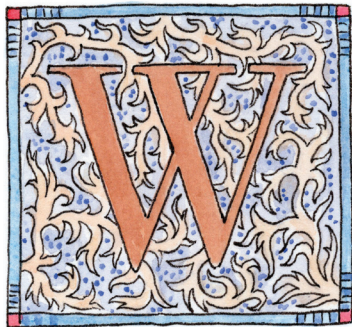


BRET STEPHENS

Editor's Note



WHEN the editors of SAPIR decided last summer to dedicate our ninth issue to Israel's 75th birthday, we wanted to look forward and back: forward, to how Israel could flourish in the decades ahead; back, to what it had already overcome and achieved against daunting odds. Our mis-

sion is to offer, as the front cover of this journal proclaims, "ideas for a thriving Jewish future," ideas that must go beyond a particular moment in time.

What we did not expect is how much we would have to face up to Israel's *present*. The national crisis triggered by the government's judicial-reform legislation may soon be resolved, hopefully through some sort of creative and durable compromise. But the political and social fissures the crisis has exposed cannot be sidestepped or downplayed. Necessarily, many of the essays here address the issue directly, albeit from different vantage points: legal, sociological, historical, political, geopolitical, and philosophical.

We also believe in a diversity of viewpoints. This issue showcases that commitment, with essays from across the ideological and religious spectrum. But viewpoint diversity is not simply a matter of representing sides. It's also about listening to individual perspectives. So we've asked many of our contributors to fill in a blank: What, to them, is Israel? And we've asked others to address the question: What, to them, does it mean for Israel to be a light unto the nations?

The answers vary widely. To Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer, editor-in-chief of the Haredi journal *Tzarich Iyun*, Israel is a miracle. To *Haaretz*'s Amir Tibon, it is a country at risk of destroying itself. To former Labor MK Einat Wilf of Reichman University, it is a liberator. To the journalist Nazier Magally, it is a hope for its Arab citizens. As for Israel's light, it is, for Michael Bloomberg, like the Statue of Liberty — that mother of exiles and beacon of hope. For Mijal Bitton, the grandest act of Jewish resistance. For Michael Walzer, a nation struggling to meet the most crucial moral test, of living with others on equal terms.

These and other authors give us a sense of the Israel they know so well, worry about so much, love so deeply, argue over so passionately. Their Israel, in glory or folly, is never an abstraction — as it shouldn't be for anyone who wishes to see it thrive. *