

PLAYING THE PART

Exploring Your Role in Today's Story



Drawn from materials composed following the October 7 attacks, the following resources highlight the roles we play in the stories of our lives. These roles include, among many others, parent, Jew, educator, student, soldier, or activist.

LOSING YOURSELF IN THE STORY

"You have this big story. But you also have the human, personal story. It's so easy, in this moment, to forget *your* story and kind of drift with this kind of national catastrophe and kind of disappear in it."

- Etgar Keret, Israeli Author ([Etgar Keret, Israel's bard, on life after Hamas' attack](#))

Keret points out that our personal stories take place against the backdrop of larger stories*. During times of crisis, we may feel the pull of one story (and the responsibilities that story entails) over another.

*See the "Stories of the Moment" section for examples

- ◆ Why might we "forget" our own story in the face of a "big story?"
- ◆ What are the benefits and risks of this act of "forgetting?"



Source: [forward.com](#) Courtesy of Etgar Keret

Etgar Keret is one of Israel's most beloved authors. Known for his short stories that blur fact and fiction in ways that are revelatory as they are disarming and surreal, he is also a keen observer and commentator of Israeli society and the Jewish community.



CLAIMING YOUR ROLE

“In some sense I feel that my parents trained me all my life for this moment. And I think that the most important thing that I got from my parents was saying that when there are big incidents, there are big narratives. And those big narratives would say: You have a role. You are now a victim. You are now a hero. And they said, “Don’t believe those roles.”

- 'I Feel a Human Deterioration' - Etgar Keret Struggles to Make Sense of the Violence and Loss Around Him

Keret here explores how we are assigned roles in “big narratives,” or stories. He urges us to remember that even as we assume our assigned roles, we maintain our unique stories.

- ◆ What does Keret mean when he says that big narratives “say,” “you have a role?”
- ◆ What is lost when we assume an assigned role rather than crafting our own?
- ◆ Think about the different roles, assigned or claimed, that you’ve played over the last few weeks and write 3-5 of them in the spaces below.
- ◆ Among the assigned roles, are there any that you don’t want to take on? Among the roles you have claimed, are there any that surprised you?

ASSIGNED

CLAIMED



STORIES OF THE MOMENT

The following are two responses to the October 7 attacks that can help learners articulate the stories in their own lives. As you read them, pay attention to the stories in the background and the roles that the characters are playing.

Yotam Avrahami is one of many Israelis living abroad who felt the pull of multiple stories at once. While his wife and daughter remained in New York, he returned to Israel as soon as possible after the October 7 attack to join his reserve unit.

He reflected that “It’s the thought that you have friends that will be in immediate danger, and you cannot help them,”

- [NYTimes, Some Israelis are flying home to fight.](#)

On the Shabbat after the attack, Rabbi Rachel Timoner, an American Rabbi based in Brooklyn NY, encouraged congregants to remember their parts in the Jewish and Israeli story: “But please, please do not take your mezuzah off your door. Please do not stop coming here to be together. Please do not take your star from around your neck. Please do not stop living as proud Jews. Please do not stop standing as steadfast supporters of our Israeli family, who feel more alone in the world now than ever. Please do not stop calling for the return of the hostages. Please do not stop giving to aid funds. Please do not stop calling Israeli friends and family, here and there. Please do not stop doing all of the Jewish things you do. Every one of them, every Jewish thing you do, matters.



Source: NY Times, Jalaa Marey/Agence France-Presse – Getty Images

