatives.

And, of course, you can listen to both full Israel Story episodes—and many, many more—at <u>https://www.israelstory.org/</u> recommended\_list/wartime-diaries/, or wherever you get your podcasts.

## **CLOSING INTENTION**

Since October 7th, many Jews in the diaspora have responded to the urgent need to participate in political activities that could help lead to the release of the hostages. These efforts are ongoing and need your support. But beyond the political, there are also important spiritual actions we can and must take for the sake of the souls of those held captive in Gaza.

"It's not enough just to listen, you have to do something. So do something. Do something nice."







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