

S A P I R

IDEAS FOR A THRIVING JEWISH FUTURE

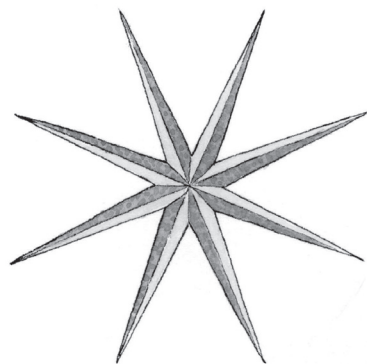
WAR
in
ISRAEL



Special Edition
October–December 2023

*And they saw the God of Israel:
Under His feet there was the
likeness of a pavement of
sapphire, like the very sky
for purity.*

—Exodus 24:10



Bret Stephens

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mark Charendoff

PUBLISHER

Ariella Saperstein

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Saul Rosenberg

MANAGING EDITOR

Felicia Herman

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Isaac Hart

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Katherine Messenger

DESIGNER & ILLUSTRATOR

SAPIR, Ideas for a Thriving Jewish Future. ISSN 2767-1712. 2024, Special Edition, War in Israel.
Published by Maimonides Fund.

Copyright © 2024 by Maimonides Fund. No part of this journal may be reproduced in any form
or by any means without the prior written consent of Maimonides Fund. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America.

WWW.SAPIRJOURNAL.ORG

WWW.MAIMONIDESFUND.ORG

S A P I R

CONTENTS

6 *Editor's Note* | *Bret Stephens*

10 *Diary of an IDF Soldier: October 8–15* | *Yoni Heilman*

Analysis

20 DOUGLAS MURRAY
The Easy Politics of Criticizing Israel

26 DAVID WOLPE
Wisdom in the Face of Destruction

30 BRIAN MULRONEY
In the Face of Antisemitism, Neutrality Is a Sin

38 BRET STEPHENS
The Road to a Second Kristallnacht

44 MICHAEL OREN
The Day After

48 *Diary of an IDF Soldier: October 25–29* | *Yoni Heilman*

Campus

56 ROGER ROSENBLATT
What's Happened to Harvard?

60 SARA STEINHARDT BLOOM
New Priorities for American Jews

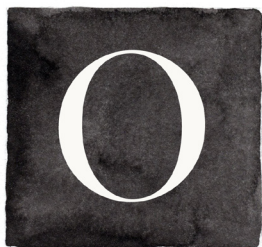
- 68 NADINE STROSSEN & KENNETH S. STERN
SJP Still Deserves Freedom of Speech
- 76 JACOB BAIME
SJP Does Not Belong on Campus
- 82 SARAH HURWITZ
To Jewish College Students Who Are Scared
- 88 *Diary of an IDF Soldier: November 9* | Yoni Heilman

Community

- 94 FELICIA HERMAN
They Are Doing Their Part — Are You?
- 102 MIJAL BITTON
That Pain You're Feeling Is Peoplehood
- 108 DAVID BERNSTEIN
Jewish Community Relations and the October 8th Jew
- 114 DAVID HAZONY
The War Against Jews
- 124 MAXIM D. SHRAYER
Anti-Zionist Committees of the American Public
- 136 *Diary of an IDF Soldier: November 19 – December 7* | Yoni Heilman

BRET STEPHENS

Editor's Note



IF ALL the immediate reactions by Jewish thinkers to the massacres of October 7, was there anything more pathetic—I mean this in both the pitiable and derisive sense of the word—than the one from Joshua Leifer, a contributing editor for *Jewish Currents*?

“The loss, the tragedy—incomprehensible,” he wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter, on October 8.

People who were supposed to have been interlocutors, partners in some type of common conversation, self-professed human rights defenders, even would-be colleagues are celebrating and glorifying unspeakable acts that violate the most basic elements of human life. I feel sick.

Now is a time to mourn lives, and, against all odds, keep our faith in the possibility of a better future for all people, Palestinians and Israelis alike. We must not give up on that faith, no matter what, for if we lose that faith, everything is lost.

Are these not the values that led us to oppose the cruel siege

This article was originally published online on October 16, 2023.

of Gaza? To resist the brutalities of the occupation? To oppose apartheid? Where are these values when Israeli children are held hostage, families wiped out, corpses violated before cheering crowds?

I feel for Leifer. Sort of. Like other earnest Jewish idealists who were sure they could blend their two faiths—one Jewish and particularistic, the other leftist and universal—the events of October 7 have been a brutal awakening. What happened to all those pro-Palestinian “partners” with whom they had dialogued at conferences while jointly denouncing the evils of Israeli policy? Where was the human reciprocity, the sense of fellow-feeling, after progressive Jews had given their all to the cause of ending the occupation? How did this common march to justice and equity end up in the blood orgy unleashed on teenagers at a rave, babies on a kibbutz, families at breakfast?

It used to be that Jewish liberals got mugged by reality, to borrow Irving Kristol’s memorable phrase. Now Jewish progressives are being massacred by it, at least vicariously.

And yet there was always something inescapably ugly about the way in which Leifer’s camp—the post- or anti-Zionist Jewish Left—conducted itself these past 20-plus years. Israel deserved honest, even stringent criticism from a loyal opposition. But Leifer’s camp supplied libel and defamation. Israel could have benefited from a Jewish Left that opposed its policies but loved the state. Leifer’s camp despised the policies, abandoned the state, and mainstreamed anti-Zionism. Like the Cold War’s “useful idiots,” they allowed themselves and their Jewishness to give moral cover to outright antisemitism—making the case, as Peter Beinart did in the pages of the *New York Times*, that there should be no Jewish state, so that chants of “from the river to the sea” could become almost respectable.

There was also something unforgivably stupid. When Leifer says the massacres are “incomprehensible,” how can he possibly mean

it? Nothing Hamas did on October 7 hadn't been loudly presaged in scores of previous acts of mass murder, not to mention the words of their own charter. And did it *really* require the cheers for October 7 from Black Lives Matter, Students for Justice in Palestine, or the Democratic Socialists of America for the *Jewish Currents* crowd to notice the putrescent odor of Jew-hatred wafting around them?

Whether Leifer and his friends will have a genuine awakening remains to be seen. My guess is that only a few will make a clean break. Just beneath the surface of many self-declared idealists there tends to lie an incurable narcissism. The problem isn't self-hate. It's overweening self-love.

Whichever way the far-Left goes, that leaves the rest of the American Jewish community—center-Left, center-Right—prosperous, sane, and suddenly afraid. In conversations about the attacks with students, rabbis, business leaders, Jewish professionals, leading political figures, and others, the sentence that everyone seems to circle around is this: “We are alone.”

That's despite clarion statements of solidarity from President Biden, leaders in Congress, prominent TV anchors, and millions of ordinary Americans. Yet, beneath that, we Jews sense that something is badly amiss. The tardy, feeble, equivocal statements from major academic leaders. The bizarre response from Donald Trump, which had more to do with Benjamin Netanyahu's willingness to accept the results of the 2020 election than with the murder of more than a thousand Jews. The boldness and openness of support for Hamas on college campuses and within “social justice” organizations. The bullying and harassment of Jewish students and teachers, the targeting of Jewish-owned businesses, the violent assaults on visibly Jewish persons. The moral equivalency, by people who should know better, between the atrocities of October 7 and Israel's efforts to ensure they never happen again.

And beneath that fear, an even darker one: Maybe the Jewish state, the insurance policy of every Diaspora Jew, is not as strong and steady as we had long assumed. And maybe America and

other states in the supposedly civilized world will sooner or later turn on their Jewish citizens just as the French did in the 1890s, or worse as the Germans (and the French and much of Europe) did in the 1930s.

These issues demand clear thinking and urgent responses from the Jewish community. We are in a moment of darkness, the darkest in our history since 1945. But is this the darkness of dusk, or right before dawn? Regardless, we at SAPIR have felt the urgency of the moment, rapidly turning from a quarterly to a near-daily during the first two months of the Israel-Hamas war. The essays and conversations in this special issue were published online in the days and weeks following October 7. Herewith, we intend to bring the light. *

When Hamas attacked Israel, Yoni Heilman, the CEO of TAMID Group and an American oleh (immigrant), joined hundreds of thousands of Israelis who were called up to reserve service in the IDF. He has been sending near-daily messages to family and friends, as a digital diary of the war that SAPIR has been honored to publish. We include excerpts of these dispatches throughout this issue.

YONI HEILMAN

October 8–15

Diary of an IDF Soldier

Sunday, October 8 | 9:11 P.M.



ESTERDAY morning I had one foot out the door on the way to Simchat Torah dancing with my son when my phone rang. An hour of quick packing, changing into uniform, and making sure the *mamad* (shelter room) was ready. A few brief words to my kids (14, 9, and 6) and my wife—no time to reassure them or help them past tears—and I closed the door behind me.

These diary entries were originally published online on November 1, 2023.

The roads were empty...mostly. Every car I passed looked like mine: a soldier in uniform, a steely expression in his eyes, trying not to exceed the speed limit.

Our base has been alternately filling up and emptying out over the past 36 hours. In between briefings, gathering gear, and exercises, we check our phones. We see the same videos as everyone else. We try to shelve until some later point the shock of seeing familiar faces in grotesque scenes.

When Shabbat ended, I called to check in with my wife. They had a couple of sirens during the day and are planning to lay mattresses and sleep all together in the *mamad* overnight—better than the trauma of a midnight run under fire. I am suddenly aware of the other army—that of the siblings, parents, and especially wives with small kids, who have no choice but to step up and be everything for everyone at the moment. Around midnight, the head of our brigade addresses the officers and commanders. He quotes Clausewitz's *On War*, which I've never heard in Hebrew.

Our plans have been changed many times today, but finally our unit is on the move. Heading south.

Tuesday, October 10 | 9:45 A.M.

On days one and two it was preparation for the unknown: getting our hands on as much equipment and information as possible. When I lost my phone at one point, it was two hours before that became a priority—I judged that my wife wouldn't start to worry until that much time had passed, and I chose instead to make sure I had full clips for my gun and other relevant combat gear.

Days three and four have been about alertness, now that I am near the front. The need to be alert determines how much I sleep. I eat only enough so hunger doesn't wake me. My personal cleanliness and comfort finally declined enough today that I sacrificed sleep to walk 10 minutes to the nearest bathroom and took the time to brush my teeth, shave, and clip my nails as short as possible.

Someone once said to me that Israel's enemies are deterred only because they believe that we are alert and at the ready throughout every shift. I will not let the reality be any different.

Wednesday, October 11 | 12:30 A.M.

8-8. That's what they call it. Eight hours on: in the eye of the storm, keeping the outside world at bay as we buckle down to do our jobs and do them well. We can do them well only if we can dissociate mentally and physically. That means no emotional space to process events, to think about what life was before or what it will be after. No space to feel the dirt and sweat and hunger and exhaustion. To let frustrations with leadership surface. To think about spouses and children and parents and friends and careers.

Eight hours off: coming off duty into a flood of updates, messages, and news. The flood of emotions, made worse by the hunger and exhaustion I allow myself to feel for the first time since the early afternoon.

Over the past eight hours, I missed news of an escalation on a northern front, growing anger at the Israeli leadership, a flood of antisemitism on American campuses. Now I need to eat a snack, wash up, and sleep on the floor of our protected area so I can wake up ready for the next eight hours on.

Wednesday, October 11 | 4:30 P.M.

I had a good opening sentence—really, I did—but in the middle of it we had a Red Alert for a rocket attack. Where I am, we have 15 seconds to get under cover, and I was as far away from it as one can be at my location, so I grabbed my gear and sprinted.

A couple of minutes later I got it back... and as soon as I sat down on a bench to write, I heard gunfire and everyone sprinted back to protected positions. Thankfully, it turned out to be our own forces—but we didn't know that for quite a few long minutes.

For a moment, I was inspired to see a small group of soldiers in the back in an impromptu study group . . . until I heard them discussing the technical steps and religious process of recovering bodies. More was said than I ever wanted to hear.

I last showered three days ago and was seriously considering it today but . . . might forgo for now. Dirty and ready to sprint to safety beats clean and exposed any day.

I was glad in the end to get started on an empty stomach—the first thing to do this morning related to recovering fallen civilians. From there, it was an incredibly busy eight hours. Tactical wins: Our unit captured three terrorists and took out two others, among many other things. Non-tactical: One commander took a few minutes to fix water pipes in a house in one of the towns that has been cleared of civilians. And over the radio I heard an exchange about making sure to milk cows.

After my shift I went to our base's shul—a few minutes there help me to make the mental switch. For a moment, I was inspired to see a small group of soldiers in the back in an impromptu study group . . . until I heard them discussing the technical steps and religious process of recovering bodies. More was said than I ever wanted to hear.

Thursday, October 12 | 9:30 A.M.

The level of donated food, toiletries, and equipment is like a flood. But what makes that lump catch in my throat are the little notes,

This is a war. There is trauma. And for too, too many, life will never be the same. But we will triumph. We will build a safe new reality. I know it because I, and the thousands of soldiers I have seen over the past week, will not rest, will not see our families, will not take our boots off, until we have made it so.

handwritten, scrawled on napkins hastily taped to sandwich bags. “Thank you for protecting us and lifting our morale and making all the people of Israel feel safe,” reads one.

As a grunt in basic training, pride in our unit was a big thing. In this war, the pride is in being part of this brother- and sisterhood that showed up and stood ready to do whatever it takes.

Last night I was lucky enough to get a few extra hours’ sleep. I’ve been using my flak vest and helmet for a pillow and sleeping in the reinforced tunnels we have for rocket fire, but last night someone from my unit showed me that some of the scant housing on our base had open beds. At 4 A.M. I tiptoed my way into a room with five bunkbeds that had a single unoccupied mattress, wondering whether I’d be woken by someone returning from duty to find his bed occupied, or to a unit waking up and wondering about the stranger in their midst.

At 8 I awoke to polite voices around me. I opened my eyes to a room of people getting ready for the day, and one soldier saw me stir. “תישן אחי,” he said: Sleep, brother.

I woke up anyway and saw these guys were getting ready to head out into the field. They are part of Unit 669—a commando rescue

unit of literally the best people you want in times of trouble. Think of a helicopter flying in through heavy gunfire, someone rappelling out of the sky and picking you up like you weigh nothing. These guys call that a Monday.

I blinked and two of the guys switched to English—and I introduced myself to Jason, originally from Perth, Australia. Turns out, my organization, TAMID, and his company, Stella, have worked together. We spoke briefly about our respective units, and then he told me about a nonprofit he has just created to collect funds that will support private post-trauma therapy when the war is over, when the lines for treatment will stretch the public system beyond capacity. He put it together in between missions.

This is a war. There is trauma. And for too, too many, life will never be the same. But we will triumph. We will build a safe new reality. I know it because I, and the thousands of soldiers I have seen over the past week, will not rest, will not see our families, will not take our boots off, until we have made it so.

Sunday, October 15 | 1:30 A.M.

In the course of my work at TAMID, I recently had the opportunity to work with a very smart friend and colleague. She focused my team on the concept of polarities: a spectrum whose balance is less about finding a single point, and more about adapting to shifts from pole to pole under different circumstances.

Thus were my past 24 hours.

Shabbat is referred to as מעין עולם הבא: a flavor of the world to come. For me, it began as the holiest of days, which I will offer as a series of images:

- A handful of female soldiers, rifles slung over their backs, reverently lighting Shabbat candles.
- Three hundred soldiers—Ashkenazi and Sephardi, religious and secular, from a dozen different units, singing

Kabbalat Shabbat — welcoming Shabbat. We spilled out from the tiny synagogue on base into a vortex of dancing, shouting, crying voices as armored Hummers with mounted machine guns drove around us, their occupants smiling and singing along as they headed out to the front. “שבת קדשנו, מחמד ליבנו, וטהר ליבנו לעבדך באמת” we sang: Our holy Shabbat, treasure of our hearts, purify our hearts to truly serve You.

- Overhearing an intellectual debate between a colonel (who formerly led our unit) and our rabbi (a major) about the permissibility of boiling water for coffee on Shabbat in times of war.
- Later learning that that same colonel had volunteered to come back to our unit as a spare hand. After leading it for years, in this war he spent the week releasing potato shipments from local farms to the rest of Israel, milking cows, cleaning garbage after the end of a meal, and arranging an armored caravan to rescue pets left behind when the border towns were evacuated.
- The rabbi said a few words before dinner: “This week, more Jews were killed than in any week since the Holocaust.” He paused. “But this time it’s different. This time we have an army. We will not let Jewish lives be forfeit. We need not walk fearfully in the darkness. We are trained, we are equipped, we are strong.”

Shabbat morning dawned, and I felt very much at peace.

Later in the morning, I stepped into the operations center during a very busy point and saw I could help by sitting at the radio. Not a moment later, a mortar fell directly on one of our positions, and I found myself at the center of reporting and coordinating an emergency evacuation and body identification. Watching multiple teams mobilize with grim expressions on their faces. Watching the

colonel go out to meet the injured as they were loaded onto air transport. Watching his No. 2 step out to speak with a mother. And then the room settled down and we got back to our regular work.

Now Shabbat is over. Tonight is Rosh Chodesh, the first day of the new Hebrew month. The blessing for the new month calls for a good life of peace and redemption. But I cannot put out of my mind the nickname of the new month: Mar Cheshvan, “bitter” Cheshvan. *

Yoni Heilman's diary continues on page 48.

PART ONE

ANALYSIS



DOUGLAS MURRAY

The Easy Politics of Criticizing Israel

*It is not Israel that is the weak link in the chain.
It is almost everybody else*



MY FIRST WAR in Israel was the 2006 Lebanon war. Since then, I have had an allergic reaction to a number of attitudes that crop up every time Israel is involved in a conflict.

The first is the tendency of international observers, both friendly and unfriendly to Israel, to offer the country advice on how it should—or should not—conduct its military responses.

Opponents of Israel demand a cease-fire the moment any atrocity occurs against Israel. But that has been the response of Israel's enemies ever since the creation of the state. Every time Israel's opponents attempt to wipe it out, they swiftly demand a return to the status quo that existed precisely before the attack. It is the same this time around. None of Israel's opponents were

This article was originally published online on October 31, 2023.

demanding a cease-fire on the morning of October 7. But, just as the Arab armies did in 1967 and 1973, when they lose—or sense that they’ll lose—they immediately balk at their territorial and human losses and cry “injustice” over them.

Friends of Israel are equally prone to offering the country military advice. Some will fall away as any war progresses, boosting their “mainstream” or “centrist” credentials by calling for a cease-fire some way into the conflict—always before the stage at which Israel can declare victory. For Israel seems to be the only country in the world never allowed to win a conflict. It is allowed to fight a conflict to a draw, but rarely to a win. Which is one reason why the wars keep occurring.

I mention this tendency only because of its utter futility. There is no reason why the IDF or Israel’s political or military class should listen to the opinions of people with little to no skin in the game. Whenever Israel is involved in a conflict, international observers of all varieties waste their energies shouting into the whirlwind.

A far better use of time, it has always seemed to me, is to work out what can be done in your own country.

The October 7 attack has created an exceptional sense of national unity inside Israel. As my friend Melanie Phillips has commented, almost everybody in Israel knows at least one family that has already lost a loved one. Every Israeli knows somebody who has been called up, if he has not been called up himself. The nation will need this unity and purpose in the period to come. Nobody who knows Israel well will be surprised by the fact of this unity.

It is outside the country that things are actually rotten. It is on the streets of New York City and London that local Muslims and young hoodlums have torn down posters of abducted Israeli children. It is in Berlin that a synagogue has been petrol-bombed and houses of Jews had Jewish labels scrawled on their doors. It is on the streets of Milan that Muslim immigrants have chanted that they want the borders open “so we can kill the Jews.” It is on the streets of Europe’s cities and in the halls of American campuses

that the most rabid Jew-hatred has spilled out. And it is these factors I should like to dwell on.

Let me take just one day of Friday sermons in my own country of birth—Great Britain. On October 20, which was two Fridays after the massacre, there were, as usual, sermons given at hundreds of mosques across the U.K. Generally, the British public have no idea what goes on in these mosques. Many may be peaceful, while many are probably not. It is not a matter of opinion, but a simple matter of observation, to point out that Muslims are in the main subdued when their fellow Muslims are killed by other Muslims. There has been no significant unrest in the West over the hundreds of thousands of Muslims killed in Syria or Yemen. Jews must be involved for Islam's oldest hatred to rear its head.

Here are highlights from just a few of the sermons that we have on record from October 20:

- At a mosque in Manchester, the imam prayed for the victory of the “mujahideen” fighting the “enemy of Allah and Islam.” “Protect them from the usurping Jews,” said the preacher. “Oh almighty, take them away.”
- On the same day in Redbridge, an imam delivered a sermon in which he taught the Koranic lessons about Mohammed's slaughter of the Jews; he concluded with a prayer that the Muslims should have victory over the “cursed” Jews and infidels. “Scatter them and rip their groups apart,” he prayed. “Destroy their houses and homes, bring them down and punish them like you do criminals. Make Muslims get their victory.” Over whom? Once again, over “the usurping Jews.”
- At the local Islamic Center in Lewisham, which has received hundreds of thousands of pounds of taxpayer support, the imam said that Muslim countries must invade Israel for their “honor.” He then prayed for a Hamas victory.

Within 48 hours of the October 7 massacre, pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel protests erupted across the U.K., as in other countries. All before the Israelis had done anything but get slaughtered.

This is the tiniest selection of mosques across the country. We know about what happened in these ones only because people recorded them.

The following day, the streets of London — among other British cities — were flooded with tens of thousands of Muslims. These are people who have been allowed into Britain and whom Britain took in believing that they would become part of the country. These crowds included members of the widely banned group Hizb ut-Tahrir, who called for “jihad” and for the “Muslim armies” to arise. Other protesters were filmed in Whitehall calling for the Islamic State to render its “curses” on the “infidels,” and they made the specific demand that Allah’s curses should “be upon the Jews.”

While such bloodthirsty cries went up, the local Metropolitan police looked on with considerable sanguinity. They later put out a statement from their crack squad of Koran interpreters insisting that the word “jihad” has many meanings. Former detective superintendent at the Metropolitan Police, Shabnam Chaudri, told broadcasters that “jihad means a lot of different things to many different people.” Thus was the behavior of violent and threatening thugs on the streets of Britain excused by the very people tasked with protecting the public. Jewish schools were closed the day before these protests and Jewish schoolchildren who did go to

school were encouraged to dispense with their yarmulkes or any other symbols of their faith.

Although over the years there have been small local protests in relation to Bashar al-Assad's butchery in Syria and other massacres of Muslims worldwide, these protests have been tiny and sectarian. To really fill the streets, you don't even need Israel to have retaliated to a massacre—you just need the massacre. Within 48 hours of the October 7 massacre, pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel protests erupted across the U.K., as in other countries. All before the Israelis had done anything but get slaughtered. Most of the bodies of the dead had not yet even been found.

But the crowds turned out anyway. In Scotland they included the parents of First Minister of Scotland Humza Yousaf. The first minister's wife, Nadia El-Nakla, is Palestinian and has publicly described Israel as a terrorist regime. Her parents—the first minister's in-laws—are in Gaza, despite the recommendations of the British government. Within days, Yousaf was calling for the resettlement of Gazan Palestinians, not to Egypt or Jordan, but into Scotland. Which would certainly mean an even starker alteration of the country of my childhood. I don't think anyone in Scotland even a generation ago thought that the country would ever be a prime candidate for relocations from Gaza. Scotland is still recovering from hundreds of years of a bitter sectarian conflict of its own. What a time to import a new one.

Still, this is what politicians in the West increasingly do. In London, the city's mayor, Sadiq Khan, swiftly called for a cease-fire. Before the third week of protests on London's streets, he released a video calling for a cease-fire: "It will stop the killing and would allow vital aid supplies to reach those who need it in Gaza." He was among the first Labour figures to break the party line on backing Israel's right to defend itself. The Scottish Labour Party leader, Anas Sarwar, swiftly followed suit.

Of course, this has nothing to do with international politics. Neither Israelis nor Palestinians have any need to listen to these

men. It is a purely domestic matter, part of an attempt by certain British politicians to keep their large and increasingly agitated Muslim electorates firmly on their side.

Why do I mention all this? For one reason only. It seems to me that Israel can look after itself. Even when it struggles in doing so, one thing can be said with absolute certainty: The Israeli government and authorities wish to prioritize the well-being of their own people. The same thing cannot be said of other governments and authorities across the West. Obviously the problem is more or less extreme from country to country. In some countries — such as America — the top level of politics maintains its support of the Jewish state. But on the ground, not least on the nation's campuses, the foundations are rotten.

In other countries, there is a rot almost all the way through. To its shame, Britain seems to have become one such nation. But it is a reminder that when it comes to the question of security in the Western alliance, it is not Israel that is the weak link in the chain. It is almost everybody else. *

DAVID WOLPE

Wisdom in the Face of Destruction

*We are in the paradoxical situation,
as a people who love peace, of saying to
the world, 'We must wreak more destruction'*



AFTER WITNESSING Hamas's gleeful butchery of Jews, we will see pictures from Gaza of tremendous destruction in the days to come. Many of us will be called upon to speak. What might we say?

The Torah is a realistic book. It does not hide the reality of human depravity and cruelty. In its pages you will find what you find in the world—that people can be beasts to one another, and that we move haltingly and uncertainly toward goodness.

You will also find the Torah constantly admonishing us to remember. Human beings have a poor memory for pain. Not only is this anecdotally true (how many mothers have said the pain of childbirth

This article was originally published online on October 25, 2023.

fades?) but we also see it in peoples and nations. We don't wish to remember the bad times, the painful times, the evil times. "Why dwell on the past?" is the constant dismissive platitude. But Scripture is wiser than psychology. For when we forget, we also forget what is needed to ensure that evil does not recur.

Again and again, we are told to remember Amalek, the tribe that came savagely upon Israel in the wilderness. That memory is necessary, we are told. In fact, according to the rabbis, when, after battle, the king of Israel, Saul, spared Agag (the king descended from Amalek), he ensured that later there would be another attempt to destroy the Jews in Haman centuries later. We may forget, but history remembers.

That is why the rabbis say that one who is kind to the cruel will end up being cruel to the kind (Tanhuma, Parshat Metzora). They remind us that allowing cruel people to pursue their designs in this world will ultimately lead to innocents running, terrified and helpless, as evil men shoot them in the back, kill their children, and rape the women. It will lead to October 7. The great philosopher Maimonides, having fled from Almohad persecution in Spain in the 12th century, put it more comprehensively. "Compassion toward the wicked," he said, "is cruelty toward all beings" (Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, Part 3, Chapter 39).

So now we witness terrible scenes from Gaza. We know that innocents are dying. And we grieve for those innocents. We do not need to follow that sentence with "but." We can pause for a moment and know that mothers and fathers have been bereft, and people who have no share in the conflicts initiated by their leaders are dying. In the Midrash, in rabbinic legends, when the Temple is destroyed, God rebukes the prophet Jeremiah because in the story Jeremiah does not weep. During the Passover seder, we spill from our wine cups for the suffering of the Egyptians. Tears are the right response to the cries of the suffering of any nation.

We see the pictures in Gaza, and we grieve. And we remember that many times Israel has gone into Gaza in the hope of containing

The crucial moral difference is that, for Israel, the death of civilians is a tragic by-product of war and Israel tries to avoid it; for Hamas, the death of civilians is the point, the yearned-for result, and the beheading of babies is the proof.

Hamas, and the fruit of that restraint is the unparalleled brutality of October 7.

One of the greatest values in Jewish tradition is *pidyon shevuyim*, the redemption of captives. Kidnapping in order to extract concessions is not a new practice, and our ancestors knew it well. We pray ardently, urgently, that the captives — American, Israeli, and from other nations — might be liberated. We know that the cruelty of their captors makes that tragically unlikely.

Yet we know who will pay the price if Israel does not destroy Hamas — not those of us sitting in New York or Los Angeles or Little Rock. The Torah tells us this: “For those of whom you allow to remain of them shall be stings in your eyes and thorns in your sides and shall vex you in the land wherein you dwell” (Numbers 33:55).

Although that is not entirely true. It will not be a threat only in Israel. Synagogues have guards — unlike other houses of worship — because the ideology of Hamas is not liberation. The terrorists did not fly over the fence chanting “two-state solution!” Hamas is a homicidal cult, as we have seen, and it has no borders. The crucial moral difference is that, for Israel, the death of civilians is a tragic by-product of war and Israel tries to avoid it; for Hamas, the death of civilians is the point, the yearned-for result, and the beheading of babies is the proof.

We are in the paradoxical situation, as a people who love peace, of

saying to the world, “We must wreak more destruction.” Not because we cherish it or wish it but because without it, we are being cruel to the future, and not only to our future. For ideology is a contagion, and the reach of Hamas’s sadism has spread far beyond the Gaza Strip, from Mumbai to New York.

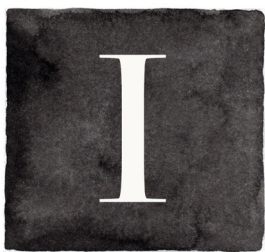
John Adams, the second president of the United States, said, “I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy.” We prosecute this war so that the next generation might have a chance to grow up without this sort of war. We do not do so for revenge, although many no doubt wish revenge. We do not do so for the satisfaction of bloodlust or the imposition of ideology. We do it so the children of Israel, and children elsewhere as Maimonides reminds us, will have the chance to grow up in a world where such ideas no longer capture twisted souls.

So my friends, stand strong and weep; weep and stand strong. As the Psalmist promises, however dark the night, joy will come in the morning. *

BRIAN MULRONEY

In the Face of Antisemitism, Neutrality Is a Sin

Jews are our fellow citizens; they are our friends; they are our neighbors. And this is their home. But until they feel safe and accepted, it will never, in any complete sense, be home for anyone



IN HIS BOOK *Explaining Hitler*, Ron Rosenbaum tells of Hitler, just prior to his suicide, as the Third Reich lay in ruins, calling on Germans to “above all else [continue] the struggle against the Jews, the eternal poisoners of the world.”

Who would have imagined that this call, virtually from the grave, would be heeded more than 80 years later, on an otherwise ordinary Saturday in October when we wit-

Brian Mulroney received the Theodor Herzl Award from the World Jewish Congress on November 9, 2023. This edited transcript of his remarks was originally published online on November 16, 2023.

nessed in horror and disbelief the largest single-day murder of Jews since the Holocaust?

The most sacred duty of any government is to provide for the security of its citizens. No government could let these obscenities go unpunished and retain the trust of its people.

Hamas knew full well the reaction its murderous rampage against innocents would provoke. They knew and didn't care. Indeed, it is the reaction they sought. They chose to put the lives of the 2 million people of Gaza they claim to defend in mortal danger in a deliberate, nihilistic attempt to set the Middle East on fire.

But why would they do this? It was not to increase the likelihood of a Palestinian state. It was not to improve the lives of the people of Gaza. So why? Because these are terrorists in the purest sense of the word, for whom the senseless violent act satisfies the strategic objective: killing Jews.

Hamas knew something else. They knew they could count on a legion of apologists who, while decrying attacks on Jews here at home, are prepared to accept attacks on Jews in Israel as deserved.

Contemporary antisemitism has added the State of Israel to its list of targets. Israel has become the new Jew. Stripped of its intellectual pretensions, of the cloak of human rights, these ritual denunciations of Israel with which we have become all too familiar are a pernicious form of racism.

I do not believe in collective guilt or collective responsibility. Only the killers, and the organization they serve, are guilty of these atrocities. Their women and children are not. And yet, Hamas is using them to pay the price while they scurry about safely in tunnels, demonstrating to the world that they care no more for the lives of Palestinians than for the Jews they slaughtered.

Elie Wiesel once wrote: “What have I learned in the last 40 years? I learned the perils of language and those of silence. I learned that

in extreme situations where human lives and dignity are at stake, neutrality is a sin. It helps the killers, not the victims.” I am far too familiar with the history of my country to ever be silent or neutral when it comes to the victims of antisemitism.

In the spring of 1937, two years after the Nuremberg Race Laws were enacted, Canada’s Prime Minister Mackenzie King visited Germany to meet Chancellor Adolf Hitler, after which he recorded the following in his diary: “My sizing up ... was that he is really one who truly loves his fellow man. ... As I talked with him I could not but think of Joan of Arc. He is distinctly a mystic.”

The following day, King lunched with the Nazi foreign minister Konstantin von Neurath, who “admitted that they had taken some pretty rough steps...but the truth was the country was going to pieces....[The Jews] were getting control of all the business, the finance, and ... it was necessary to get them out to have the Germans really control their own city and affairs.”

How did Canada’s prime minister react to these diabolically racist and extremely ominous comments by the most powerful leaders of the Third Reich? “I wrote a letter of some length by hand to von Neurath whom I like exceedingly. He is, if there ever was one, a genuinely kind, good man.”

King’s description of Hitler as a latter-day Joan of Arc, and von Neurath as a good man, was not the reaction of an ignorant rube duped by slick salesmen of hate. No. Von Neurath’s antisemitic screed simply validated what he, the prime minister of Canada, already believed.

We know this because, a few months before his trip to Germany, King revealed himself when he met an elderly Russian immigrant who related that he had built a furniture and clothing business on Rideau and Bank Streets in Ottawa, had three sons and a daughter, and was now retired: a true Canadian success story. King recorded in his diary: “The only unfortunate part ... is that the Jews having acquired foothold. ... It will not be long before this part of Ottawa will become more or less possessed by them.”

This, from the prime minister of Canada!

The prime minister sets both the agenda and the tone in Ottawa. Is it any wonder, then, that Canada's doors were slammed shut to Jewish immigrants before and during the war? Or that, when asked how many Jews would be allowed into Canada, a senior immigration official famously replied: "None is too many"? Or that a shipload of desperate Jews was denied entry and instead sailed back to Europe on a voyage of the damned?

There come times in a nation's history when the failure to do the right thing has consequences so great that its footfalls haunt us through history. This was such a time, a time when Canada's heritage and promise were dishonored. To this day, I cannot watch footage of the faces of Jewish mothers, fathers, and children consigned to the gas chambers without, as a Canadian, feeling a great sense of sorrow, loss, and guilt.



I was born in Baie-Comeau, a small paper mill town on the North Shore of the St. Lawrence River in 1939, a few months before Canada declared war on Hitler's Germany. There were no Jews in Baie-Comeau. It was not until I entered law school at Université Laval in Quebec City in 1960 that I really came to know Jews.

I had two Jewish classmates, Michael Kastner and Israel (Sonny) Mass, one from a wealthy family and one working-class like me. We became friends and remain so to this day. I learned about the tiny but impressive Jewish community there, but little of its history and challenges in Canada.

It was when I moved to Montreal to practice law in 1964 that I first came into contact with a large Jewish community, which ignited my interest in and support of the Jews and Israel. By this time, the horrors of the Holocaust and the systematic persecution of Jews were fully documented. Why, I asked myself, would such evil be visited upon anyone, and specifically

No child comes into this world a hater. Hatred is learned. Therein lies both the problem and the solution: education, education, education.

the families of this vibrant community I was getting to know?

The Jews of Montreal were remarkable. Families were close, values were taught, education was revered, work was honored, and success was expected. How could it be, I often wondered, that the progenitors of people demonstrably making such a powerful contribution to the economic, cultural, and political life of Montreal and Canada were reviled over centuries and decimated in a six-year period, beginning in the year of my birth?

Thus began my first serious reflections on antisemitism. Following the Holocaust, the cry of “never again” became both affirmation and promise. We hoped that humanity would forswear antisemitism forever. The founding of the State of Israel in 1948 reinforced this hope.

In 1976, at a Quebec Economic Summit chaired by premier René Lévesque, I was astonished to hear the president of the Quebec teachers’ union denounce Sam Steinberg and other Montreal Jewish leaders in a decidedly racist manner. Although I was only a member of the private sector at the time, I demanded the microphone and denounced him and his views on the spot.

That day, I promised myself that if I were ever in a position of leadership, I would do what I could to lift some of the stain from our national character left from that time in the 1930s when we abandoned the Jewish people at the very time in their history that they most needed our protection.

So, in 1984, as leader of the Opposition, when the Pierre Trudeau government invited the Palestine Liberation Organization’s United

Nations representative to be heard in Parliament, at a time when the PLO was officially designated as a terrorist organization, I summoned the Israeli ambassador from his sickbed to my office so that we could jointly excoriate both the government and the PLO.

In 1985, now prime minister, my government appointed the Deschênes Commission of Inquiry on Nazi War Criminals who had escaped to Canada, because, as I said then, “our citizenship shall not be dishonored by those who preach hatred” and “Canada shall never become a safe haven for such persons.”

I appointed Jews to my cabinet and to the highest reaches of the public service and judiciary. I appointed three Jews in succession as chief of staff, perhaps the most sensitive and influential unelected position in Ottawa: Stanley Hartt, Norman Spector, and Hugh Segal.

I appointed Norman Spector as Canada’s first Jewish ambassador to Israel, smashing the odious myth of dual loyalties that had prevented Jews from serving in that position for 40 years.

I invited Chaim Herzog to make the first official state visit to Canada by a president of Israel. On June 27, 1989, I had the high honor of introducing President Herzog as he spoke to a joint session of the House of Commons and Senate.

Senator David Croll was an outstanding member of the Jewish community from Ontario, elected to Parliament as a Liberal in 1945. He never made cabinet for no apparent reason other than that he was a Jew. I elevated this remarkable Canadian to the Privy Council on his 90th birthday.

As leader of the Opposition, I articulated my view of Canada’s foreign policy in the Middle East when I said that Canada under my government would treat fairly the moderate nations in the region such as Jordan, but that, first and foremost, Canada would make an “unshakable commitment” to the integrity and well-being of Israel. And for my nine years as prime minister, we did precisely that.

We committed Canada to participate in the Gulf War in 1991. The many reasons included the security of Israel. History will record we did the right thing.

In 1993, I was the first foreign leader invited to meet with President Clinton. At a joint news conference, we were asked about the peace process. I said: “I’m always very concerned when people start to lecture Israel on the manner in which it looks after its own internal security, because for very important historical reasons, Israel is of course best qualified to make determinations about its own well-being.” I believe that to be true today.

This does not mean that Israel should be immune from criticism. One can strongly disagree with policies of the government of Israel without being called an antisemite. Nor does it mean that a strong defense of Israel’s right to security precludes the acceptance of a Palestinian state whose citizens can know the benefits of health care, education, economic opportunities, and growing prosperity. This should be the objective of all who believe in justice and the dignity of mankind.



This latest surge of antisemitism did not suddenly surface out of nowhere. It is part of the historical continuum that was only briefly interrupted following the Second World War. In the wake of the Holocaust that killed two out of every three European Jews, a butcher’s bill so obscene that even now, more than 80 years later, it beggars understanding, firewalls were thrown up, and the bonfires of antisemitism were for a time reduced to flickering embers.

But those firewalls, weakened by the passage of time and willful neglect, have been breached. Cloaked in the armor of free speech, fueled by hate, and stoked by the oxygen of the internet and social media, those fires now burn out of control.

A telling example of that neglect is that, according to a recent study, 22 percent of young Canadian adults haven’t heard about, or weren’t sure they had heard about, the Holocaust; 52 percent couldn’t name a concentration camp; 62 percent were unaware that 6 million Jews were killed during the Holocaust; and 57 percent of Canadians said

that people now care less about the Holocaust. American surveys on the subject have returned results just as discouraging.

No child comes into this world a hater. Hatred is learned. Therein lies both the problem and the solution: education, education, education. Our children must be taught why this soul-devouring virus cannot be countenanced and why it must be eradicated.

Canadians and Americans share an incontrovertible truth. We are almost all children of immigrants. We have been ennobled and enriched by every culture and religion that thrives in the rich soil of our freedom.

We derive our strength and our energy from our diversity. And while Jews may remain separate from others in the specifics of their faith, they are joined intimately with all of us in their pride of citizenship, their love of peace, and their appreciation for what jewels we have in these civilized and mature nations. We are home for millions who have sought sanctuary and a fresh beginning far removed from the savage winds of violence that afflict so many parts of the world.

In the final analysis, Jews are our fellow citizens; they are our friends; they are our neighbors. And this is their home. But until they feel safe and accepted, it will never, in any complete sense, be home for anyone.



Antisemitism, born in ignorance and nurtured in envy, is the step-child of delusion and evil and is a scourge that must be eradicated. It will not be stamped out in my lifetime, nor in the lifetime of my children, or even, sadly, in that of my grandchildren.

But as Reinhold Niebuhr reminded us: “Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime; therefore, we must be saved by hope. Nothing fine or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore, we must be saved by faith.”

I urge you all to keep the faith in the trying days to come. *

BRET STEPHENS

The Road to a Second Kristallnacht

*This moral shattering did not happen overnight.
It was years in the making*



I'VE ALWAYS been fond of a line from George Orwell: “To see what’s in front of one’s nose needs a constant struggle.” It sums up the job of a newspaper columnist.

My colleagues in the news department, the reporters and editors and bureau chiefs there, are in the business of *revealing*—of revealing what’s new, what’s different, what you didn’t know the day before.

Those of us who work on the opinion desk are largely in the business of *reminding*—of reminding readers of what they once knew or should have known, applying those reminders to new cases, giving them fresh expression. That’s the business I’m in.

Bret Stephens received the Teddy Kollek Award for the Advancement of Jewish Culture from the World Jewish Congress on November 9, 2023. This edited transcript of his remarks was originally published online on November 16, 2023.

We're now in a season of reminders, and it's fitting that this ceremony takes place on the 85th anniversary of Kristallnacht. We commemorate the event not because, in and of itself, it represents a particularly great tragedy: Ninety-one or so murdered that night is almost minor in the long history of Jewish calamities, including what befell us last month.

We commemorate Kristallnacht, rather, for what it presaged and for what it symbolized.

What it presaged was the impending destruction of European Jewry. What it symbolized was the shattering of a moral order that might have prevented their destruction. Kristallnacht was more than a pogrom in the heart of supposedly civilized Europe. It was the signal that all the old categories—decency, order, fairness, justice, reason—no longer applied. Broken glass was a reminder of how brittle the barrier between civilization and barbarism could be.

This moral shattering did not happen overnight. It was years in the making. It first required the preparation of the public mind to accept that anything was permissible when it came to the Jews. And anything was permissible because, as Joseph Goebbels insisted, “the Jews are guilty.”

Guilt first, crime second—like the Queen of Hearts’s “sentence first, verdict afterwards” in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*—is the essence of the inverted logic on which all antisemitism rests.

We are now witnessing, on a daily and even hourly basis, and on a scale only a few of us thought possible just a few years ago, the same kind of moral and logical inversions; the same “heads-I-win, tails-you-lose” sleight-of-hand reasoning; the same denying to Jews the feelings and rights granted to everyone else; the same preparing of the public mind for another open season on the Jews.

You see it everywhere, right here, in front of our noses.

- Israel is told it has a “right” to self-defense—and that every conceivable means of self-defense amounts to a war crime.
- Israel is sternly warned not to “re-occupy” Gaza in the wake

of the present war—even after it was previously accused of continuing to “occupy” Gaza long after it had stopped occupying any part of it in 2005.

- Israel is told not to “blockade” Gaza by depriving it of fuel, electricity, and other goods—even after it was accused for years of blockading Gaza when fuel, electricity, and other goods flowed.
- Israel is expected to stop building or to dismantle settlements in the West Bank for the sake of a Palestinian state—and then told that the kibbutzim whose members were slaughtered last month were also “settlements.”
- Israel is asked to give Palestinian civilians time to flee Gaza before its military campaign begins—and then denounced for creating a “nakba” by forcing Palestinians to flee their homes.
- Israel is told that it must scrupulously abide by the laws of war—even as the wanton murder, rape, and kidnapping of Israelis is treated as a legitimate form of “resistance.”

And then there are the absurdities that Americans are supposed to swallow.

- We are told that “from the river to the sea” is a call for the creation of a Palestinian state, without any mention that it is principally a call for the destruction of the Jewish state.
- We are told that we must hold Israel to a high moral standard because it’s a democracy, and that we should also denounce it because it’s an apartheid state.
- We are told that we should support calls for “Free Palestine,” and that the vehicle for doing so is a Hamas regime that has stripped Palestinians of every civil and human right, not least by treating them as cannon fodder

or human shields in its theocratic death struggle against democratic Israel.

And then, the greatest lie of all: that Israel — the victim of one of the greatest massacres in memory, the proportional equivalent of sixteen 9/11s by American standards, an atrocity that would have been 10 or 100 times worse if the perpetrators had been given the means and opportunity — is, in fact, the real aggressor, the real perpetrator.

The perpetrator, on account of all its alleged crimes before October 7, which meant it got what was coming. And the perpetrator, for having the gall to fight back.

No matter what, Israel is guilty, because Israel, like the Jew of Goebbels's imagination, is definitionally guilty, guilty from birth. The only remedy for guilt from birth is death. Anti-Zionism, an openly eliminationist ideology that is indistinguishable from antisemitism except that it hides itself better, is now a mainstream, respectable view. Respectable on college campuses. Respectable in newspaper offices. Respectable in so many other places that define our culture. If, like me, you believe that politics lies downstream from culture, it won't be long before anti-Zionism also takes hold on campaign trails, in legislatures, in all the other institutions of state.

We are already at the point where the pro-Palestinian movement has become openly pro-Hamas; where the reaction to the murder of Jews is euphoria; where the more Jews are killed, the more it is taken as evidence of the perfidy of the Jews themselves.

This is the road back to Kristallnacht.

It is important to call all of this out — to point, again and again, to the illogic, the fabrications, the reversals of causality, that go into the conspiracy theory that is anti-Zionism. We must expose the intellectual sloppiness and moral slipperiness that occur when retaliation is conflated with aggression, when deliberate murder is treated as the moral equivalent of manslaughter, when raw casualty

If, like me, you believe that politics lies downstream from culture, it won't be long before anti-Zionism also takes hold on campaign trails, in legislatures, in all the other institutions of state.

figures are treated as substitutes for comparative culpability, when the matter of intent is deleted from the equation of justice.

Yet, as important as it is to see what is in front of our noses, it's equally important to stop holding our noses.

We Jews have been holding our noses for quite some time when it comes to the private schools and universities to which we send our children or grandchildren; to the media we read, watch, and hear; to the institutions we support through our philanthropy. I won't name names; you know them anyway. We have wagered that it is better to have influence on the inside than to complain from the outside. But if that influence has achieved anything of real value, it's difficult to see it in this degraded mainstream culture in which Jews increasingly feel alone and afraid.

Now we face a two-front challenge. The first, a frontal battle against the forces gathering to destroy the State of Israel and all those who support it. For Diaspora Jews, this is a battle we won't have to fight militarily, for which we can thank our brothers, sisters, and cousins in Israel. But we do have an obligation to fight it politically, institutionally, financially, culturally.

The second challenge, a much more patient and expensive effort, is to create new institutions—new private schools and universities, new news media, new publishing houses, new think tanks, new prize committees, a new ecosystem of thought and creativity and

culture—to provide an alternative, and ultimately a replacement, to the rotted-out places that we’re at last starting to leave behind.

In this sense, the award you are giving me is aptly named. Teddy Kollek, for all he did in his long career, will be remembered for two things: standing for an undivided Jerusalem, united and held together by Israeli arms; and promoting, within that city, a diverse, boisterous, and flourishing culture, open to all so long as they came in peace.

These are things worth protecting and upholding today: an Israel whose strength and moral confidence protect not only the lives of its people but also the free and vibrant society within it; an America that does not succumb to the same kind of moral disorder that occurred a century ago, when hatred of the Jews became the vehicle for the destruction of all liberal values—of which the shattered glass of Kristallnacht became so emblematic.

That’s the task that falls on all of us tonight. And it’s a task we begin by seeing what’s in front of our nose. *

MICHAEL OREN

The Day After

*At some point, the fighting will end.
What comes next?*



HIS WAR doesn't end with an iconic photo of desert fighters gathered around a makeshift flagpole in Eilat and hoisting a hand-painted Israeli pennant. This war doesn't end with paratroopers gazing heavenward at the Kotel, or with their commander announcing, "The Temple Mount is in our hands." This war doesn't end in black and white but in lurid color as hollow-eyed reservists return home to their families, their careers, and their enduring nightmares. It ends with parents, siblings, wives, and lovers weeping, and with the shouts of bitter reckoning in the streets. And finally, hopefully, the Israel– Hamas war ends with something resembling peace.

That outcome is far from guaranteed. After more than a month in combat, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are far from realizing their objective of destroying Hamas. Much of Gaza has yet to be

This article was originally published online on November 28, 2023.

cleared of the terrorists, some 25,000 of whom are reportedly still alive and battle-ready. Beneath the Strip, an estimated 300 miles of tunnels — booby-trapped and mined — wait.

Meanwhile, multiple clocks are running. There is the clock of ammunition, certain stocks of which are already depleted, and the need to preserve sufficient reserves for a possible second front with Hezbollah. There is the humanitarian-disaster clock of the more than 1 million Palestinian refugees who, at Israel's urging, fled to the southern part of Gaza, who are now exposed to the privations of winter and serving as shields for the terrorists hiding among them. There is the clock of a White House laboring under mounting pressure to mediate further cease-fires and hostage exchanges and that, in turn, pressures Israeli leaders to accept them. There is the financial clock of an Israeli economy: Shorn of tourism and almost all foreign investment, it cannot keep hundreds of thousands of some of its most productive citizens indefinitely mobilized.

The IDF can beat out those clocks by advancing swiftly yet surgically while reducing as much as possible the casualties on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides. Israel can ultimately achieve its goal. The process, however, is likely to stretch over many months, perhaps even a year. And while the world will press its demands, what, if anything, is Israel's endgame?

The same question is being posed by many Israelis, few of whom want to reoccupy Gaza permanently. They, too, want to know how, apart from defeating Hamas, Israel defines victory. What, they ask, does the day after look like?

That day begins, first, with Gaza's demilitarization. No more rockets, rocket factories, or underground arsenals. All the weaponry in the hands of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad must be confiscated and destroyed. The entire tunnel system, all 300 miles of it, must be sealed, cracked, and buried. Gaza must never again serve as a launching pad for any projectile of any caliber at the people of Israel.

Concurrently with demilitarization, Gaza must also be separated

from Israel by a cordon sanitaire of between one and two kilometers in depth. Apart from IDF patrols, no one will be allowed to enter this no-man's-land. No one, certainly, will be able to approach the border.

To stem the smuggling of further armaments into Gaza, the IDF will resume its former positions along the Philadelphi line on the Egyptian border. Israel will retain broad security control over Gaza, including its airspace and radio frequencies, and reserve the right of hot pursuit against reactivated terrorist cells.

Next, Gaza must be internationalized. It must no longer be an Israeli problem or even an Israeli-Egyptian problem, but the responsibility of the international community, above all the United States. The fact that two U.S. carrier strike forces are currently in the Middle East is proof that Gaza threatens not only its immediate neighbors but also the entire region and possibly the world.

Accordingly, the United States must enlist other nations — Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Abraham Accords countries especially — to help demilitarize Gaza and supervise its reconstruction.

The international force will oversee the building of a modern infrastructure for Gaza — transportation systems, water desalinization and waste treatment plants, and electrical grids — along with state-of-the-art hospitals and health-care centers. It will remove the UNRWA institutions and Hamas summer camps that taught Palestinian children to glorify terror; in their place will be schools that educate them for peace. The refugee camps will be disbanded and replaced by new neighborhoods complete with parks and commercial centers. A harbor and an airport will be opened. The farmlands that, prior to Israel's disengagement from Gaza in 2005, exported organic vegetables to the world, will be revived. Gazans must be offered a quality of life totally unthinkable under Hamas.

To ease Gaza's endemic congestion, some have suggested that the Egyptian government might be incentivized to resettle large numbers of Gazans in the northern Sinai Peninsula. This would indeed be a positive development, though one that Egypt is unlikely

to approve. Cairo has long opposed the notion of repatriating even one Palestinian on its soil. Nevertheless, such a solution can still be pursued, and financial offers submitted to the Egyptians.

Completing all these day-after tasks will no doubt prove challenging, yet none will be more onerous than establishing a benign and responsible Palestinian leadership. The Biden administration has already expressed its interest in reestablishing Palestinian Authority control over the Strip. The Israeli government has cautiously concurred but with the caveat that the PA must first extensively be reformed. Certainly, the 88-year-old Mahmoud Abbas, a deeply corrupt and antisemitic autocrat who has accused the IDF of perpetrating the massacres of October 7, who, fearing a Hamas victory, is now in the 18th year of his four-year term, can hardly be reformed. The PA, it must be recalled, took over control of Gaza after Israel's disengagement. PA police were richly funded and trained by the United States only to be overthrown by Hamas two years later. There are compelling reasons to seek an alternative leadership to the PA, one that is native to Gaza and invested in its welfare. Such a leadership would have the option to federate with the West Bank/Judea and Samaria and participate in a future two-state solution.

Such an outcome remains very much in the future, though. The Palestinians will first have to accept America's formula of "two states for two peoples"—they still refuse to recognize the Jews as a people—and to commit to abjuring any further claims against Israel. A democratic Palestinian government, subject to its own laws, must emerge. Only then can a treaty much like the Peace to Prosperity Plan proposed in 2020—involving massive investment in the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian independence, and territorial swaps with Israel—be negotiated. Only then will the trauma and agony of this war become bearable. The attainment of security and peace will help justify the vast sacrifices Israelis have made. Only then, will October 7 indeed have a day after, and many hopeful days after that. *

YONI HEILMAN

October 25–29

Diary of an IDF Soldier

Wednesday, October 25 | 7:14 A.M.



MY SHIFTS vary between three different states: boredom, busywork, and high stress.

An outsider might not be able to distinguish between the first two—we can be frenetic during busywork and loud when we are bored.

But during moments of high stress and danger, there is a level of quiet that settles over everything. We are focused, efficient, deliberate.

Every shift includes all three, and last night was no different. Coming off duty, I sought my refuge: 10 minutes of prayer in our base's shul.

As I emerged and turned to go to sleep, I noticed a circle of soldiers with guitars. Curious, I came closer and sat down to listen. A soldier named Tal was playing a beautiful love song that seemed

These diary entries were originally published online on November 6, 2023.

to fit our new reality like a glove and left everyone in the circle nodding pensively. Tal had spent 20-plus years in a special-forces unit before his age and deteriorating hearing pushed him to seek another role. He is a musician by trade and has attached himself to our unit's mental-health officer, going from subunit to subunit, supporting those who have absorbed too much of what is going on around us.

Another soldier picked up a guitar and sang a haunting melody I'd never heard before, using the words of a prayer called *הושענות*, recited only on Sukkot. He pointed out that the prayer describes God calling out for redemption alongside His people—He's a partner in our darkest hours rather than a spectator from the heavens.

A thick fog sat low above our heads, illuminating the area with the reflection of the base's lights and creating a beautifully surreal ambiance. Yet I am keenly aware that the same fog presents a danger to our unit and just a couple hours earlier had aided a failed terrorist attack in Zikim, on the beaches near another part of the border with Gaza.

Thursday, October 26 | 10:03 A.M.

I could have sworn today was Wednesday, when I half-jokingly checked with someone. Nope—it's Thursday.

The intensity of being part of the military effort in wartime can be so overwhelming that you sometimes forget the outside world. Yesterday a friend messaged me to offer sympathies for the end of the Phillies' playoff run; I had forgotten baseball existed.

I am aware that there are frustrations and questions about the decisions our government is making in the prosecution of this war. There is a feeling that we are standing still when we should be doing something. From where I sit, the army is doing a tremendous amount. Sometimes our efforts play out in a headline; other times they do not. It is the same on an individual level: Sometimes all of our attention is on a soldier who led a successful mission, or

on one who became a casualty. Rarely does the spotlight shine on the officer who cleaned the bathrooms instead of sleeping between shifts, or the guy who sets out snacks for those operating through the night. But we are all working—and working hard, as individuals and as a collective.

Time and time again I am amazed—or more accurately, inspired—to witness firsthand the extraordinary humanity of this army of the Jewish state.

I have said I feel lucky to be here and to have a role to play—which is true. But I am on my own roller coaster of emotions: Sometimes I feel good about the work I am doing and can clearly see my contribution to the war effort; other times, I feel as though I am in the way or unnecessary.

Time to process these thoughts is a luxury, maybe one I should avoid for now. I find it hard to re-read some of my own updates, even when I am just skimming for typos. I read somewhere that army therapists are working to keep soldiers in a state of trauma in order to delay post-trauma until a time when soldiers can afford to focus on processing it. That, there, is a sentence I will find hard to reread. And an idea that seems unfathomable.

A few minutes ago, I walked past a fellow soldier cursing and crying. I don't know him well enough to ask what's wrong, but I don't need to—I can already guess.

There are times when I am aware of another looming challenge, like a distant mountain barely visible through thick fog: the return to normal life.

It was hard enough readjusting to life at a private American university after my initial IDF service. At the time, there was only one person who seemed to understand what I was going through—or at least to understand that she couldn't possibly understand. Twenty years ago yesterday, we started dating; this year, we celebrated 18 years of marriage.

If there is an anchor I cling to in all of this, it is the certainty that she will be waiting for me when I finally reach the shore.

The way we battle, the way we wage war, the way we act in this worst of realities, is not a reflection of who they are but of who we are. When the sounds of gunfire become a distant memory, it will not be our own actions that keep us up at night, but theirs.

Saturday, October 28 | 8:21 P.M.

I have been thinking a lot about silence.

Generally speaking, this war has been nothing if not loud. Most hours of the day and night are filled with the buzz of drones overhead, the bone-rattling thumping of artillery, the roar of jet planes and helicopters flying back and forth, to and from missions.

In between all the noise, though, silence creeps its way in to fill the gaps.

Like a distant memory, I can recall the silence of October 7, of the drive to my base on eerily empty highways.

The way the dull roar of a normal shift drops to a focused hush when something serious happens, like someone spinning the volume button on a radio from 10 to 2.

The silence of a forest filled with empty tents and bloody cars after a music festival became a massacre.

Houses burnt to ashes, or pockmarked with bullet holes, standing silent on a beautiful sunny day in defiance of the tragedies that unfolded inside them.

There are silences I am lucky not to experience: the deafening silence of an empty spot at the dinner table, or of a newly filled grave.

Privacy is practically nonexistent, and when I am off duty, I catch many quiet moments of fellow soldiers. A father answering the question of his young children the only way he can, in order to preserve secure information: “It’s not important where I am — and Hamas doesn’t need to know, either.” A military officer and his No. 2 reading a poem by the poet Hayim Nahman Bialik about the 1903 Kishinev pogrom and discussing its parallels to October 7.

The background silence of my nine-year-old, who mostly stays off-screen when I call home because it’s too hard for him to see me where I am.

And the silence on the radio, when our unit is attacked, until each position calls in that everyone is unharmed. And the thousandth-of-a-second of silence when the call comes that someone has been injured or worse, that millisecond while the brain processes the truth before the body kicks into action.

Sunday, October 29 | 9:27 A.M.

For security reasons, I cannot write about military tactics, though I wish I could. Time and time again I am amazed — or more accurately, inspired — to witness firsthand the extraordinary humanity of this army of the Jewish state.

For 2,000 years, all aspects of Jewish law that relate to self-governance were theoretical, abstract — maybe even ridiculous — as we were shepherded from country to country, ghetto to Pale of Settlement to ghetto, and eventually to death camps. The idea of Jewish sovereignty was laughable. But we clung to our code of ethics, studied our body of law — the Torah — and made it central to our national identity. Such that when our sovereignty was restored after two millennia, we had a moral and ethical foundation upon which to build.

I see it play out before my eyes. Behind every angry comment about “razing Gaza” are Jewish souls that, when it comes to waging war, cannot but treasure human life. For all of the anti-Israel

propaganda about “carpet-bombing,” in my experience “precision-bombing” is not a sufficiently accurate term. There is no military term for the way this army wages war on its enemies; I don’t think modern terminology considers the possibility of such a humane approach to battle. I am filled with pride.

I see the other side’s tactics as well. It fills me with a disgust so deep that I cannot distinguish it from severe nausea. Multiple times I have seen Hamas use their own children — and their knowledge of how we value children’s lives — as a weapon against us. As a human being, as a father, I am stunned to see children deliberately put in mortal danger.

I shouldn’t be surprised. After all, the massacres of October 7 were not undertaken by individuals with any moral compass. It feels critical to retain a sense of the humanity of our enemies, but I simply cannot find it in what I am witnessing.

I hang on to a thought: The way we battle, the way we wage war, the way we act in this worst of realities, is not a reflection of who they are but of who we are. When the sounds of gunfire become a distant memory, it will not be our own actions that keep us up at night, but theirs.

Fifty years ago, Prime Minister Golda Meir wrote, “Peace will come when the Arabs will love their children more than they hate us.”

Alas, that time has not yet come. *

Yoni Heilman’s diary continues on page 88.

PART TWO

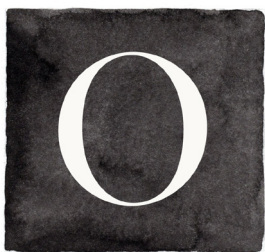
CAMPUS



ROGER ROSENBLATT

What's Happened to Harvard?

Since Harvard is a teaching institution, one must ask what can be taught to someone who effectively cheers on the beheading of babies



ONE CANNOT get it out of one's head. The young Israeli at the music festival, trapped, awaiting capture and worse from the Hamas murderers, sending two brief sentences back to his family: "I love you" and "I'm sorry."

It's the "I'm sorry" that brings you to your knees, because what he was being sorry for was causing his family and loved ones such pain. He wasn't suffering at the moment he sent the message. He was anticipating their anxiety, sorrow, and grief, and he was attempting to relieve them of these burdens by assuming them himself. Another young Jewish man did a similar thing a couple of thousand years ago. "I'm sorry."

This article was originally published online on October 16, 2023.

It goes wider and deeper. “I’m sorry.” I’m sorry for providing a satisfying moment for these dead-hearted murderers. Sorry that my life is likely to end before I could do anything to counter evil impulses, evil people. Sorry that I’m only human.

Halfway across the world, the murderers’ verbal accomplices—one waving a swastika—gather and march in Times Square, and send notices from Fair Harvard that the slaughter of children was justified. Or just as bad, that there’s much to be said on both sides. (I cringe even as I write that tripe.) When Donald Trump says something like that—as he did following the lethal street violence in Charlottesville—he showed himself to be the most dangerous sort of apologist, an inciter of riots. When Harvard students say that, and worse, what are they to be called? Free speakers with a controversial point of view?

When I was teaching English and writing at Harvard in the 1960s, I was also senior tutor, a sort of resident dean, and, later, master (when that title existed) at Dunster House. So I worked closely with both students and faculty. It was the time of anti-Vietnam protests all over the country—at Harvard, the protests sometimes taking the form of students blocking recruiters who were in one way or another associated with the war effort, then escalating to building takeovers and student strikes.

The issue then was quite different, of course. We were involved in a wrong war, and we had to get out.

But the question of how the university ought to respond was generically the same. Protest, yes. But how far is too far? And where does protest become the equivalent of violence itself? Clearly something instructive was to be attached to disciplining students for their protests. Yet everything they were being taught in their classrooms told them to speak their minds fearlessly. The line that was drawn had to do with damage. Demonstrations that threatened the purposes, indeed the existence of the university—that intended and supported pure destruction—were not to be countenanced.

Of course, there were faculty members who wanted to pat the

To study the world is to weep with the world.
What is to be done with people, at Harvard or
in Timbuktu, who celebrate death over life?

protesting students on the back, or just as bad, sit and wait for things to blow over. But the faculty members who did not speak out against the destruction of the university and its principles were simply being cowardly, or fooling themselves. And the student protesters would learn absolutely nothing about the line between forcefully demonstrating opinions and fomenting violence.

At a memorable faculty meeting (they seemed to come twice a day), it was proposed that the students be cheered rather than disciplined. Professor of Government Samuel Beer, the most admired liberal Democrat on the faculty and a hero to most of the students, stood up and said that if that were to happen, “You do them no favor.” Nothing would be left of the rudderless “good ship Harvard” but flotsam.

He meant, of course, as Dr. King preached and proved, that the anticipation of punishment is a necessary part of civil disobedience.

So now, as the young Israeli who was sorry lies dead or in shackles (it was reported that he lost one arm in the Hamas onslaught), pro-Palestinian groups at Harvard proudly march in favor of terrorists. Even the Harvard president, who eventually seemed to recant with a strong statement condemning Hamas, came out initially with something so carefully balanced, it sank of its own weight.

Since Harvard is a teaching institution, one must ask what can be taught to someone who effectively cheers on the beheading of babies. By so savage an act — as savage as the act it applauds — one forfeits the right to call oneself a student. A student’s mind is by

definition open to learning—flexible, inquiring, and above all sympathetic. To study the world is to weep with the world. What is to be done with people, at Harvard or in Timbuktu, who celebrate death over life? Not for nothing is the Hebrew toast—*L'chaim*—what it is.

I'm sorry. There are no two sides to this slaughter. Either you are the side of the healers or the killers. I'm sorry. In some situations—too many, historically—moral relativism does not apply. I'm sorry, as is every parent and grandparent in the world, that the life—the good and vibrant life of one young man in Israel, who at this moment could be eating, drinking, singing, and laughing with his family—may be no more. And for what? Bloodlust. Sorry, sorry, sorry. *

SARA STEINHARDT BLOOM

New Priorities for American Jews

What if we decided that widespread antisemitism had irreparably ruined these universities and their once-lofty reputations?



HE LAUGHS HAVE BEEN few and far between lately. Maybe that is why it felt so good when Leon Cooperman, the billionaire investor, blurted out on live television that “these kids at the colleges have shit for brains.”

Mr. Cooperman, the first in his family to graduate college, took a big step toward achieving the American dream when he was accepted to Columbia University. I know this story well because the same is true of my father, Michael Steinhardt. In May 1957, he had breakfast with his usually absent father to tell him of his plans to attend City College. In response, my grandfather, who hadn't finished eighth grade, let alone high school, told his son that there was this fancy school that wealthy Jewish boys attended,

This article was originally published online on November 6, 2023.

that he had read about it in the *New York Times* wedding section. If my dad could get into Wharton, my grandfather would pay for it.

That was nearly 70 years ago—and the American Jewish community is still lusting after entry into elite universities as if these institutions are the sole path to success, the most important sign of being on track to a lifetime of wealth and happiness. But recent events have shown us that the universities don't, in fact, lust after us.

In the past few weeks, Marc Rowan, Ronald Lauder, Jon Huntsman, Les Wexner, and other philanthropists have had a long-overdue wake-up call alerting them that many academic institutions have seriously lost their way. The influence of antisemitic ideas on campus—cloaked in the guise of anti-Zionism promoted by student groups, faculty, and administrators—has finally outweighed some people's desire to support the schools that once helped them achieve success. (It has even outweighed the hope that their donations would secure admission for their children and grandchildren.)

On many campuses, outrageous, blatant lies about Israel's past and present cast the Jewish state as a genocidal, bloodthirsty invader of indigenous lands. Pressure from faculty and students, the weight of immense donations from countries including Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and plain old cowardice have led too many school administrators to issue mealy-mouthed “both sides” statements about the October 7 attacks and to look the other way as students and outsiders aggressively march through campus, interrupt memorial vigils, threaten and even assault students, cheer for the recent massacre and wish for future ones, and tear down pictures of hostages.

This is a pathetic moment for the American university. It might shock us, but it shouldn't surprise us.

Elite universities in particular have been consumed in recent years by the notion that the world can be seen simply as a race-based identity hierarchy of “oppressors” and “oppressed.” This is the hip new take on an ideology entrenched in universities for decades—one that has metastasized beyond them and into the media, corporate America, and American political life. This ideology

argues that the West and the values that have built Western civilization are indelibly stained by racism and imperialism. American Jews, who are alleged to be white, or even “hyper-white,” are, the story goes, on the oppressor side of the ledger. The Jews’ alleged whiteness combines with their alleged imperialism to justify the claim that the Jewish presence in Israel is “settler colonialism.” Jews become the worst of all villains—which should come as no surprise to anyone who knows Jewish history.

And so we arrive, step by rotten step, at the ideas and behaviors on display on campuses today, where the mass killing of Jews in Israel is celebrated as an act of “resistance” or a just “military action” against “occupiers” by the “indigenous” population. In this twisted logic, Jews can never be genuine victims, even when they’re being murdered, raped, or kidnapped. Facts don’t matter—including the fact that Israel, the restoration of the Jewish people’s ancient homeland, was created as a refuge from millennia of genocidal attacks just like those perpetrated by Hamas terrorists in October.

Faced with this grotesque spectacle that violates all norms of humanity, civilization, and intellectual rigor, university leaders are—wait for it!—doubling down.

On a recent call with an elite university president (who is Jewish), whose Jewish students are genuinely terrified to be on campus, whose students and employees have demonstrated all of the above bad behaviors *and* been caught on camera doing so, this president said that her university had been “a leader.” Its response had been “remarkable.” The university has been “on it.” When I asked about the role that the same ideology infusing DEI programs on campus had played in demonizing Jews, she had absolutely no idea what I was talking about.

The hypocrisy would be laughable if I had the heart to laugh. We all know exactly what these institutions would have done if they had seen barbarism and slaughter in any other context celebrated on campus or anywhere else. Or if the posters being proudly torn down (in some places, by Jewish students) featured

Our students are living in fear because their classmates are threatening to kill them and celebrating the deaths of their loved ones in Israel. *What other group would stand for this?*

victims of police brutality or homophobia rather than kidnapped Israelis. The response would have been a full-throated condemnation and a rapid, public demonstration that the university was pursuing all possible means to identify and investigate those who had broken its rules and behaved so abominably. Instead: crickets. After incessantly blathering for years about condemning hate of all kinds, university administrators are showing us that, well, actually, it's simply not so popular to announce that you're punishing people who hate the Jews.

The moral rot of universities can be addressed only by the universities themselves. But if you are waiting for that to happen, don't hold your breath.

Don't be like the trustee who implored me to be "hopeful." Don't stick with a school because you think you'll have a little influence from within. (This is the "what power does Marc Rowan have now?" argument. The answer: He has a lot of power, including perhaps depriving the university of a billion dollars in donations.) Don't imagine that Band-aids such as new debate clubs or morning prayer sessions for the soldiers and the hostages (both real examples that donors shared with me) are going to make a dent.

If pernicious ideologies have been baked into the soul of elite universities over the past 20 years (at least), then denial, appeasement, and fear have been baked into the soul of Jews over the past 20 centuries. It's time to stop.

When the trustees at universities decide that their institutions need an overhaul, they can begin the long road back to reclaiming moral clarity. They can call the Brandeis Center to investigate legal action against persistent discrimination, or submit to an external review of the impact that DEI has had on their campuses. When the presidents of these universities want to evaluate their policies regarding free speech, and stop using these policies as cover for hate speech, they can clean up their act so that professors who applaud civilian massacres are fired, and those who intellectually challenge their students are celebrated.

Jewish donors and trustees cannot and should not lead this charge. We will, of course, sue the universities to ensure that students' civil rights are protected, and that the universities comply with federal laws. But ultimately, for universities to change, their leadership must recognize that they are morally and intellectually bankrupt.

While Israelis figure out how to destroy Hamas, we in the American Jewish community need to rethink our priorities. Netanyahu has begun to call this Israel's "second war of independence." American Jews need to adopt a similar revolutionary approach and to start rethinking how we live in this country — starting with a loud refusal to tolerate people who slander us and behaviors that threaten us. Even if the Jewish story in America winds up ending the way it has in nearly every other country around the world, we need to go down fighting.

To start, in terms of campuses: University donors shouldn't be satisfied with a "better letter" or tepid plans outlining "listening sessions" and "education about antisemitism and Islamophobia." Our students are living in fear because their classmates are threatening to kill them and celebrating the deaths of their loved ones in Israel. *What other group would stand for this?* Take your cue from the impassioned speeches of Mijal Bitton at NYU or Professor Shai Davidai at Columbia. Yell and cry and build Jewish pride and demand that the universities treat Jews with the respect that any human should deserve.

We need to demand recognition of the rot in the university system. We need to demand a wholesale change. And if we can't find it in the places we used to love, then we need to walk away. Find new places to care about, and start building entirely new programs and institutions.



“Imagination is more important than knowledge,” Albert Einstein said. While knowledge is limited, imagination knows no bounds. The Jewish people’s long history of harnessing our imagination gives me hope. Instead of the Ivy League continuing to receive eight-figure checks from our philanthropists, let’s get creative and think anew about how our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren can thrive in this country. Let’s build some backbone and some pride already. As Bitton said: “Our generation’s souls are being formed, right now, in fire.” Let’s harness this for the rebirth of a strong, forceful, pride-infused Jewish life in America. Some ideas:

What if all our high-school seniors in their second semester went on a week-long program in America to prepare them for life as American Jews — a prequel, if you will, to Birthright? Here they would learn that Jews are a civilization, a people, a culture, and yes, a religion. They would learn that the idea of the Jewish people does not fit easily in Western categories of identity, and that our very existence gives the lie to the ideology itself. They would learn that many of the best ideas in Western civilization either come from the Jews or have been embraced and spread by the Jews. They would learn Jewish pride and Jewish fierceness. They would learn Jewish history and maybe even some Hebrew.

What if we invested in the reconstitution of the Zionist youth movements that have lost steam in America over the past few decades? We can amplify the enthusiasm of our teens who *do* feel a sense of

Jewish reawakening in this moment and support them to project and promote Jewish pride—through weekend retreats, peer-led activities, camp summers, and experiences with their Israeli counterparts remotely and in person?

What if tens of thousands of 18-year-olds volunteered in Israel for a gap year between high school and college, or during college, or after it? They could learn Hebrew, apprentice under Israeli artists or entrepreneurs or teachers, pick carrots and potatoes, serve in the IDF, help rebuild the country after this trauma.

What if a significant portion of our college students went to elite universities in Israel, such as the Technion or Hebrew University or Ben-Gurion University or the Reichman Institute, where international students would be taught in English?

What if we built vibrant, exciting *ulpan*s (Hebrew-language schools) in major cities in America, so young adults who return from gap years or Birthright trips could learn to speak Hebrew and enjoy Israeli music, food, and film?

And what if we decided that widespread antisemitism had irreparably ruined these universities and their once-lofty reputations? What if we actively sought out and invested in the schools that are getting the current moment right? Let's identify universities that are actually devoted to justice, truth, scholarship, and high-minded ideals; where the difference between good and evil is obvious; and where the ideal of educating and building moral citizens for a diverse world becomes a reality. Let's take the steps to make Yeshiva University or Brandeis or other colleges into highly competitive institutions, beacons of educational freedom and light. Let's woo top college professors away from the Ivy towers—professors who are surely tired of walking on eggshells around their students, who want their instruction to center on critical thinking and controversy.

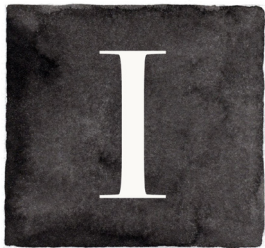
Einstein also said, “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” Our problems, the oldest problems in the world, have not changed. Let us now find the determination, the chutzpah, the humility, the courage, the pride, the audacity, and the dollars to fight our own war here in America. It is not as bloody as the war being fought in Israel. But it’s our own front, with its own dangers, and it’s on us to engage in the fight. *

.

NADINE STROSSEN &
KENNETH S. STERN

SJP Still Deserves Freedom of Speech

The strong protections U.S. law affords to much hateful expression is especially important for members of any minority group, very much including Jews and Zionists on campus



IN THE AFTERMATH of Hamas’s brutal October 7 massacre, a number of chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and other student groups issued statements praising as “resistance” Hamas’s killing of babies, raping of women, and seizing of hostages — all of which violate the laws of war, not to mention basic human norms.

We share the outrage. But we are deeply concerned by efforts to suppress rather than respond to this expression. As First Amendment law recognizes, there is a fundamental difference

This article was originally published online on November 9, 2023.

between the government punishing speech that intimidates targeted students — as it must — and speech articulating abhorrent ideas — which it may not. Students have the right to express support for Hamas, just as they had the right to express support for the North Vietnamese in the 1960s or the Communist Party in the 1950s.

Almost everything we hear being said about Hamas is protected from government action. Further, although private higher educational institutions are not bound by the First Amendment, almost all have committed themselves to abide by First Amendment standards, and these commitments can be enforced as a matter of contract law.

So demands from politicians and Jewish groups that SJP be thrown off campus or investigated for potential “material support” for terrorism (which *is* illegal) based only on things they are saying are not only legally dubious; they will surely backfire. For a university to fulfill its mission of promoting critical thinking, students must be able to express ideas, no matter how repugnant society might consider them.



In the long run, the kinds of demands being made are bad for Jews, too. Throughout our careers, we have fought antisemitism and other discriminatory ideologies. We believe that the strong protections U.S. law affords to much hateful expression is especially important for members of any minority group, very much including Jews and Zionists on campus.

We concur with the fundamental tenets laid out in 1927 by the first Jewish Supreme Court justice, Louis Brandeis: that, far from suppressing hatred, “repression [of speech] breeds hate,” that “the fitting remedy for evil counsels is good ones,” and that “only an emergency can justify repression” of speech. Consistent with Brandeis’s “emergency principle,” the government may punish

hateful speech that, in context, directly causes or threatens specific, serious, and imminent harm. Such constitutionally unprotected speech includes intentional incitement of imminent violence, and targeted threats and harassment. Enforcing these limits on speech is itself speech-protective: After all, when Jewish students and faculty members are intimidated by threatening or harassing speech, they are deterred from exercising their own First Amendment freedoms of speech and association.

But the government may not restrict speech solely because its message is hateful or hated, or because it might indirectly lead to some future harm. Under that looser, “bad tendency” test, which prevailed until the 1960s, the government had too much discretion to punish minority voices and views—including those advocating human rights. As Brandeis recognized, both liberty and safety are promoted when government restricts speech that meets the emergency standard, but both are undermined when government restricts speech that does not.

Of course, the recent torrent of hateful antisemitic and anti-Zionist expression does include a few cases that do meet the emergency test. On October 31, Cornell University junior Patrick Dai was arrested on federal criminal charges for posting online threats that directly targeted Jewish students. Among other antisemitic, threatening language, Dai said, “gonna shoot up 104 West,” a Cornell dining hall that caters predominantly to kosher students. In another post, he threatened to “stab” and “slit the throat” of any Jewish males he sees on campus, to rape and throw off a cliff any Jewish females, and to behead any Jewish babies. He also threatened to “bring an assault rifle to campus and shoot all you pig Jews.” When antisemitic speech targets specific individuals or groups of individuals and intentionally instills in them a reasonable fear that they will be subject to violence, it constitutes a punishable “true threat.” Another example of illegal threats on campus may be seen in this recently-circulated video, which appears to show a Jewish student at Harvard surrounded

Both liberty and safety are promoted when government restricts speech that meets the emergency standard, but both are undermined when government restricts speech that does not.

by anti-Israeli protesters and cornered while trying to move on; they are restricting his right of movement and making physical contact with him.

The online post by a UC Davis professor that used threatening language against “zionist journalists who spread propaganda & misinformation” and their families is trickier. Deplorable as this expression is, it does not target a sufficiently specific set of individuals to be punishable, in our view — unless one or more individual journalists can point to additional contextual facts that led the post to instill reasonable fears in them. This might be the case, for instance, if the professor had previously described a specific individual as “a zionist journalist,” or as someone who “spread[s] propaganda & misinformation.”

Short of this, however, censorship is bad for everyone. This is why we oppose efforts to punish constitutionally protected expression by SJP. Florida’s Governor Ron DeSantis ordered state universities to ban SJP. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the Brandeis Center urged university presidents to investigate their campus SJP chapters for potential violations of laws barring material support for foreign terrorist organizations.

These actions were prompted by SJP’s parroting of pro-Hamas propaganda: The ADL and the Brandeis Center stressed that the national SJP provided its chapters with a toolkit instructing, “We must act as part of this movement,” and followed with campus

A core value of the academy is, or should be, the quest for individual agency and rejection of groupthink; everyone learns more from people with whom they disagree.

events where students “proudly declared ‘We are Hamas,’ and ‘We echo Hamas.’” This kind of hateful, incendiary rhetoric scares and enrages many on campus, particularly Jews and Zionists. They feel unsafe, unequal, and uninvited. To borrow a trope from progressive campus activists describing far tamer expression, such pro-Hamas rhetoric “denies the humanity” of Israelis and Jews. But these expressions hardly amount to “material support” for Hamas.

In rulings that prohibited the government from punishing a Ku Klux Klan leader’s call for violence against blacks and Jews, or from punishing civil rights and anti-war activists who used violent, incendiary rhetoric, even when their speech was followed by some violent action, the Supreme Court explained that we must tolerate such language because “strong and effective extemporaneous rhetoric cannot be nicely channeled in purely dulcet phrases. An advocate must be free to stimulate his audience with . . . emotional appeals.” The Court has recognized that even explicitly threatening, violent language may well constitute “political hyperbole,” because “the language used in the political arena . . . is often vituperative, abusive and inexact.”

It’s enormously important, therefore, to recognize the line between permitted “expression” in support of foreign terrorist organizations and forbidden “material support” for them.

In its 2010 *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project* decision, the

Supreme Court repeatedly stressed the narrowness of the federal statute’s concept of expression that constitutes “material support,” which requires “working in coordination with or at the command of” the foreign terrorist organization. Even more on point is the Court’s 1972 *Healy v. James* decision, which ruled against a university’s refusal to recognize a campus chapter of Students for a Democratic Society, based on a generalized fear that the chapter might engage in “disruptive” activities. Following these precedents, no campus may take any punitive action against its SJP chapter based on that chapter’s expressive conduct alone. If, however, the chapter were to go beyond advocacy for Hamas to *fundraising* for it, that would violate “material support” laws without raising any First Amendment issue. But we are unaware of any evidence that SJP has done so. And if there were such evidence, it would be a matter for law enforcement, not an investigation by campus administrators or unsubstantiated presumptions of illegality by state officials.

Then there is the difficult area where speech and action may be intermingled. On October 31, Virginia’s attorney general announced that his office had launched an investigation into American Muslims for Palestine, a nonprofit organization that funds SJP, for potentially violating Virginia’s charitable-solicitation laws. In a long series of cases, the Supreme Court has recognized that regulations on charitable solicitation burden First Amendment rights of expression and association; hence, the government must demonstrate that any such regulation serves important purposes—such as preventing fraud—without unduly restricting the organizations’ expressive conduct. It is especially important that these regulations not selectively target particular nonprofits because of their ideologies. It may be tempting to overlook such concerns in the case of antisemitism and terrorism. But we should not forget that Southern states deployed these very tactics against the NAACP in the mid-20th century, in response to its anti-Jim Crow advocacy.



The lesson of speech-suppressive measures throughout history and around the world is that they are likely to be ineffective at best, counterproductive at worst. Already, the initiatives against SJP's pro-Hamas advocacy have drawn increased attention to that activism, illustrating the familiar "forbidden fruits" phenomenon. Additionally, SJP and other Hamas apologists have been able to claim that efforts to silence their ideas reflect the inability to rebut those ideas on their merits. Why should SJP be given the gift of free-speech martyrdom?

More effective strategies include offering classes and programs about the following topics: how to discuss difficult issues without vilifying classmates; the importance of free speech and academic freedom; the causes of various hatreds and approaches for countering them; and the history surrounding the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. University leaders should also strongly protect students from physical assaults as well as from intimidating, harassing, and other illegal speech and acts, while stressing that students should be expected to hear ideas that they disagree with—ideas, even, that cut them to their core. Moreover, universities should encourage all students to avoid communicating in ways that are insulting, offensive, disrespectful, or frightening—to be mindful that while they may not be able to control what happens in Israel and the Palestinian territories, they can control how they treat their classmates. Leaders and faculty should stress that this is an opportunity for empathy and intellectual curiosity. Why does the friendly student who sits next to you in an art or physics class hold a view of the conflict that you consider evil? If you're a partisan, doesn't it help your advocacy to imagine yourself in that classmate's shoes, to ponder how and why your adversary sees things differently, so that you may counter her arguments more effectively? A core value of the academy is, or should be, the quest for individual agency and rejection of groupthink; everyone learns more from people with

whom they disagree. That's a message that's not stressed enough, and now would be a good time to underscore it.

To be sure, the “good counsels” that Brandeis advocated in response to speech that falls short of his emergency standard is not guaranteed to reduce hatred of Jews or support for ruthless terrorists. But, as both history and reasoning have shown, the alternative censorial strategy is doomed to fail. *

JACOB BAIME

SJP Does Not Belong on Campus

Students for Justice in Palestine has been treated with kid gloves on most campuses, but the signs of this group's fascistic tendencies have been obvious for years



UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS seem to be surprised that they have been incubating some of the leading and most active antisemites in America. In their reactions to the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel, and then to subsequent outrages against Jewish students and campus communities, they seem mystified. Institutions so devoted to “safety,” “inclusion,” and “diversity” have become the launching pad for the vocal and aggressive demonization of Israel and Israelis, as well as any student who identifies as a Zionist. How can that be?

I’ve worked with pro-Israel students on campus for nearly two decades. I concluded long ago that university leaders don’t think

This article was originally published online on November 9, 2023.

of Jews as deserving of any of the traditional protections or considerations of the modern American university. Jewish students are seen as privileged and white, and therefore in a position of permanent, structural power. When students of color, gay or transgender students, or Muslim students complain of mistreatment, universities swiftly come to their aid with new security and police measures, heavy administrative involvement, and loud calls to identify and investigate the perpetrators. When Jewish students complain — even about explicitly threatening vitriol that no one would dare level against any other group — universities suddenly remember their real purpose. Jewish students, and Jewish students alone, are told: Learning to contend with your ideological opponents is what the university is about.

This “justice for me, but not for thee” dynamic isn’t new. For years it has caused Jewish students and faculty to self-censor, to hide their Jewish identities, and especially to deny their connections to Israel and Zionism. Today, on one campus after another, Jews are being called to testify against themselves in some kind of lose-lose inquisition: If they defend Israel, they are guilty. If they criticize elements of Israel’s counterattack in Gaza but still believe Israel was victimized by Hamas — they’re also guilty.

How should university leadership respond? One particularly important question will be whether they have fostered campus antisemitism by funding and sanctioning individual chapters of a leading anti-Israel group on campus, Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). SJP has been treated with kid gloves on most campuses, but the signs of this group’s fascistic tendencies have been obvious for years. At campus debates over boycotting Israeli products, SJP has attempted to drown out and intimidate pro-Israel students. Its members have physically blocked the tables for Birthright Israel trips and confronted students interested in signing up. SJP has even taken to calling for the removal of Hillel from campus, simply because Hillel believes in the importance and value of a Jewish state.

Far from espousing interest in legitimate debate about Middle East politics, and far from calling for a two-state solution, SJP has long endorsed the annihilation of the State of Israel. Chants of “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” are mainstays at their rallies. In the weeks since October 7, their statements and activities at Harvard, George Mason, Northwestern, Rutgers, and other campuses have endorsed “all forms of resistance,” “our comrades in blood and arms,” and “a unified Palestine”—all of which, in the current climate, could be understood as incitement to violence. That’s exactly what happened at Tulane late last month, when three Jewish students were physically attacked, and more recently at UMass Amherst, where a student was arrested for punching a Jewish student.

Florida governor Ron DeSantis recently banned SJP from state university campuses, while Virginia’s attorney general has launched a probe into the group’s fundraising, suggesting that Virginia may follow Florida’s lead. This week, Brandeis University became the first private university to ban SJP, citing its support for Hamas. The Anti-Defamation League and the Brandeis Center have sent a letter to university presidents urging them to investigate SJP for “materially supporting a foreign terrorist organization.” SJP’s funding sources remain opaque, since it is not a 501(c)3 non-profit, but its ties to American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) are well-documented. As the Foundation for Defense of Democracies has revealed, AMP was reconstituted from the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development and also the Islamic Association for Palestine, which were shut down by the U.S. government for funding Hamas.

Those defending SJP’s presence seem to have discovered a newfound commitment to freedom of speech, open inquiry, and university neutrality. The rest of us can be forgiven for finding this defense disingenuous and unlikely to last the next time a more popular marginalized group is attacked in the same way. The hypocrisy of private colleges and universities is particularly

The only way universities exit the spiral is by setting a new course for themselves and defining a culture that is not, at its core, comfortable with antisemitism or its present corollary, anti-Zionism.

shameful, as they have enforced speech codes policing “hate speech,” harassment, and intimidation much less aggressive than SJP’s.

As Jewish students at Brown, Cornell, and Yale recently argued in the *New York Times*, SJP’s tactics are not about swaying opinion but about intimidating Jewish students. The students defend the right to debate and peaceful protest, but add:

Free inquiry is not possible in an environment of intimidation. Harassment and intimidation fly in the face of the purpose of a university. The codes of ethics of universities across the country condemn intimidation and hold students and faculty to standards of dignity and respect for others. Campuses are at a crossroads: The leadership can either enforce these ethics, or these places of learning will succumb to mob rule by their most radical voices, risking the continuation of actual violence. Simply affirming that taunts and intimidation have no place on campus isn’t enough. Professors violating these rules should be disciplined or dismissed. Student groups that incite or justify violence should not be given university funds to conduct activity on campus.

Whether SJP should be permitted to operate on campus is no longer primarily a legal question, but a moral one. If the rhetoric

and actions at Charlottesville or the argument that “All Lives Matter” were easy for universities to denounce and marginalize on campus, why can they not do the same for SJP? If I were a university leader taking seriously the spread of antisemitism on my campus, I would look at SJP and ask whether its presence was improving or damaging the campus climate. The answer should be obvious.

Instead, when these incidents are presented to university leaders, whether by Hillel or Chabad directors, or by national organizations such as my own (the Israel on Campus Coalition), the response is similar. “This is concerning and merits further study and monitoring.” “This is a very emotional issue, and if Jewish students need support, we are there for them.” “We try not to police people’s views on highly charged political issues.” It’s always the same neutral and bloodless language of today’s therapeutic culture. But Jewish students don’t want therapy and counseling. They want security—and the freedom to learn without intimidation sanctioned and permitted by the universities themselves.

That expectation is starting to gain a following. Three out of the past four presidential administrations—Bush’s, Trump’s, and Biden’s—have pressed the Department of Education to protect the civil rights of Jewish students. Increasingly, the department’s civil-rights bureaucracy is responsive. This should give university administrators pause: The government is starting to listen to Jewish students, and it has the power to investigate, take sworn testimony, read emails, and make administrators answer for their sins of commission and omission.

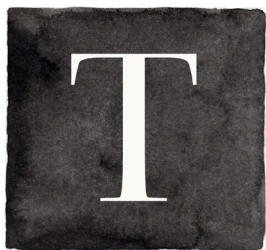
The only way universities exit the spiral is by setting a new course for themselves and defining a culture that is not, at its core, comfortable with antisemitism or its present corollary, anti-Zionism. University leadership must expect a new and firm commitment to civil discourse from all campus organizations that would force SJP to the sidelines. Any organization recognized or funded by the university must forswear hateful speech, rhetoric inciting or celebrating genocide, and acts of intimidation, both in-person

and online. University presidents must publicly outline plans for combating antisemitism on their campuses with the same strength they bring to the fight against racism. Enforcement and compliance could come in many forms. But a culture is not created in a disciplinary hearing. Leaders must choose to lead. Administrators must follow consistent principles. Faculty must honor the universal pursuit of truth and learning. People of good faith must defend the rights of Jewish students and faculty who believe that Jewish lives matter. Such actions are not too much to ask, but for decades, they were rare in most American universities, and we accepted it. It is time to follow the lead of Marc Rowan and other donors forcing universities to make a choice: Either change or become fully captive to people who support the genocide of the largest Jewish community in the world. *

SARAH HURWITZ

To Jewish College Students Who Are Scared

Charging Jews with ‘genocide’ is not an objection to occupation, but a lie that justifies opposing Jews ‘by any means necessary’



TO JEWISH COLLEGE students who are scared right now:

I recently had the privilege of speaking with some of you during visits to Hillels at campuses across the country. While news stories have focused on a handful of extreme incidents at colleges—Jewish

students being assaulted or threatened by their classmates, professors celebrating violence against Jews—the stories you told me revealed that the problem is far more widespread, far more insidious.

You spoke about how, on some of your campuses, organizations

This article was originally published online on November 10, 2023.

devoted to social justice and inclusion—from clubs representing minority student communities to socialist and environmental groups—are allying themselves with Students for Justice in Palestine, which celebrated Hamas’s savage terrorist attacks on Israel as “resistance.” When I asked students on one campus which clubs are allying with Jewish students, there was an awful silence, and then one muttered, “None of them.”

Another student explained that if you go to a campus Hillel, even if just to attend a Shabbat dinner, or study Jewish texts with a rabbi, or cry in the office of a caring staff member, you may be ostracized for being a “Zionist.” On many campuses your classmates have twisted this word into an epithet, wrongly claiming it means supporting “colonialism” and “apartheid,” and they hurl it at you regardless of your views on Israel or how you actually define Zionism for yourself.

Many of you spoke about your fear and isolation—about classmates who you thought were friends posting hateful things on social media, roommates who’ve become increasingly hostile, professors who you worry will deny you letters of recommendation.

My heart ached as I listened to you. I wanted to beg the adults on your campuses who are supposed to be in charge to do more to protect you. And when our meetings ended, I did not want you to leave the safety of Hillel’s walls.

I know you already know this, but it’s still worth stating: This is antisemitism. Your classmates’ demands for “intifada” and chants of “from the river to the sea” are not critiques of the Israeli government and too often serve as calls for violence against Jews. Charging Jews with “genocide” is not an objection to occupation, but a lie that justifies opposing Jews “by any means necessary,” which apparently now includes killing parents in front of their children, raping women, kidnapping toddlers, and mutilating and murdering babies. And when your classmates demand that you disavow your ancestral homeland in order to be accepted, they are claiming the right to define your identity for you, an

act of domination we would never tolerate against any other minority group.

I know the intensity of this Jew-hatred is new for most of you. It is for me as well. I went to college in the 1990s, and I cannot recall a single moment when I felt uncomfortable as a Jew. But what you are seeing on your campuses is actually a very old story, one that rests on the belief that Jews are overwhelmingly, terrifyingly, preternaturally powerful. That's what the Germans claimed in the 1920s and 1930s. They were obsessed with Jewish power. They accused Jews of deliberately undermining Germany's efforts in World War I, leading to their defeat; of causing a massive economic crisis; and of polluting Germany with their inferior race and perverse modern ideas. It did not matter that Jews were less than 1 percent of the German population, and it does not seem to matter today that there are only 16 million Jews on the entire planet — about the population of Istanbul. If anything, the massacres of October 7 and the explosion of antisemitism worldwide — like the pogroms, expulsions, inquisitions, and crusades stretching back through history — remind us just how limited our power is.

Despite these facts, on many college campuses — where critical thinking has been replaced by the simplistic idea that the world can be divided into oppressors and oppressed — Jewish students have somehow become the oppressors. As a result, I know some of you have been told you have no right to speak, and if you do, anything you say is suspect. When you try to express your grief and fear, you're mocked and humiliated, your social-media feeds littered with nasty comments, as if you are not entitled to basic human emotions. It seems that you are seen as somehow less than human. Like I said, it's a very old story.

And I know some of your Jewish classmates aren't helping when they declare that Israel has no right to exist, and that it is the product of white European colonialism. It is an incredible privilege to hold such an opinion. Perhaps they do not realize that millions of

We've held fast to these texts, carrying them with us across the globe, living proudly by their wisdom, and enraging so many people for so many centuries with our stubborn refusal to disappear.

Jews do not have this privilege. Perhaps they are unaware that more than half of Israeli Jews are Mizrahi—they and their ancestors lived in Middle Eastern and North African countries for centuries, even millennia, until they fled brutal antisemitic persecution in the second half of the 20th century. Israel was their refuge. They are not white. Erasing the bodies, lives, and experiences of these millions of people of color is not exactly consistent with being an antiracist. Also, for the record, Ashkenazi Jews in Europe were not considered white by the Europeans who murdered them during the Holocaust.

Jews who hold such opinions are part of this very old story, too. There have been plenty like them throughout history—Jews who proudly side with the majority around them and disdain their fellow Jews. Sadly, they've met the same fate as the rest of us when we are attacked. The only difference is that they were surprised.

As I listened to your stories, I felt both heartbroken and infuriated. But I also felt something else: amazement and overwhelming pride.

I have to admit, before I began my visits with you, my expectations were low. I figured you were part of a generation whose brains had been softened by social media, who think in hashtags and memes. I expected that you would shout over one another, shut one another down, and speak in slogans.

But what I found was the exact opposite. You spoke with nuance, care, and precision. You would express an opinion, and then immediately list arguments against it and then the counterarguments to those counterarguments. You listened respectfully to one another—even as you expressed wildly diverse opinions—and gently corrected classmates when they had gotten their facts wrong. And even though you're angry and afraid, you've been holding dignified vigils where you mourn the lives of innocent Israelis and innocent Palestinians, and express anguish about hostages and about humanitarian concerns, and keep on singing and praying even in the face of classmates who try to disrupt you.

I couldn't get over it—and I couldn't figure it out. How had you turned out this way?

But I think I get it now. Because your feelings are often dismissed, you've learned to seek out facts and get them straight before posting on social media, and you understand that feelings are not a substitute for critical thought. Because you know your classmates will relentlessly question your arguments, you've learned to question them yourself. Because your stories are often decentered, you spend a lot of time listening to others' thoughts, emotions, and opinions, and they inform your own. You have learned to hold these opposing viewpoints, to wrestle with them.

This is all so deeply Jewish. It's the very process of Jewish tradition. As Amos Oz and his daughter Fania Oz Salzberger wrote, Jews are “not a bloodline but a textline.” For thousands of years, we have been questioning, debating, challenging, and wrestling with our sacred texts—agonizing about what it means to be a good person, live a worthy life, and serve something greater than ourselves. We've held fast to these texts, carrying them with us across the globe, living proudly by their wisdom, and enraging so many people for so many centuries with our stubborn refusal to disappear. The Ammonites, the Hittites, the Moabites—they're all gone, but we are still here, still uttering the same prayers we offered in our ancient Temple in Jerusalem, still painting street signs in Tel Aviv and posters

advertising Hillel events here in America, with the same letters we etched into parchment thousands of years ago.

You all have taken your place in that tradition, and I am so incredibly proud—in awe, really—of all of you. You fill me with hope about the future of our people.

With love and admiration,
Sarah *

YONI HEILMAN

November 9

Diary of an IDF Soldier

Thursday, November 9 | 3:47 P.M.



KAY. Let's talk about tactics.

I avoid the news for the most part. I read *Ynet* enough to put names and faces to the tragedies I hear on the radio in real time, and I skim the *New York Times* to get a sense of how the world views this conflict. Neither of these is a pleasant experience.

But I've seen enough reported publicly to be able to share things I've witnessed or experienced firsthand.

Like Hamas turning its weapons on its own people in order to block humanitarian corridors of escape arranged by the Israeli military.

Like terrorists carrying large packages of improvised explosive devices right up to the border fence, assured of their safety because they've brought a child along with them.

One night our forces took on heavy fire in the form of rocket-propelled grenades. Before we had a chance to return fire, a crowd of

This diary entry was originally published online on November 27, 2023.

more than 100 Palestinian women, children, and babies were forced out of an unseen tunnel, to deter our forces—or gain political points from their deaths. Our soldiers, of course, chose the former.

These were buried in the news. I can attest to their truth.

These tactics come from a combination of two elements: the first, a complete disregard for human life, even the lives of their own innocent children, on the part of Hamas. I cannot say more without losing composure.

The second: a clear understanding of how we perceive human life. Our capacity to love even those who hate us. And as certain as I am that Hamas sees this as a weakness to exploit, I am far more certain that they are wrong. It is our greatest strength.

I am there to see the pain and disgust in our commanders' expressions when they see children being used this way. In those moments, they are soldiers second, and fathers first. I remember the pride in one officer's eyes as he explained that we have certain missiles whose trajectory can be adjusted, after they are fired, until the moment of impact. "In case the terrorist jumps to one side?" I asked. "Not really possible," was the response. "It's in case a child comes into view."

During my first professional job, working for the Israeli consulate in New York, I stood in the back of the room as then-Foreign Minister Shimon Peres faced a room full of cameras from every media outlet in New York. It was the Second Lebanon War, and Peres was asked about an incident from that morning: The IDF had just inadvertently fired upon a school in southern Lebanon. I winced—there could be no adequate response, could there?

Shimon Peres offered the official response: It was an unfortunate, unintended tragedy. Then he paused and looked down. After a moment, he lifted his eyes, looked directly at the reporter who had asked the question, and added, "Is there anyone in this room who really, truly, believes that Israel would ever deliberately kill a child? That we could ever condone such a thing? For us, children do not have nationalities. They have an international passport. We bring

them to Israel — often from enemy countries — for free, life-saving heart surgery! We are a nation who loves all children.”

Emotions are running high these days. But let’s pause a moment to recognize what those emotions are, on our side of this war, and where they come from.

Some of us are in anguish over the innocent Palestinians caught between the guns of Hamas and the advancing IDF, and there are those who, in raw pain, have no capacity for that sentiment. But we are not celebrating advances. We are not singing about victories. We are not joyous over lives lost. Even in those moments when our unit has eliminated a terrorist, there is no tally, no high-five. We nod and move on.

What are we doing? For my part — and from what I can tell, for many around me — there is a lot of love, and a lot of tears.

Gabrielle and I send each other clips or stories we’ve seen that move us. I usually watch them while I am eating, the result of which is that I’m often crying and eating at the same time. Sometimes tears of sorrow, sometimes tears of pride and of joy. Either way, my food turns out saltier than is probably healthy.

Yesterday, before my shift, I heard something that sounded like live music and went to investigate. It turned out to be Akiva, one of Gabrielle’s favorite singers, doing an impromptu concert from the back of a truck. Akiva was in uniform; he explained that his unit is based up north, but he was using his short leave to come and lift the spirits of soldiers in the south.

At 1 A.M., when I came off duty, I followed rumors to the gate of our base, where I found a family of Yemenite Jews packing up food they had brought. When they turned and saw me approaching tentatively, they asked whether I was hungry. “Of course!” I said. They joyously erupted into whoops and reversed course. Within three minutes I was holding a steaming bowl of soup with parsley, potatoes, and a chicken thigh; a large Yemenite *laffa*; and a bowl of *hilbeh* (fenugreek cake). They directed me to a nearby picnic table with a tablecloth, sliced lemons, and Coca-Cola.

While I sat down to eat (dinner at 1 A.M.?), a car approached, blasting Eyal Golan's latest song about Am Israel Chai. Its occupants intended to barbecue for soldiers but, seeing there was already food, they made a giant dance party instead.

At 1 A.M. In the desert. In close range of rocket fire. All I could see and feel was an immense amount of love. It's infectious.

On my way to sleep, I passed the door to our base's HQ. It's usually a solo post, staffed by another unit, but I popped my head in and saw a young woman with a long expression at the radio. "Did they bring you soup?" I asked. "No, what soup?" she answered. Back to the gate I went. Five minutes later, I continued my journey to sleep, leaving an ecstatic soldier drooling over her soup in my wake.

The other day, I was exchanging voice messages with a friend. At the end of my last one, the words "love you" came out of my mouth. I could have edited the message; I could have added a note laughing at my blunder. But I didn't, because in that moment, I felt love for my friend. Love for all of my friends. And the colleagues who are carrying on my work in my absence. The friends, acquaintances, and even strangers who send me messages about the thoughts I share. The donor to my organization who messaged my wife. The community that has rallied to support my family. The friends who bring groceries and throw in a treat. My family, of course, first and foremost, but so many others. And my fellow soldiers, who have become a kind of new family.

So we can talk about tactics. But I know all I need to. I know that our enemy's tactics will destroy them, no matter how many victories they claim. And I know that regardless of how much loss we suffer, our tactics will build us up, will fill us with hope and joy and love until they spill over into everything and everyone around us.

אור חדש על ציון תאיר, ונזכה כולנו במהרה לאור
and may we soon merit to bask in its rays. *

Yoni Heilman's diary continues on page 136.

PART THREE

COMMUNITY



FELICIA HERMAN

They Are Doing Their Part — Are You?

*When you encounter anyone you know —
or even those you don't know — failing this
most basic of moral tests, call them out.
Every time. And repeatedly*



HERE'S A WAR ON. But Israelis are not the only ones in the fight for morality and civilization.

If you are reading this from Israel, you are in this war in a way that is clear. We wish you strength, courage, and love. When people ask me whether I have family

in Israel — implying, why else would I be so upset? — I now say, “Yes — I have 9 million family members there.” We are with you.

If you're reading this from anywhere else in the world, then you need to know: *You are also in this war.* This is a world war, and

This article was originally published online on October 19, 2023.

Israel is just one of its theaters. It is the battle between good and evil, enlightenment and barbarity.

It's happening "over there," but it's not only happening to "them." Whether you know people in the IDF or not; whether you know people killed in battle or not; whether you know any of the 1,200 Israelis who were massacred—it doesn't matter. If you've ever professed to care about the Jews, if you're on the side of good and you condemn evil, now is the time to show it. There is no "Yes, but." There can be no moral equivocation or equivalence.

Let's just say those words again, words we never could have imagined saying, words we were never supposed to say again: 1,200 Israelis, nearly all of them Jews, have been *slaughtered*. Let this fill you with rage and with sorrow. Let it create a fire in your belly, and a pit in your stomach. Stop appending after their names the words זכרונם לברכה: May their memory be for a blessing. They are martyrs, killed intentionally because they were Jewish. Instead use השם יקום דמם: May God avenge their blood.

When I've said this to friends over the past few days, instinctively I start wagging my finger in their faces. There is *no* sitting on the sidelines. The luxury of fearing that speaking up will mean losing friends, alienating "allies," getting fired, getting expelled, being uncomfortable, hurting people's feelings—all that is *over*.

If this is not the moment that moves you to defend Israel and the Jews, there never will be one. They killed Jewish babies. Entire Jewish families. Pregnant women. Holocaust survivors. *They celebrated their deaths, publicly*. And they're not giving up—every rocket shot into Israel, every terrorist infiltration, is intended to target more civilians, to add to the slaughter.

But here's one advantage on our side: The events of October 7 were so monstrous and depraved that *you don't need to know anything about Israel or the conflict to be able to condemn them*. You don't need to be Jewish, you don't need to know any history. Your politics don't matter. You don't even need to care about Jews, though it would be great if you did.

You either condemn evil, or you abet it.

Remember the Holocaust? The pogroms? The Inquisition? The massacres of Jews that accompanied the Crusades? Ever wondered how you'd have acted if you were around when those things were happening? This is your opportunity to answer that question.

It's simple to understand what doing your part looks like in Israel. It looks like military service, but also volunteer service. The countless acts of ordinary and extraordinary generosity multiply each day: packing and cooking food for soldiers; babysitting the kids of reservists and taking care of their pets; cleaning out communal bomb shelters; milking the cows of murdered kibbutzniks. Kashering new kitchens in the middle of the night so they can start cooking food for soldiers as soon as possible. Marrying couples on army bases before they go into battle. Being the person in town with the (rare) swimming pool who sets up an hourly schedule so dozens and dozens of kids can come swim each day. And it looks like the bakery in the Arab village across the street from my father-in-law's moshav in the Jezreel Valley, delivering gifts of food to the psychologists, educators, government workers, and defense-division staff who are working in the municipal offices 24/7. All of Israel is under threat, and all of Israel is engaged in the battle.

We must have that same mentality in the United States and beyond.

The reason is simple: How dare we not? How dare we, as Jews or simply as people who say we believe in good and detest evil—how dare we not engage in any way we can? How dare we say it's okay for our friends' children to die in battle, or be beheaded or burned alive, but, you know, it's kind of uncomfortable for me to say something about Israel in mixed company? And how dare we say that destroying our enemies is against Jewish values? Read the Torah.

Every person I know in Israel has either been called up to serve or has relatives who have been called up. In the Maimonides Fund's

Show up for the Jewish people or get out of the way. Speak up for the side of good, or abet the side of evil. Speak up for the side of the slaughtered, or strengthen the hands of those who slaughtered them.

Israel office alone, people have been called up to the paratroopers, to combat medical units, to the unit that informs families when their loved ones have been killed. I just watched a video (20 times) of one of my colleagues leading 100 of his fellow Home Front Command soldiers in song from a shelter on their base, כלל העולם כולו גשר צר מאד והעקר לא לפחד כלל: The whole world is a very narrow bridge, but the important thing is to be not afraid.

A rabbi I know in Israel has seven sons serving in the IDF right now. They are all risking everything, and they are all at risk. They are us. We are them.

Each and every one of us is *commanded*, therefore, to do our part, whatever that looks like. Whatever asset you can deploy—not just money but also your voice, your network—deploy. No more shyness, no more apathy, no more embarrassment. No more fear of consequences. No moral confusion, no moral equivalence. No “Yes, but.” Show up for the Jewish people or get out of the way. Speak up for the side of good, or abet the side of evil. Speak up for the side of the slaughtered, or strengthen the hands of those who slaughtered them.

What does that look like? Here are some ideas.

Don't hide your pain: When people ask you how you are, tell them.

Don't hide your Jewishness: Wear it with pride. Not because we are victims, but because we are strong. Because we are resilient.

If you think this is hard now, just wait — it will get harder. As reports from Gaza begin to dominate the discourse, it will get harder to remind people of how this started, or why it is happening.

Because our history is littered with death, with massacres just like this, which we remember, constantly, to remind us always to choose life. The Jewish people has a mission, a purpose, and is a light in the world. In every generation they rise up to destroy us. We persevere.

Make sure to thank those writing good statements, doing good things. Thank your elected officials. Thank Biden, thank Blinken. Thank your rabbi, holding everyone's pain and still leading services. Thank the dean or the administrator or teacher who shows kindness to your kid, the non-Jewish friends who send you notes or invite you to dinner. The coworker who finally tells you that she's Jewish, and the non-Jewish one who comes by to express his support. We need all of these good people in the fight.

And when you encounter anyone you know — or even those you don't know — failing this most basic of moral tests, call them out. Every time. And repeatedly.



All the examples that follow below are based on real, recent experiences.

Your 10th-grader's English-literature teacher decides to hold a conversation "on the conflict" on Tuesday? No — call the head of school immediately, and pull your kid out of class if the school

allows it to happen. Your alma mater or the organization you support issues a statement lamenting “loss of life” (the passive voice being a dead giveaway for pandering, quivering pusillanimity) or failing to differentiate between deaths caused by murderous barbarians and those from justified military retaliation — deaths that Israel is trying to avoid and Hamas is trying to increase? No — make a call, withdraw your financial support, organize others to do the same. If they respond “But we’re a diverse, global community,” ask them what part of the institution’s values welcomes members of the community who condone beheadings, rape, torture, murder, and kidnapping. Ask them exactly what their statement is meant to show support for, and if the decapitation of Jewish babies is on that list. If their next statement is bad, too, complain again.

And if you don’t get the answer you want, quit. Quit your friends, quit your institutions. *Why would you ever want to be affiliated with people or institutions that cannot condemn barbarism?* That condemn mistreatment of everyone but the Jews? That equivocate about acts that are making soldiers, government officials, reporters and cameramen retch or weep onscreen? Quit, and then spread the word. Saying they should be ashamed of themselves is the understatement of the century.

If you are a donor, a philanthropist, a foundation: Hold all the recipients of your funds accountable. If they fail this most basic of moral tests, leave them forever. But make sure they know why.

Lastly, for Jewish communal professionals, for Jewish leaders: This is literally what we’ve been put on earth to do. Respond to the call to service. Our job is to protect the Jewish people, strengthen the Jewish people, care for the Jewish people, work for a thriving Jewish future. That means unequivocally condemning the slaughter of Jews and defending Israel’s duty to defend itself and destroy Hamas.

Most of you know that Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, and that Israel was created to be a refuge from precisely this kind of slaughter — and a place that

would fight back and destroy our enemies when it occurred. Many of you have also struggled with how “controversial” Israel is among your constituents, some of whom may even declare themselves to be “anti-Zionist,” not that they likely understand the implications of that term. (This massacre, by the way, is precisely those implications come to life.) You are now called to make a choice. Either coddle people with ideas that lead to Jewish destruction, or oppose them and call them out. Try to explain how you can be both devastated by Jewish slaughter and concerned for Palestinian civilians, but if you have the latter without the former you are a traitor to your people. And do not compromise, even one whit, in how your organization responds to slaughter. If your numbers go down, so be it — why would you want anyone who cannot meet this most basic standard of morality to be affiliated with your organization?

There is nothing political in what happened last week; there’s only barbarism. *Jewish communal professionals must demonstrate unequivocal moral clarity in this moment, or they do not deserve to stay in their jobs.*

This is not “cancellation.” Cancellation is about listening to rumors, finding people guilty with no due process, making mountains out of molehills, inventing offense where none was intended, firing people for using the wrong word. Cancellation is about letting a hypersensitive class of infants who have no ability to discuss differences of opinion make your moral decisions for you.

This is not that. This is holding people accountable for condoning heinous, explicit, intentional acts of Jew-hatred.

If you think this is hard now, just wait—it will get harder. As reports from Gaza begin to dominate the discourse, it will get harder to remind people of how this started, or why it is happening. And who is responsible for the fact that there are noncombatants in a war zone. Israel evacuates its citizens who are in danger; Hamas traps them in their homes. If you do not act now, it will be harder to act later. And you will need to stand your ground then, too.

At the same time, this is very simple. Everything you have ever been taught requires you to stand up for the slaughtered, in whatever way you can.

This is your *Hineni* moment.

As we just read in this week's parsha, *Bereishit*, your brother's blood is crying out to you. Answer the call. *

MIJAL BITTON

That Pain You're Feeling Is Peoplehood

*Our pain must show us that there is
no war against one part of us that isn't
a war on all of us*



HAT WORDS of Torah can reflect our profound sorrow in this moment?

Each of us will forever remember the moment when we first heard about the October 7 massacres. I had just arrived at the community I lead, the Downtown Minyan, my mind filled with plans for that night's Simchat Torah celebrations. I am *shomeret* Shabbat, so I was completely surprised when a congregant, frantic with worry, approached me before I had a chance to remove my jacket. He urgently informed me about a devastating attack on Israel. He spoke of Hamas breaching the border, civilian hostages, and reported atrocities.

I was in shock and gripped immediately by a visceral pain for my beloved Jewish people. Unable to reach out to my own relatives in Israel to check on their safety, I nevertheless had a service to lead

This article was originally published online on November 2, 2023.

and a community to hold. I still do. Finding words of Torah for this moment — words of mourning, anguish, and resilience — has been my calling ever since that morning.

A teaching by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik (known as the Rav) came to my mind that Shabbat, a piece of Torah that I have returned to every day since October 7. It is about Jewish peoplehood. The pain I felt in that moment was for the Jewish people, and I knew many others would be feeling the same, perhaps for the first time so acutely. I've taught this piece many times in the past few years, but as more of an abstract concept, to urge liberal American Jews to understand that Jews are not just a religious group, but a people, a family — and that this comes with special commitments towards one another. The morning of October 7, the Rav's wisdom took on a new dimension.

In a 1956 sermon, Rabbi Soloveitchik asks whether the dispersion of Jews across the world — and the ensuing diversity of Jewish customs, languages, and ways of life — has caused Jews to cease being one people: “Is the Jewish Diaspora one or not?” Are we still a “we”?

To explore this question, the Rav invokes an obscure Talmudic inquiry (BT Menachot 37a) in which the rabbis debate the status of a man with two heads. Should he wear one or two pairs of tefillin, receive one share of inheritance, or two? The rabbis' question is legal, spiritual, and ontological: They want to know whether this is a single or a multiple being.

So too, the Rav asks, we should ask about the Jewish people: Are we one or many? He provides a response as profound as it is raw. He suggests that the way to determine whether the man with two heads is a single entity is to pour boiling water on one of the heads. If the other head screams in pain, then the two-headed man is a single being; if not, “then they are two individuals enfolded in one body.” This painful test is the test of peoplehood. The Rav writes, “So long as there is shared suffering, in the sense of ‘I am with him in his distress’ (Psalms 91:15), there is unity.”

This past Simchat Torah, such a test was carried out. The worst form of cruel, murderous boiling water drenched our people in southern Israel, and many of us—thousands of miles away—cried out in visceral pain. The anguish has been overwhelming, as has the rage. It has led many Jews around the world to act in ways we have never acted before, inspired by feelings we have not felt before.

This is what Jewish peoplehood feels like. The pain is telling us that the organism is working, that we are still a “we.”

This pain is the essence of being—or becoming—a Jew. Maimonides tells us, poignantly, that we must ask would-be converts to Judaism whether they know that they are joining a despised and oppressed people. “Don’t you know that in the present era, the Jews are afflicted, crushed, subjugated, strained, and suffering comes upon them?” If they answer that they know this, and that they still want to become a Jew, they are accepted. The beating heart of Jewish existence is accepting the pain of peoplehood and the moral obligations that ensue.

This radical empathy is not simply a matter of emotion; it is necessary for the Jewish people’s survival. A week after the massacre, I expressed to a dear friend in Israel, Tanya White, a Torah teacher, how inadequate I felt were my actions to support Israel. Compared with the sharp and constant pain in my heart, the amount I was able to do here felt staggeringly small. I felt as if I was in a shiva house, with my clothes torn. I felt that there was too much distance between the two heads for one of them to realize how much the other was suffering and needed help. But Tanya reminded me of a powerful episode in the Torah that helped me channel my grief.

Exodus 17:8–16 records the story of Amalek’s cruel attack on the Jewish people wandering in the desert, as well as the Jewish solidarity that the attack inspired. The ragged group of hundreds of thousands of still-traumatized former slaves meets the most base human cruelty as the Amalekites descend upon them, attacking the weakest of the people—children, women, the elderly. The Israelites, with no battle experience, have no choice but to fight.

The most important weapon at our disposal, the one we have to nourish and insist upon, is peoplehood — feeling and behaving as one being.

Joshua leads the former slaves, who now pick up arms, and Moses, in his eighties, rises up to a mountain and lifts his hands to give the people strength and courage, to remind them of their heavenly Father. The Torah tells us that whenever Moses's hands were high, the people overcame, and whenever his hands dropped, the people would lose strength. But the elderly Moses couldn't hold up his arms alone — he needed help. So Aaron and Hur held up Moses's arms to keep them upright throughout the entire battle.

וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֲמוֹנָה עַד-בֹּא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ: Moses' hands remained steady — steadfast, committed (*emunah*) — until the sun set. That day, these Jews who had just escaped their chains were able to triumph against a malevolent enemy. They did so because they were united, because they were one body. Some took up arms in battle. Moses held up his actual arms, and others held up Moses's arms. Their pain was shared, but each had a unique role to play.

We are called now to find our own role in this battle.

Even as time distances us from the horrors of October 7, and new horrors rise up in our own backyards, we must *insist* on fighting the “compassion fatigue” that threatens to creep in. We must keep the pain of peoplehood fresh to breed a sense of solidarity with Israel as it fights to defend itself and its borders. Our job is not simply to mourn or worry. Instead, our pain must lead us to act for the sake of our Israeli brothers and sisters suffering under rocket fire and in captivity, grieving the dead and treating the wounded. Our pain must

show us that there is no war against one part of us that isn't a war on all of us. Our pain must lead us to hold up our arms, supporting Jewish lives and security, and to hold up the arms of anyone undertaking this battle.

And we must prepare for knowing that the job of standing with our people in the United States will become more difficult as Israel ensures it is once again feared in the Middle East. As Micah Goodman explained with tremendous clarity in the early days of the war, “[Israelis] want love and we want fear. We want love from the West. We want fear from the Middle East.” For Goodman, one of Israel's main challenges is that the actions it must undertake to ensure deterrence in a volatile and tribalistic Middle East will cause it to lose support in the West. Especially in America, we Jews have our role to play: to help support Israel's battle to eradicate Hamas by shoring up support from its most important ally.

We are living in difficult and dark times. I can't seem to shake off the sense that we have returned to Jewish history, to saying “b'chol dor vador”—from generation to generation—they rise up against us. And I can't keep from crying out in frustration and horror at this phrase's taste of truth. We are facing multiple battles in Israel, in America, and around the world. The most important weapon at our disposal, the one we have to nourish and insist upon, is peoplehood—feeling and behaving as one being.

For indeed, Hamas's war is not a war against Israel or against the “Zionists” denigrated by so many American college students and activists today. It is a war against the Jewish people. It is a war against our history, our memory, our dignity. It is a war against our calendar, the sanctity of Shabbat, the jubilant joy of Simchat Torah. It is a war against innocence; on those who care for our people, who work our fields, who tend our livestock. It is a war against laughing Jewish children and against Jewish parents' blessings for peace. It is a war against all of us, and we all have our role to play.

This is not the first time such a thing has happened to our people, of course. Nor is it the first time that war in Israel has engen-

dered new feelings of peoplehood. My late teacher, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, wrote beautifully in *A Letter in the Scroll* about his feelings, and those of many Diaspora Jews, in the days after the Six-Day War:

It was then [in 1967] that I knew that being Jewish was not something private and personal but something collective and historical. It meant being part of an extended family, many of whose members I did not know, but to whom I nonetheless felt connected by bonds of kinship and responsibility.

This is our task: to understand that the pain we are feeling is what Jewish peoplehood feels like, and then to hold on to this pain tightly and fiercely, even from afar. Our task is to channel this pain into unwavering and committed action, to either join the battle in our own way or to hold up the hands of those who are fighting. *

DAVID BERNSTEIN

Jewish Community Relations and the October 8th Jew

*It no longer serves us to be so buttoned-up,
because American society is so much
less buttoned-up*



AT A RECENT conference in Philadelphia, Bret Stephens coined the term, “October 8th Jew.” It was meant especially for left-wing Jews who, observing the glee with which their ideological fellow travelers responded to the previous day’s mass murder of Jews, belatedly realized that progressive politics are no safe haven from antisemitism.

Now, it’s time for Jewish organizations to act on the realization. But how?

Over the course of 30 years or more, the priorities of national and local Jewish agencies dedicated to intergroup relations — the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, the

This article was originally published online on November 20, 2023.

leadership of America's synagogue denominations, the Jewish Federations, the Jewish Community Relations Councils (JCRCs)—haven't changed much. They have focused on partnering with non-Jews, often on the Left, who share a commitment to civil rights but who, left to their own devices, might embrace anti-Israel positions. The goal of Jewish community relations has been to work toward a more just society while keeping these fence-sitters from embracing anti-Israel narratives.

This work once had a good track record. No longer. Given how thoroughly radical left-wing voices now dominate so much of progressive politics, and particularly in light of their de facto support for Hamas, it's high time to rethink the whole strategy.

Here's what needs to change:

1) *Be unflinchingly honest.* Don't mouth false niceties to curry favor with non-Jewish interlocutors. Last week, a Jewish community-relations professional declared on social media, "Hamas does not represent all (or most) Palestinians. . . . These terms and concepts are hurtful and make productive discourse impossible." I pointed out that Hamas may indeed represent a strong majority of Gazans, and I posted an article by Democratic pollster Mark Mellman that noted, "Gazans give [Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud] Abbas just 33 percent, while 64 percent would vote for Hamas's [Ismail] Haniyeh." The JCRC professional responded, "Regardless of what the polls say or how you interpret them, it's not a statement that's helpful in a conversation about finding common ground."

By contrast, I participated in a remarkable high-level Muslim-Jewish dialogue in late October, in which Jewish participants engaged forcefully and unapologetically. One prominent rabbi told the group point-blank that "antisemitism is a much more serious problem than Islamophobia." This was jolting for many of the Muslim participants and not a few of the Jews. Not one Muslim participant, however, left the Zoom conversation. The typical dynamic in Muslim-Jewish or Arab-Jewish dialogue is for Jews to be

nuanced about Israel, acknowledging Israeli excesses and decrying the occupation, while our interlocutors offer an unqualified defense of every Palestinian act of rejection and violence. It's fine for Jews to be nuanced, but it's long past time to expect the same from our interlocutors. We should ask, "Why is it that you never find fault with anything that Palestinians do?" If they are incapable of engaging in such conversation, then it's time to move on, lest we become complicit in their denial. We know where that gets us.

2) *Don't partner with people who think it's okay to murder Jews.* I'm generally averse to most litmus tests. I've had a drink with a staff member of the anti-Zionist Jewish Voice for Peace, and I've had coffee with a radical leader of CAIR (the Council on American-Islamic Relations). But I don't think any self-respecting Jewish organization should sit on a public panel, join a coalition, or be in dialogue with people who supported the murder of our brethren in Israel. The ADL's Jonathan Greenblatt got it right when he stated, "I'm not going to humanize people who dehumanize others." We should be isolating, not platforming these extremist voices. If larger coalitions insist on giving them a place at the table, we should withdraw, whatever the temporary loss of influence.

3) *Don't pay the price of admission.* There's an old adage in Jewish community relations: "If you're not at the table, then you're on the menu." The problem is that you can be both. Too many Jewish groups have been willing to parrot rhetoric about America being a "white-supremacist society" in order to be at the table. For example, they were willing to go along with California's highly ideological ethnic studies school curriculum, with its lesson plans about "de-colonialism" and "settler-colonialism," provided it didn't explicitly denounce Israel or insult Jews.

But supporting outrageous political positions completely at odds with the traditional Jewish understanding of America is dangerous. It feeds belief systems that may not be antisemitic on their face, but

Given how thoroughly radical left-wing voices now dominate so much of progressive politics, and particularly in light of their de facto support for Hamas, it's high time to rethink the whole strategy.

are “antisemitic-adjacent” and descend easily into open antisemitism when given the opportunity. Just as we wouldn't support an “America First” curriculum even if it didn't directly malign Jews, we should not do so with the radical pronouncements coming from the other side.

4) *Prioritize partnerships with groups that support democratic values.* This is a significant change. Today, our most important work is with groups in the center, with whom we agree on fundamental democratic values. Our new allies do not buy into social-justice dogma on the Left, just as they do not buy into replacement theory on the Right. They are patriotic but not nativist, and they know the difference between an imperfect democracy, whether it's Israel or America, and a truly oppressive regime, whether it's in Tehran or Gaza. The point is to wed ourselves to a common democratic vision of American society, rather than to a particular point on the political spectrum.

5) *Isolate the extremists.* In the aftermath of the October 7 massacre, numerous leftists immediately shared ghastly memes on social media praising the Palestinian “resistance” and calling for “the liberation” of Palestine. Where the old Jewish community-relations strategy was to identify and influence the fence-sitters

and “complicate” their understanding of Israel, the new October 8th strategy must be to keep leftist ideologues out of mainstream institutions—or kick them out. Jewish community relations have a golden opportunity to isolate the hang-glider crowd and demand that school officials and elected leaders keep hate out of our schools and politics. In this respect, name-and-shame is the name of the game.

6) *Be the insurgent.* In the decades since the Six-Day War, American Jewish organizations have become political insiders, boasting an array of high-level relationships. It’s quite an achievement. In becoming incumbents, however, we have also become hesitant to appear combative, to the point where we are failing to act even when it serves our interests. Radical anti-Israel progressives have gained the upper hand in universities, the entertainment industry, and the news media. These hostile forces rely on the Jewish community’s reluctance to use our power and fight back hard.

In the ethnic studies case discussed above, for instance, the Jewish community in Orange County, Calif., chose to object to the proposed curriculum by sending a few people to give well-rehearsed testimony at a Santa Ana school-board meeting, rather than coming out in large numbers in a visible display of opposition. Indeed, they specifically asked people to stay at home and not demonstrate. Meanwhile, the anti-Israel groups did come out in full force, carrying placards and chanting in support of keeping the anti-Israel elements in the curriculum. It’s okay for us Jews to come out in numbers and express our outrage. It no longer serves us to be so buttoned-up, because American society is so much less buttoned-up.

7) *Don’t dodge the conversation.* For too long, Jewish organizations, fearful of alienating internal stakeholders or progressive allies, have shunned discussion about the ideological roots of left-wing antisemitism. The 31 student groups at Harvard that publicly blamed Israel for the Hamas massacre didn’t come from

nowhere. It was decades in the making. Ideologues see systems of oppression everywhere and insist this schema is the only way to understand the world's disparities. Our universities have conditioned large swaths of society to see Israel in these terms, too.

October 8 offers us the opportunity to rethink what we do and how we do it. We cannot fail to seize the moment for change. *

DAVID HAZONY

The War Against Jews

*Stop acting like the benign ocean water
that fuels the hurricane passing overhead.
Instead, be the hurricane*



JEWES AROUND THE WORLD have awakened to a new reality of grief, fear—and mobilization. Alongside the horrors of the October 7 terror invasion of Israel, a global antisemitic movement has suddenly emerged, marching through our cities, celebrating the barbaric violation of Jewish bodies, tearing down posters of Jewish victims, blaming Jews for the atrocities committed against them, and unleashing yet more violence against Jews and Jewish institutions.

While global Jewry has come together in unparalleled fashion to support Israel in its most difficult hour, there is nonetheless an important truth that many Jews are still finding hard to accept, or at least to articulate.

This article was originally published online on November 7, 2023.

It is this: War has been launched against the Jewish people.

The war is not only against Israel—it is against global Jewry. While the IDF regains the upper hand against Hamas and others in the coming weeks, we should expect our enemies to turn their wrath toward a more vulnerable target: the Diaspora. Listen to the chants of “Globalize the intifada!” This is what they mean.

Jews everywhere must now come to see themselves as being in a state of war. Not only because the victims of October 7 were our own people, but also because the antisemitic hordes are rising up against Jews in city after city around the world. The Diaspora must prepare itself for battle, too.

We recognize these hordes from generations past: from the pogroms of the Russian empire and Soviet persecution, from the Farhud in Iraq and Arab riots in pre-state Palestine, and from the Holocaust. And going back even further to the Crusades, the expulsions, the blood libels. Just as persecutors of generations past invented justifications for their hatred of and violence toward Jews, so today’s mob uses lies about Israeli “genocide” and “apartheid” to justify the slaughter of Jewish innocents. The lies change; the results are the same.

The lust for Jewish blood, so familiar to us, can now be seen in the eyes of the protesters, in their placards and cartoons, in their chants, and increasingly in their actions. From London to Istanbul, from Brooklyn to Beirut, from Detroit to D.C., the message is the same: They pretend they are calling for justice and freedom, but their real target is every Jewish man, woman, and child on earth.



To understand the nature of this war, we must understand the profound connection between the Hamas invasion on October 7 and the antisemitic protests around the world. It is not simply that one triggered the other. The two crises emerge from the same moral universe, one in which grievances against The Jew (state or people, doesn’t matter) take on infinite importance, providing infinite

license to override any principles of morality, decency, self-restraint, empathy, dignity or sobriety in response to the perceived threat. The Jew is infinitely demonized, and any attack is thus inherently just — to be celebrated, embraced, and used to fuel further rage.

Because antisemitism is a conspiracy theory, different from other forms of bigotry, it carries infinite explanatory power for every imaginable grievance. Words are borrowed and distorted beyond recognition (“genocide,” “apartheid,” “colonialism”). Responding with rational arguments is fruitless; the purpose of the borrowing and distortion is not to make a logical point, it is simply to aim these terms as weapons against The Jew.

When they say “by any means necessary,” they mean it. They will do anything and everything they can get away with; any act is a noble defiance of the cosmic order in which The Jew controls all.

This combination of infinite grievance and infinite license produces something that can legitimately be called infinite evil. The *only* meaningful difference between the protesters — so thoroughly uninhibited as to rip down signs of kidnapped Jewish children — and the Hamas fighters who kidnapped those children (and tortured and murdered others) is that the latter have lots of weapons and a willingness to sacrifice their own lives for the “resistance.” (This is the product of lifelong indoctrination to martyrdom combined with the use of drugs). Hamas is simply “braver” and better armed than the protesters; but the force arrayed against the Jews is one and the same.

This is why the explosion of antisemitism happened not as a response to Israel’s retaliation, but *before* it had even started. It was an immediate, instinctive response to October 7 itself.

Israelis are actually familiar with this phenomenon, which I call “celebrating.” During the second intifada, every major terror attack in Israel triggered demonstrations by Palestinians across the West Bank — a frenzied, instinctive response that combined the celebration of terror with enraged riots against the IDF. At the time, I thought this was just a brilliantly effective tactic of media

Anyone who thinks that October 7 was a glorious act of justice and resistance, rather than unalloyed barbarism, is cut from the same cloth as Hamas, part of the same cinematic universe—even if they sit in the halls of Congress.

manipulation, a way to change the subject by instantly replacing images of bombed-out buses and pizza parlors with those of soldiers shooting rock-throwing protesters.

But watching such demonstrations erupt across the world after October 7 has convinced me that there's something deeper going on here: an instinctive response, an overflow of hate-filled joy that identifies with and even idolizes Hamas itself. Sure, some of the protestors and politicians who support them will insist they are not pro-Hamas—just as for years they've been insisting they are not antisemitic, but merely anti-Israel or anti-Zionist.

Don't believe them. Anyone who thinks that October 7 was a glorious act of justice and resistance, rather than unalloyed barbarism, is cut from the same cloth as Hamas, part of the same cinematic universe—even if they sit in the halls of Congress.

This movement makes little distinction between Jews and Israel, as is now clear. The posters with a Star of David in a trash can urging us to “keep the world clean” are about Jews. The rioters at the Dagestan airport in Russia were searching for Jews. The signs on stores in Istanbul that say “no Jews allowed” are, obviously, not talking about Israel. Neither were the people marching in a heavily Jewish neighborhood in Brooklyn shouting “Say it loud, say

We are no longer powerless, neither in Israel nor in the Diaspora, and it's time to recognize and embrace our power to mobilize and to take the fight to the barbarians at our own gates.

it clear, we don't want no Zionists here." Being American, they have merely continued their habits of useful euphemism.

Hamas, too, makes little distinction. Article 7 of their founding charter concludes with the following quote from the Hadith:

The Day of Judgment will not come until Muslims fight the Jews, when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say, "O Muslim, O servant of God, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him."

Infinite grievance plus infinite license equals infinite evil.



Deep down, Jews know all of this too well, even if some have needed a reminder. The emergence of ancient hatred against us, seemingly detached from all reality, triggers an ancient, existential fear. We are so few, and they are so many.

Our fear, however, is a relic of centuries of impotence. We are no longer powerless, neither in Israel nor in the Diaspora, and it's time to recognize and embrace our power to mobilize and to take the fight to the barbarians at our own gates.

We need to start by calling the current antisemitic wave a war rather than a pogrom. Pogromists preyed upon the powerless; we

are far from that. Jews everywhere must realize that they, too, are at war, that the battle is to defend their own homes, and all available resources must be deployed. Antisemitism has torn off its mask, and it is far more widespread, integrated, and bloodthirsty, than many of us imagined. The time has come to prepare a response.

Many people have realized this independently and are spontaneously rising up—the instinctive and creative energy of many donors, activists, and institutions is to be commended. They have moved past fear and into action. But war requires not only many soldiers but also strategic thinking and coordination. To that end, I'd like to suggest a few principles that might be a helpful place to start.

1) *Protect Jews everywhere.* Every community is now an outpost and every Jew a soldier—and none should be left behind. Technology allows us to stay connected instantaneously. We need to build more obvious communication channels to share resources, ideas, tools, and political and psychological support. Every Jewish institution also needs physical security—professional security and hardening of Jewish targets, and essential volunteer guards, including the *shomrim* long present in Haredi communities. We must also consider more “kinetic” forms such as armed civilian defense organizations if policing is inadequate to the moment.

2) *Recognize our enemies.* Do not be afraid of that word. Every person who actively takes part in demonstrations demonizing Israel, who refuses to condemn Hamas's actions, who rips down posters, who calls for the annihilation of Israel, or who makes excuses for barbarism is endorsing the butchery of Jews everywhere. Many of them would gladly replicate Hamas's behavior if given the chance. Recognize the bloodlust in their calls and in their eyes. They are enemies of our people.

3) *Recognize our own power.* We need not fear the mob. We need to assess threats, allocate resources, and fight back. When faced with the

attacks of October 7, Israelis immediately overcame their divisions, regrouped, and came together in full force both militarily and in civil society. Diaspora Jewry must do the same. The potential for unified Jewish power is immense: Jewish organizations, philanthropists, and activists working in concert can channel resources, aggressively deploy known weapons, and develop new ones to test on the battlefield. These include legal action and new legislation; intelligence-gathering; civil defense; rapid-response teams on campuses and in neighborhoods; and the creation of a cross-communal “war room” to monitor the operations of our enemies, gather intelligence, assess threats, and share experiences and new ideas across the Jewish world.

4) *Shift the balance of fear.* Wars are not won solely by playing defense. Jewish institutions should be focusing now on taking the fight to the enemy and working to shift the balance of fear. This has already begun with donor revolts, public shaming of students who support Hamas or people who tear down hostage posters, and more. The principle should be clear: It is not the Jews who should be afraid. It is those who take the side of barbarism, who indulge in terrorizing spectacle, who must be made to fear instead. (It’s starting to work—notice how many protesters and poster-rippers are now wearing masks.) Those who hold positions of power but who sit on the fence because they fear the mob, including many university administrators, should be made to fear the side of moral clarity even more.

5) *Recognize our friends.* Jews have friends—and the current crisis has provided a powerful litmus test of this friendship. Taking advantage of such friendships means crossing previous political, cultural, or religious divides. It no longer matters if someone is a Republican or a Democrat; an Asian parent or an Evangelical Christian. As the Israelis have done so stunningly, we need to drop our differences, create new alliances, and muster all the support we can get.

The world is watching us right now. Western civilization itself is under attack; this is not just the Jews' war. But Jews must lead by example: If we do not fight this battle, who will?

6) *Demand our rights.* Jews have rights and are protected by law, like any other group. We must demand — loudly — that those protections be enforced, and that those who violate our rights or the law be punished. On campuses and in private institutions, where codes of conduct and organizational value statements also pertain, we must demand that Jews be treated like any other group. Those who violate behavioral standards and value systems must be punished, and the hypocrisy of fence-sitting and mob-fearing leaders — corporate, academic, or governmental — must be called out every time.

7) *Adjust our philanthropic priorities.* Mobilizing donations to Israel is worthy and helpful. But recognizing that this is a global war also means funding the Diaspora's war effort — including campus groups, media and social-media strategies, educational and advocacy efforts, community-relations initiatives, and Jewish communal institutions writ large. Together, these have the grassroots reach both to mobilize Jews and allies and to act as nodes in the broader Diaspora war effort. They can also provide the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and communal support needed to sustain our troops.

8) *Fight the long-term battles now.* What we are seeing, especially in elite Western circles, is the product of half a century of investment in anti-Western and antisemitic ideas. These have been

heavily funded and have spread across our institutions. Every false narrative about Jews, Israel, and the West can be traced to books and essays written long ago, whether in Moscow, Paris, or Columbia University. It's time for us to fight the war of ideas as well—but with our own long-term strategy. We need a multifaceted approach to investing in Jewish culture (film, TV, museums, public history); intellectual life (journals, books, think tanks); and scholarship and academia (where we must wrest back the study of Jews and Israel from those long captured by anti-Israel and anti-Western ideas). A war that was launched through books cannot be won with billboards and banner ads alone.



All of these steps can be taken immediately, even if for many Jews, they feel like directives from a different planet. But going to war begins with flipping a switch. Reframe the situation: It's not a pogrom we must endure or flee; it's a war we must fight and win. Make the terms of victory clear—not to eliminate antisemitism from the earth, which is impossible, but to radically disempower and disincentivize the antisemites. The goal is for Jews to again feel safe, free, and confident that we can take part as equal citizens in every educational, commercial, and cultural endeavor we choose.

Overcome the urge to hunker down and wait for the storm to pass. Stop acting like the benign ocean water that fuels the hurricane passing overhead. Instead, *be* the hurricane. The only way to avoid the maelstrom is to *become* the maelstrom. Find every path to retaliate and reestablish deterrence. Confuse our enemies and attack them from multiple sides at once. Restore the physical and psychological security of our communities, as well as the intellectual and cultural foundations of Western civilization, that have allowed Jews to thrive.

Will this mobilization further trigger the ire of our enemies? Of course it will. But that is the nature of war. If we build our forces,

work together, and shift from fear to war-making, it will be the Jews' power rather than our suffering that will secure our safety. This will attract greater and more powerful allies, protecting Jews for generations to come.

The world is watching us right now. Western civilization itself is under attack; this is not just the Jews' war. But Jews must lead by example: If we do not fight this battle, who will? We are the ones who must draw the red lines and send out the call to arms for all those who value life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We must fight with everything we've got.

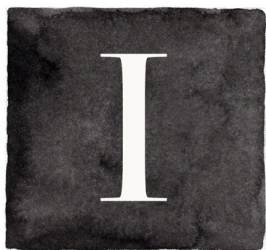
If not us, then who? If not now, when?

*

MAXIM D. SHRAYER

Anti-Zionist Committees of the American Public

*The war in Israel and the legacy of
Jewish political apostasy*



WILL START with an anecdote from my family's refusenik years. This happened in 1981. In retaliation for submitting the application to emigrate to Israel, my father, a medical researcher and a writer, had been banished from the Soviet science community and expelled from the

Union of Writers, and my mother, a university teacher and translator, had also been fired. We had already been refuseniks for almost two years, and the family savings had been depleted. My father drove a gypsy cab at night and did various odd jobs to put food on

This article was originally published online on December 26, 2023. All translations from the Russian are by the author.

the table. Then he heard about an entry-level research job at one of the many Moscow research institutes. A doctor of science formerly with a professorial rank, clearly overqualified, my father applied, hoping for a small miracle. He was received by the head of one of the research departments, a Jew and a party member. This “official” Soviet Jew asked my father, “Do you know what I need?” And he answered his own question: “I need a patriot. And you are a traitor. A traitor and Zionist! You and your sort ruin it for the true patriots, the honest Soviet Jews. If I had the right, I would execute you with my own hands!”

The early 1980s were a bleak time for Jewish self-expression in the USSR. The country was mired in an unwinnable war in Afghanistan, and the relations with the West were openly hostile. The sluices of Jewish emigration had been shut. Not only Israel and its allies, but also self-conscious expressions of Jewish pride and Jewish spiritual and intellectual self-awareness, were now deemed “Zionist” and targeted for public ostracism and vilification. The term “Zionist” had ousted and outperformed Stalin-era anti-Jewish code words such as “bourgeois nationalist” and “cosmopolitan.” Under the façade of fighting “anti-Zionism,” brainwashed Soviet young people often acted on their antisemitic urges. A non-Jewish teenager at my Soviet school tried to beat up a Jewish kid because “the Zionists have taken over the Golan Heights.”

In 1982–1983, the Soviet media were beset with anti-Israeli hysteria over the war in Lebanon. There were as many as 15,000 refuseniks in the USSR, perhaps more. Of the country’s 1.8 million Jews, how many were undecided? How many were scared, reluctant to risk a measure of stability for the promise of Jewish freedom? The Soviet propaganda against Israel and Zionism would reach a crescendo in 1983 with the creation of the Anti-Zionist Committee of the Soviet Public. Its declaration, signed by a group of eight Jewish war veterans, academics, and members of the artistic intelligentsia, appeared in *Pravda* on April 1, 1983. The declaration was surrounded by reports that the peace initiatives of Yuri Andropov,

the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, were gaining “ardent support on all the continents” and that Tel Aviv’s “criminal designs toward Syria” had been “exposed.” I quote from the declaration of the Anti-Zionist Committee:

In its essence, Zionism embodies extreme nationalism, chauvinism, and racial intolerance, justification of territorial conquests and annexations. . . . Having kidnapped the right of “defenders” of Soviet Jews, those Zionist wheeler-dealers try to persuade the world’s public opinion that, allegedly, in the USSR there exists the “Jewish question.” . . . It is with contempt that Soviet Jews cast aside the attempts by Zionist propagandists to interfere in their life.

The declaration concluded with a mission statement that the Anti-Zionist Committee of the Soviet Public would “enable an even more decisive struggle against the ideology and political practice of Zionism, for social progress and peace on earth.” The members of the Committee also included such well-known Soviet Jews as the actress Elina Bystriskaya, the composer Matvey Blanter, the Yiddish writer Aron Vergelis, and even the chief rabbi of Moscow, Adolf Shayevich. The chairman of the Committee, Colonel General David Dragunsky, was twice the hero of the USSR; he would outlive the country by a year. This Jewish war hero who, as they used to say in my childhood, *gorel v tanke*, survived a burning Soviet tank hit by a German missile, became the Jewish public face of Soviet anti-Zionism. General Dragunsky had a younger brother, Zinoviy, who had been a corporal during World War II and, allegedly, was later mixed up in underground business affairs. While the general never retracted his statements against Israel or repented for the harm he had done, not long before his death he admitted that he did not “write” some of the anti-Zionist statements that appeared under his name.

I was almost 16 when the formation of the Anti-Zionist Com-

Like Jewish religious apostasy— as old as Jewish civilization itself, or at least as old as diasporic living— Jewish political apostasy is driven variously by a combination of fear, cowardice, opportunism, survivalism, and, in rare cases, by the proverbial zeal of the convert.

mittee was announced, and I remember the public appearances of its members and the disgust that we refuseniks felt toward them. In my teenage refusenik idealism, I was shocked that there were Jews who would actually stoop so low. I remember lying awake at night and thinking that only in a cursed country like the Soviet Union did they have such warped Jews who were willing to turn against Israel. I was wrong.

The stories of a Soviet Jewish scientist who privately practices anti-Zionism and a Soviet Jewish general who performs it in public bring to light the phenomenon that I have been observing since the years of my family's refusenik limbo— and for much of my adult life outside the former USSR. In the weeks following the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel, I have come to regard this phenomenon— Jewish anti-Zionism and activism against Israel— Jewish *political* apostasy. Like Jewish religious apostasy— as old as Jewish civilization itself, or at least as old as diasporic living— Jewish political apostasy is driven variously by a combination of fear, cowardice, opportunism, survivalism, and, in rare cases, by the proverbial zeal of the convert.

From its inception as a state and a country, Israel has had to fight just, patriotic wars against enemies bent on its destruction and erasure. But never before— not in 1956, 1967, 1973, or

subsequently—has Israel faced not only troops at its borders but also such vast armies of political and intellectual enemies in the places of the largest post-Shoah Jewish communities, particularly in the United States. In the weeks since the start of the Israel– Hamas war, those of us whose hearts ache for Israel have found it excruciatingly difficult not to react emotionally to the virulent public conduct of those individuals of Jewish origin who rally against Israel under the international banners of anti-Zionism.

As Israel lives through perhaps her most difficult time in history and fights for her secure future — as Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Gaza still hold hostages—it is especially difficult to resist the urge to separate oneself from the Jewish enemies of Israel by calling them bad Jews, disloyal Jews, or, to borrow the ruthless term introduced by Natan Sharansky and Gil Troy, un-Jews. Demarcation lines between Jews who regard Israel as a central or essential coordinate of the Jewish condition and Jews who, in their blind rage or sober calculation, imagine a better world without Israel, are not new. And yet, in today’s climate of open animosity toward the very idea of the State of Israel, it is important to be clear about the roots and stems of the political apostasy of American Jews.

In the immediate aftermath of the Hamas attack, alarming numbers of Jewish academics rushed not to defend Israel or voice empathy with Jewish victimhood but to enact various performances of anti-Zionism. For instance, Benjamin Schreier, a professor of English and Jewish studies at one of the oldest land-grant universities, tweeted on October 10, 2023: “The AJS [Association of Jewish Studies] is caught between the Scylla and Charybdis of liberal Zionists and bloodthirsty genocidal Zionists.” In times of war, this student of Jewish culture found meaning in appropriating such a Menshevik shibboleth. Both collectively (through the activism of such organizations as Jewish Voice for Peace or IfNotNow) and individually, Jewish political apostates inflict real damage by poisoning young minds and promoting hatred of Israel.

There is a particularly grave danger in the activism of committed

anti-Zionists from among the ranks of Jewish educators, academics, public intellectuals, and clergy. They call themselves Jews and give their own work — and the work of non-Jewish anti-Zionists — a veneer of intellectual, professional, or spiritual legitimacy. Some of the Jewish political apostates use their origins, in some cases even ancestral connections to the Shoah, as a validation of their anti-Zionist views. Tal Frieden, a self-described “Jewish organizer,” outlined their path to anti-Zionism this way: “I started to think of my grandparents’ stories of the Holocaust as a reason to oppose any nation that aims to expel, oppress and wipe out another group of people.” Marione Ingram, a German Jew who has lived in the United States after having survived the Shoah, has referred to Representative Rashida Tlaib, an avatar of congressional forces seeking to sever U.S. support of Israel, as a “hero.”

And there is also the case of Israeli-born academics and public intellectuals who have found greener pastures and cozier perches in the United States and contribute, whether or not they claim to represent anything more than a personal perspective, to the cacophony of Israel-bashing. Take the example of Linda Dittmar, author of the memoir *Tracing Homelands*, who was born in 1935 in Mandatory Palestine and taught for many years at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. On October 11, 2023, at a campus event convened by Students for Justice in Palestine, Dittmar spoke of having been “‘deeply inculcated’ into Zionist ideology from an early age” and characterized her current reaction as “a mix of shame and rage.”

In their apologetic or defensive moments, some of the Jewish anti-Zionists wax nostalgic for a bygone era when a plurality of American Jews, especially within Reform Judaism, were not Zionists. They deliberately blur the line between the past non-Zionism of many American Jews and today’s active political struggle of some American Jews against Zionism and Israel. As Jonathan Sarna, a leading historian of American Jewry, explained in “Converts to Zionism in the American Reform Movement,” “well into the 1930s the majority

Today's American (and Canadian) Jewish anti-Zionists behave in ways that replicate the behavior of tens of thousands of Soviet Jews in the 1960s–1980s.

of Reform Jews, and certainly their rabbis, preferred to associate themselves with an ambivalent non-Zionism.” That was 90 years ago! In the words of Thomas A. Kolsky, author of *Jews Against Zionism*: “The rebellious rabbis were not wild-eyed radicals, but respectable defenders of American classical Reform Judaism.” The fundamental fact that today's Jewish anti-Zionists consistently ignore is that mainstream Jewish American religious or intellectual opposition to Zionism had largely ended in 1948 with the creation of the State of Israel.

At the same time, today's Jewish anti-Zionists love to root themselves in the history of the Jewish socialist movement, specifically the Bund and its American successors, and in the activities of Jewish communists and left-wing socialists of the 1930s to the 1960s. Should one be surprised that even in its current, glossier format, *Jewish Currents*, a magazine historically allied with the Communist Party USA and its offshoots, still today continues to employ and empower the Jewish ghosts of Menshevik and Trotskyite anti-Zionism? A selective fabrication of roots comes across with exceptional clarity in “A Brief History of Anti-Zionist Jews,” published in *Left Voice*—self-described as a “revolutionary socialist news site and magazine”—two weeks after the October 7 attack. The overview presents “a long history of Jewish socialists fighting against Zionism which offers lessons for today's struggle,” but it makes no reference to the Soviet anti-Zionist machinery.

Sherry Wolf, author of *Sexuality and Socialism*, recently described her path to activism against Israel in the following way: “I went to private Jewish school as a child, learned Hebrew, my teachers in the 1970s were Holocaust survivors. I believed Zionism was some kind of socialism, went [to Israel] in 1983, stunned by anti-Arab racism & reality, met Marxists & became an anti-Zionist Jew & socialist ever since.” Some of today’s Jewish political apostates, either directly or by proxy, find inspiration in reading Marx on the Jewish question, or they rely on early Soviet sources from the 1920s. Today’s Jewish political apostates might even reproduce a phrase from the speech of the Communist Party of Palestine representative Hadjar (pseudonym of Muhammed Ashkar) at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International that convened in 1935 in Moscow: “The Communist Party creates the national front of all Arabs against imperialists and Zionists.”

While today’s Jewish anti-Zionists are prepared to acknowledge their ideological debt to varieties of socialist or communist discourse, they conveniently obfuscate their principal Soviet sources, and specifically their rootedness in the Soviet anti-Zionism of the 1960s–1980s. Consider “Approach to Zionism,” one of the mission statements of Jewish Voice for Peace:

Jewish Voice for Peace is guided by a vision of justice, equality and freedom for all people. We unequivocally oppose Zionism because it is counter to those ideals. . . . Through study and action, through deep relationship with Palestinians fighting for their own liberation, and through our own understanding of Jewish safety and self determination, we have come to see that Zionism was a false and failed answer to the desperately real question many of our ancestors faced of how to protect Jewish lives from murderous anti-semitism in Europe.

This text exhibits many tenets of the Soviet anti-Zionist discourse. It betrays direct ideological and rhetorical connections to

Soviet anti-Zionist propaganda but fails to acknowledge them. One can only wonder why.

Students of Jewish history and culture have already done a lot to chronicle and catalogue the Soviet state-sponsored enterprise of anti-Zionism. I lean on the foundational work of Jonathan Frankel, the late London-born historian who taught at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and also on the recent academic and polemical work by American, British, and Israeli authors, especially Izabella Tabarovsky and David Hirsh. In 2019, Tabarovsky warned,

Virulently antisemitic anti-Zionism that was so central to the late Soviet Union's propaganda seems to have faded from the West's collective memory. Yet, in a strange case of déjà vu for those who, like myself, have lived through the late Soviet anti-Zionist campaign or have studied it in detail, the same memes and ideas that were in use then continue to circulate in contemporary far-left anti-Zionist circles.

Another truly important lens for a deep understanding of Jewish political apostasy is Marat Grinberg's splendid book *The Soviet Jewish Bookshelf*, which includes a section about Soviet anti-Zionist literature in Russian, Ukrainian, and Yiddish. By analogy with Nazi racial anthropology, Grinberg characterized the Soviet anti-Zionist publishing industry as "pseudoscience," adding that it is "sadly proving to be enduring and effective long after the demise of the Soviet Union."

Indeed, most of the Soviet ideological and rhetorical roots of today's anti-Zionism may be located in the period that followed the Six-Day War. Israel's "miraculous victory," as Vladimir Nabokov described it in a 1967 letter to his former classmate Shmuel Rozov, an Israeli architect, simultaneously resulted in the birth of the Jewish National Liberation movement in the USSR and the creation of institutional Soviet propaganda against Israel. In this brand of Soviet anti-Zionism, pathologically twisted parallels between Israel and the Nazi state, between Zionism and Nazism,

were commonplace, and all Soviet Jews had to endure them in their daily life. Some Jews collaborated in the creation and dissemination of these lies.

Elena Stein, director of organizing strategy at Jewish Voice for Peace, intoned at a rally on November 9, 2023, “I’m here on behalf of thousands of American Jews who say: Not in our name!” She then went on to describe her grandmother’s survival in the Shoah. In Stein’s account, as the descendant of a survivor, she had “spent years and years agonizing over the question of where were the neighbors, why did they just stand by.” Her conclusion: “It is with all of my Jewish ancestors at my back...we refuse to be neighbors who just stand by.” A more literal—and pernicious—equating of Israel with Nazi Germany could hardly be imagined, even by the Soviet propagandists themselves. Putin, no less, who has long positioned himself as heir incarnate to the Soviet regime, likened Israel’s military operation in Gaza to the siege of Leningrad by the Nazis. In doing so, the butcher of Ukraine reanimated the Soviet anti-Zionist custom of comparing the IDF to the Wehrmacht. And here is Sasha Senderovich, who as a young man emigrated from Russia and is now a professor at the University of Washington, commenting on the IDF’s efforts to provide humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza: “I dunno, this little video gives off a serious ‘Red Cross visits Theresienstadt’ vibe, if you ask me...” (To my knowledge, nobody asked him.)

What is driving American Jewish anti-Zionists to commit acts of political apostasy as Israel feels increasingly isolated internationally? Is it self-propelled fear of career or reputational damage? Anxiety over the threat to the hard-earned American Jewish (bourgeois) status quo? Panic over the alarming rise of antisemitism and a visceral sense that the U.S. might start to look a lot like the USSR in that regard? On November 1, 2023, Rabbi Jessica Rosenberg interrupted President Biden at an event in Northfield, Minnesota, with these words: “Mr. President, if you care about Jewish people, as a rabbi I need you to call for a cease-fire right now.” Unlike her

Soviet Jewish predecessors, this American rabbi and her fellow Jewish anti-Zionists enact political apostasy on their own volition, without an apparent fear of official retribution or ostracism.

While the response to the present war in Israel has added evidentiary teeth to our understanding of the Soviet ideological and political roots of American anti-Zionism, it is equally crucial to note that today's American (and Canadian) Jewish anti-Zionists behave in ways that replicate the behavior of tens of thousands of Soviet Jews in the 1960s–1980s—less “Jews of silence” (*pace* Elie Wiesel) and more Jews of public anti-Zionist spectacle. That's the most tragic part of this story, one that also augurs a heretofore uncharted terrain of Jewish retrenchment and assimilation.

But there is also hope in this story, because Jewish tradition keeps the doors open for *teshuvah* (return), and also because history has rendered Soviet anti-Zionism a despicable ideology and a futile political enterprise. To illustrate this fact, one need only see how it operated in that era and what impact it had on Soviet Jews. The formation of the Anti-Zionist Committee was announced at a time when Jewish aliyah from the USSR stood at a near standstill, and when, in the general context of state-sponsored antisemitism, the only Soviet Jews who were persecuted for being Jewish were refuseniks and clandestine teachers of Hebrew. Some of the refusenik activists, such as the fearless Ida Nudel or the “mighty” Vladimir Slepak, whom I was privileged to know as a young man, became “Prisoners of Zion.”

The original declaration of the Anti-Zionist Committee of the Soviet Public came out on April Fool's Day in 1983; the timing may have been a coincidence, or perhaps it was a function of the morbid sense of humor of the *Pravda* editors or party apparatchiks. In retrospect, the joke was on the Jewish anti-Zionists themselves. Statistics of the Jewish population in the USSR expose more convincingly than I ever could the historical fallacy of Soviet anti-Zionism. According to the data of Mark Tolts, a leading expert on the demography of Jews of the former USSR, a total of 1.4

million people immigrated to Israel from the USSR and its successor states between the late 1960s and the present. The majority of ex-Soviet Jews living in America and Canada, including several of today's vociferous Jewish political apostates, left the USSR on Israeli aliyah visas. During the finale of Jewish history in the former Russian Empire and USSR, the Jewish population dropped from 2,170,000 in the Soviet Union of 1970 to just south of 200,000 in the successor states today, and it continues to dwindle. The outflux of tens of thousands of Jews from Russia and Ukraine following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has offered further statistical proof that Soviet anti-Zionism has been a colossal failure.

Today's Jewish members of the organizations we might ruefully call the Anti-Zionist Committees of the American Public refuse to learn from the failures of their Soviet predecessors. Whether or not they realize it, American anti-Zionist Jews are the useful idiots of the anti-Zionist Soviet legacy, linking arms with forces that undermine their safety in a world increasingly hateful to them as Jews. They are cashing in the only ticket to safety that they and their children are legally guaranteed to have for as long as Israel remains a Jewish state and a national homeland of all Jews. In their opprobrious stance against Israel, Jewish political apostates find themselves on the enemy side of Jewish survival. *

YONI HEILMAN

November 19 – December 7

Diary of an IDF Soldier

Sunday, November 19 | 11:14 P.M.



PEOPLE TALK, dream, and sing about parades at the end of wars. I don't know of a war that ended with a parade since the Second World War. But I do like the idea of a decisive end.

Several times during each of my shifts, we have what might be called an “event.”

Sometimes it is a direct attack by enemy forces; sometimes it is the threat of one. Sometimes we are not even sure, initially, what kind of event we are facing. But we never allow those questions to remain unanswered. We never allow them to fade away. At a certain point, even if we haven't learned anything new, even if we haven't answered any questions, we declare an end to the period of stress and focus. Our team leader calls out חז"ל — an abbreviation that stands for the phrase “return to routine.”

I don't expect a parade at the end of this war. Frankly, I am not at all sure that that is an appropriate way to conclude a war,

These diary entries were originally published online on December 19, 2023.

anyway. But I desperately hope that the war will have a decisive conclusion. When I feel once again that routine is okay. When the idea of breaking with routine will be something to look forward to, rather than something to dread.

I would love to beat my sword into a plowshare. But I will be more than grateful if we can all just collectively whisper the word שׁוֹלָמִי.

Wednesday, November 22 | 11:16 P.M.

As Israel prepares for a possible prisoner swap — our women and children for their terrorists, some convicted of attempted murder — I'm not sure whether anyone who reads these updates wonders what I think about the deal (and so many other things about this war), but I will tell you anyway: I don't know.

My oldest daughter told me that she and her friends had discussed in school whether it is better to be kidnapped or killed; I don't know the answer, and neither can anyone else.

I don't know whether it's important to be more explicit about the realities of this war with our younger kids, giving them language we have crafted to describe what is happening. Or if we should try and shield them from the worst of it, in the hope that some of the atrocities that were committed will stay off their radar.

During my shift today, we sighted a group of terrorists hastily building a rocket launcher, hoping to kill more Israeli civilians before a pause in fighting takes effect. I had a hand in securing a fighter jet that dropped a bomb on the abandoned building they entered. I don't know whether I should be proud, relieved, or just determined to continue pursuing those who rise up against us.

Sunday, November 26 | 11:02 P.M.

Friday morning I woke up to the strangest sound: birds singing.

It wasn't the fact that there were birds nearby, which is nothing new. But the fact that I heard them, that they were the loudest

sound in range of my hearing, was. Thursday morning had been a more typical wakeup: volleys of Iron Dome rockets firing from nearby, the ever-present buzzing of a drone overhead, and regular flyovers of helicopters. But birds? It felt like the twilight zone.

Things became even more bizarre when I went on duty. My unit has spent a month and a half carefully scrutinizing a very large area of Gaza for signs of life. On the occasions when we have spotted people, 99 times out of 100 they have been Hamas terrorists trying to kill us, and we have immediately engaged them. On Friday morning, there might have been a thousand people, all at once. They were everywhere. Walking down roads, picking through rubble, riding wagons. Looking back through the fence at Israel. The scene was surreal. And all we did, of course, was watch.

The pause in fighting has introduced a complicated new reality. On the one hand, there is not a single soldier in the army who would do anything to jeopardize a deal that would see women, children, and elderly hostages released. On the other, it is unnerving to watch positions being rebuilt, tunnels being re-dug, scouting positions being deployed—by our enemy—without us making a move.

Monday, November 27 | 10:30 A.M.

Last night, I played the tiniest of roles in one of the most momentous events of my life: the release of some of our hostages.

Elements of our unit's regular operations, which have become routine for me, were breathtakingly powerful because of their context: watching from above as, deep in Gaza, individuals were loaded onto a caravan of cars. I did not know that the people surrounding the cars were armed Hamas fighters, taking a final opportunity to terrorize our children by banging on the windows of their vans and chanting the same words they had shouted on October 7 while murdering their families in front of them, "Allahu akbar": God is great.

A helicopter landed in the field near our ground troops, ready to transport the elderly grandmother who was brutally kidnapped

shortly after undergoing open heart surgery; she spent 51 days without proper care or medication.

The radio broadcast mundane reports, in the same even voices typical of our incredible commanders, made all the more unbelievable because of their meaning last night. אני בקשר עין אתך: “I have eye contact with your vehicle,” spoken by forces at the fence when the convoy transporting the hostages came into view.

אנחנו נעים בציר על פי תכנון: “We are traveling on the route per the plan,” spoken by the leader of the convoy, confirming that all vehicles had safely crossed the border.

There are approximately 16 million Jews in the world. Most of them, I hope, exchange a hug or kiss with a family member at the end of the day. Every day. Important moments — but not unusual. It happened for me, too, yesterday.

But at the end of the night, when 14 mothers, grandmothers, sons, and daughters, were hugged and kissed by their families after 51 days of captivity. . . . That was a moment when all of us cried.

Monday, December 4 | 6:31 P.M.

There is a T-shirt I have seen many people wearing. Black and white, the back simply reads “שומר אחי” — My brother’s keeper. It is a play on the famous words Cain spoke to God when asked about his brother Abel: Am I my brother’s keeper? The shirt defiantly declares that the wearer does, indeed, take responsibility for others.

As we reach two months of war and I see the best of us giving ever more attention to the needs of those around them, I realize that it’s the second word on that shirt that matters most. Not just that we insist on guarding others, but that we see one another as brothers.

The war will end, at some point. I won’t get into how we can win or what it will mean or what I think about all of it. I will just say that when the dust settles and the tanks roll home and we return to some kind of regular life — I hope that one thing we don’t forget

is that, at the end of the day, we are brothers and sisters. We are one people. And that if we are not there for one another, what are we?

Wednesday, December 6 | 3:55 P.M.

The war is escalating.

In the south, our troops in Gaza are continuing their advance toward strongholds of Hamas. In the north, Hezbollah continues a regular barrage of attacks on our forces and, when they have the opportunity, on our civilians. And in the West, the assault on our right to exist in our ancient homeland relentlessly persists.

After hours upon hours of discussions and decision-making, it was decided that our unit will be going deeper into Gaza. There is an extraordinary amount of work that goes into an effort of this size, and it was all-hands-on-deck until close to midnight, when some of us were sent to sleep in preparation for an eight-hour shift beginning before dawn.

During the course of my shift, some of our neighboring units took casualties; the first thing I saw when I finally came off duty was a medevac helicopter passing low overhead. The days and weeks ahead promise to challenge us in new ways.

And yet, for me, the scariest experience of the past 24 hours was a 90-second clip I watched on my phone.

Yesterday, a friend in England responded to my question “How are things there?” by describing a surge of hatred of immense proportions. Shortly afterward, I saw the president of my alma mater testify at a congressional hearing about antisemitism on campus. When asked several times point-blank, she could not clearly state that calls for genocide of the Jewish people violate the University of Pennsylvania’s code of conduct.

The world in which I grew up was not one in which I experienced very much antisemitism. As the grandson of Holocaust survivors, I hoped and believed that, if we were not past antisemitism, we were moving in the right direction. That liberal progressive politics on

the left, and religious conservative views on the right, gave Israel and the Jewish people friends across the spectrum. That antisemitism in Europe was a vestige of cultural sentiments that have been there for generations, and anti-Israel feelings were political or regional.

I am having trouble holding on to those beliefs.

Thursday, December 7 | 3:36 P.M.

Two months ago, today.

I'm telling myself, not you. Maybe it's because I hope to dilute the association of the events that began this war with their Hebrew date, with the joyful holiday that was to take place on October 7.

And maybe there are moments where I might admit that it's a goal for future generations. Maybe I know that it's a lost cause for ours.

Tonight we light the first candle of Hanukkah. Gabrielle and our children will light our hanukkiah without me; I will light mine in a clearing, under a camouflage net, with helicopters crossing overhead.

Last night one of our officers spoke to us about the upcoming holiday. "Hanukkah is a holiday that is very much celebrated in our homes, with our families," he said. "How appropriate, then, that we will be celebrating it here, while defending our homes and our families."

A drop of light chases away a great amount of darkness.

Let us hope that our small light in this world, and the light of the candles that all of us light around the world tonight, and the light of all the good people around the world who maintain their humanity and their truth as vital to their own well-being—let us hope that, together, our light will chase away all darkness from this world. *

CONTRIBUTORS

JACOB BAIME is the CEO of the Israel on Campus Coalition.

DAVID BERNSTEIN is the founder of the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values and the former CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. He is also the author of *Woke Antisemitism: How a Progressive Ideology Harms Jews*.

MIJAL BITTON is the *rosh kehilla* at the Downtown Minyan in New York City.

SARA STEINHARDT BLOOM is the vice chair of the Board of The Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life.

DAVID HAZONY is the editor of *Jewish Priorities: Sixty-Five Proposals for the Future of Our People*.

YONI HEILMAN is the CEO of TAMID Group.

FELICIA HERMAN is the associate editor of SAPIR and the managing director of Maimonides Fund North America.

SARAH HURWITZ is a former head speechwriter for First Lady Michelle Obama and the author of *Here All Along: Finding Meaning, Spirituality, and a Deeper Connection to Life—in Judaism (After Finally Choosing to Look There)*.

BRIAN MULRONEY was Canada's 18th prime minister, from 1984 to 1993.

DOUGLAS MURRAY is the author of *The War on the West*. He is a columnist at *The Spectator*.

MICHAEL OREN was Israel's ambassador to the United States and a member of the Knesset. He is the author of the Substack publication *Clarity*.

ROGER ROSENBLATT is a memoirist, novelist, and essayist. His most recent book is *Cataract Blues: Running the Keyboard*.

MAXIM D. SHRAYER is a professor at Boston College. He is the author of *A Russian Immigrant: Three Novellas, Of Politics and Pandemics*, and *Immigrant Baggage*. His new collection of poetry, *Kinship*, is forthcoming in April.

BRET STEPHENS is the editor-in-chief of SAPIR.

KENNETH S. STERN is the director of the Bard Center for the Study of Hate. He is the author of *The Conflict over the Conflict: The Israel/Palestine Campus Debate*.

NADINE STROSSEN is a senior fellow at FIRE (the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression) and the past national president of the American Civil Liberties Union. She is the author of *HATE: Why We Should Resist It with Free Speech, Not Censorship*.

DAVID WOLPE is the Max Webb Rabbi Emeritus of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles. His most recent book is *David: The Divided Heart*.



MAIMONIDES FUND

Maimonides Fund is a private grantmaking organization inspired by our namesake's commitment to Jewish faith, Jewish peoplehood, citizenship, and science.

וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַתַּחַת
רַגְלָיו כָּמַעֲשֵׂה לְבַנְת הַסִּפִּיר
וּכְעֶצֶם הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטֹהַר:

— שמות כד:י

We prosecute this war so that the next generation might
have a chance to grow up without this sort of war.

DAVID WOLPE · 26

We are already at the point where the pro-Palestinian
movement has become openly pro-Hamas; where the reaction to
the murder of Jews is euphoria; where the more Jews are killed,
the more it is taken as evidence of the perfidy of the Jews
themselves. This is the road back to Kristallnacht.

BRET STEPHENS · 38

For thousands of years, we have been questioning, debating,
challenging, and wrestling with our sacred texts—agonizing
about what it means to be a good person, live a worthy life,
and serve something greater than ourselves.

SARAH HURWITZ · 82

Don't hide your Jewishness: Wear it with pride.
Not because we are victims, but because we are strong.
Because we are resilient.

FELICIA HERMAN · 94

October 8 offers us the opportunity to rethink what we do and
how we do it. We cannot fail to seize the moment for change.

DAVID BERNSTEIN · 108