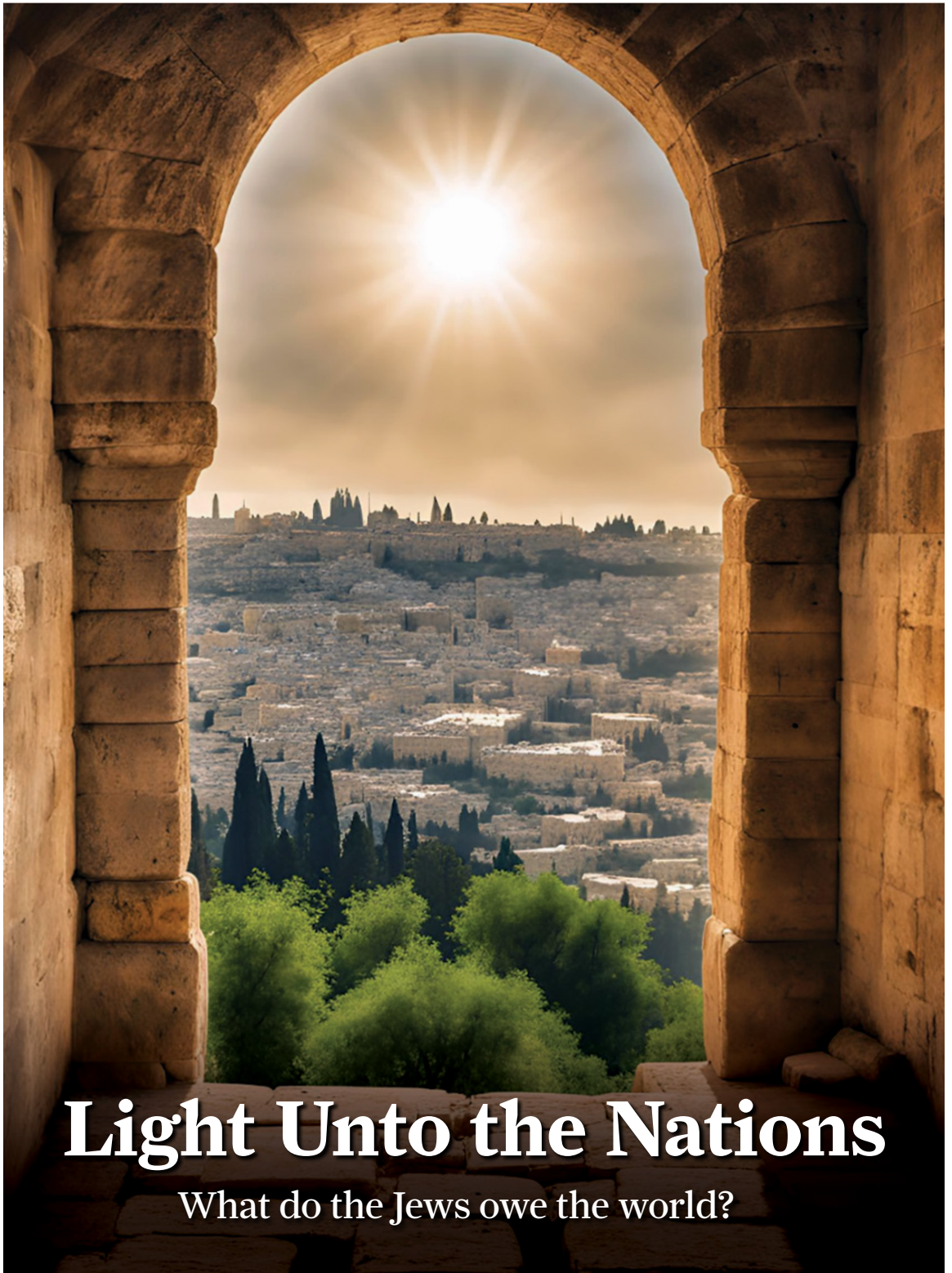


SOLOMON JOURNAL

Volume V / SPRING 2024



Light Unto the Nations

What do the Jews owe the world?

SOLOMON  JOURNAL is a premiere outlet of young Jewish American journalism on serious, relevant topics. The journal brings together Tikvah's emphasis on lofty ideas with the impact of genuinely held beliefs, refined and articulated in a concrete way.

The *Solomon Journal* is proudly Jewish, proudly Zionist, and proudly defends Western Civilization. We take positions on both current and perennial questions from this broad vantage point, acknowledging all the while that robust discussion and debate and not doctrinal purity are at the heart of the Jewish, Zionist, and Western traditions.

We believe that arguments matter but that they must be deployed in the service of the morally good and noble, not the deconstructive or subversive. At a time when the worlds of politics and culture are plagued by moral confusion and systemic doubt, we need to provide something more nurturing, something more bracing and clear.

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Letter from the Dean

I am writing this Dean's letter for the Spring 2024 issue of the *Solomon Journal* on the eve of *Yom HaZikaron*, Memorial Day for Israeli soldiers and martyrs, victims of relentless war and terrorism directed against the only Jewish state in the world. The moment is obviously bigger than any mere occasion to frame this new issue of a bespoke student-led magazine of ideas and critique. But we can gauge the things that matter most in our broader reality by noting that, incredibly, things are worse off in many ways than when we last wrote to you in our winter issue, just four months ago. If we're brutally honest with ourselves-- the only way to be in times like this, perhaps always—we must acknowledge that the war in Gaza is not going well and what's happening on college campuses across the country arguably dwarfs the actual atrocities of October 7th. This is not where we wanted to be now.

The dissonance that I'm describing can be seen in bold relief against the backdrop of our symposium theme for this current issue: What do Jews owe the world? How do we best fulfill our obligation to be a "light unto the nations"? A few questions, if I may: What if we don't owe the world anything—does the world seem to owe us, or more pointedly, want to owe us, anything right now? Is that cynicism or realism talking? What if the world doesn't even want our light-- like it feels now? Do we continue to act, counter-factually, as if the world is looking for our shining, luminous light? All this puts me in the mind of the great Polish American poet and critic, Jacob Glatstein, and his seething, searing 1938 masterpiece, "*A gute nakht, velt*," or, "Good Night, World." I won't do justice to the pointed, pained-proud words or images but if our situation in America today doesn't feel like "Flabby democracy, with your cold compresses of sympathy," I don't know if we've approximated this state since 1938, the year in which these words were written. Who is not tempted today to go back "To my crooked alleys, hunchbacked street-lamp/My stray pages, my Twenty-Four-Books/My Talmud, to the puzzling Questions, to the bright Hebrew-Yiddish/To Law, to deep meaning, to duty, to right"?

But Glatstein may be too bitter a pill to swallow, even under the foreboding circumstances we now labor under. After all, we have seen an unprecedented display of *Ahavat Yisrael*, of love of the Jewish People and State, from our many Christian friends and neighbors, locally and in the halls of government. This is no small matter. We are not (all) alone in this civilizational struggle between the good and the genocidal, between law and love on the one hand, and anarchy and despair, on the other. The fight must continue, onward to victory.

Cordially,

Rabbi Mark Gottlieb
Chief Education Officer, *Tikvah*
Dean, Solomon Fellowship

The Purpose Embedded in Every Nation

BY LIR YISSAR

The struggle to understand how God could choose just one nation, and give such purpose and responsibility to one nation, has been a persistent question for Jews and non-Jews alike throughout history. This sentiment is perhaps best encapsulated by Tevye, the protagonist in Sholem Aleichem's famous short stories *Tevye the Dairyman*, who famously beseeches God, saying, "I know, I know. We are Your chosen people. But, once in a while, can't You choose someone else?"

This poignant plea prompts reflection on the notion of chosenness and purpose. It compels one to ponder whether there can be one particular nation that has been uniquely chosen or whether every nation is chosen to fulfill a unique purpose in the world. Indeed, what Tevye failed to realize is that divine selection extends beyond the Jewish nation. As former Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth Lord Immanuel Jakobovits argued, in the same way that each individual is chosen to fulfill some God-given purpose, every nation is chosen to fill a distinct role.

Consider the Greeks, who made lasting contributions in philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy. For one, the famous Socratic method stems from Ancient Greek philosophy. Socrates developed this form of learning based on cooperative, argumentative dialogue. Through asking questions and sparking discussion, this method forces students to examine their beliefs and seek a deeper understanding of the topic at hand. The Socratic method has heavily influenced modern society, as evidenced by its widespread adoption in schools around the world.

Additionally, the discoveries made by Ancient Greek mathematicians such as Pythagoras, Euclid, and Archimedes are still used in mathematical teachings today. This includes the basic rules of geometry, the concept of formal mathematical proof,

as well as discoveries in mathematical analysis, applied mathematics, and number theory. The Greeks also made great innovations in the field of astronomy, discovering that planets are in motion and that the Earth rotates on its axis, as well as proposing the modern system of apparent magnitudes. Their pioneering insights into philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy advanced human evolution, and left us a clear example of how one nation can fulfill its purpose.

The same way the Greeks were chosen to fulfill a unique purpose, so too, the Romans had something wholly their own to offer the world. The Romans introduced unique court systems that are still used globally as well as created a praetor system for settling conflicts. This system included a praetor, a powerful government official, who took written complaints from citizens and, after investigation, authorized the case to go to trial. At trial, the plaintiff and the defendant would present evidence to the praetor, who acted as the judge and decided the fate of the case.

Later, the Romans added a jury court system, which allowed some cases to be heard in front of a jury of up to seventy-five men. A trial in Ancient Rome would have looked similar to a trial today: an opening speech, examination and cross-examination of witnesses, introduction of evidence, and closing speeches. It is clear that the Ancient Roman court system served as a foundation for the current court systems in the United States, Canada, and Europe. The enduring legacy of Roman judicial law across the globe shows the impact this civilization had on human development of the legal system, fulfilling a clear and distinct purpose in the world.

Comparably, Britain's influence on human advancement is indelible, particularly through the



country's introduction of parliamentary rule into society. The first English Parliament was convened in 1215 with the creation and signing of the Magna Carta. Over the years, the Parliament split into the House of Commons and the House of Lords and expanded in its lawmaking powers. Today, under the United Kingdom's constitutional monarchy, the two houses of Parliament are the only bodies with the authority to create legislation and laws. This kind of parliamentary system is widely seen in contemporary societies, reminding us of Britain's enduring influence.

Meanwhile, God chose the Jewish people for the purpose of moral and religious inspiration, as seen in Biblical texts. In the Book of Exodus, God declares that if the Jewish people keep the covenant we will be a "treasured possession among all peoples" and "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (19:5-6). The renowned Biblical commentator, Rabbi Ovadia ben Jacob Sforno (commonly known as "Sforno"), explained that "kingdom of priests" means that as a nation, the Jewish people are a kingdom of priests to the entire human race.

In the Jewish tradition, a priest's role is to connect the Jewish people to God. Thus, since the Jewish people are like a kingdom of priests to the

entire world, it is our role to connect all people to God. This understanding makes it clear that the role of the Jewish people is to act as an example of a moral, religious life. Additionally, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks commented on Isaiah saying about Israel, "You are My witness—declares the Lord—that I am God," by explaining that this passage is intended to teach that the Jewish people's purpose is to share our understanding of God with the world (43:10). This emphasizes the notion that the Jewish people's purpose is to spread religious teachings.

Indeed, the essence of chosenness extends beyond trite narratives, and rather, points to the unique purpose that lies within each nation. From the intellectual legacy of Ancient Greece, to the Roman advancements in judicial law, and Britain's enduring example of parliamentary rule, alongside the Jewish people's religious responsibilities, each nation develops the world further and helps to shape history. By acknowledging the varied manifestations of chosenness, we embrace the rich diversity of human purpose. ☆



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Chanukah in 1931 in Kiel, Germany

The Dangerous Narrative of the Jewish “Debt to Society”

BY OCEAN TIMMINS

I believe the world has a deep antipathy towards the Jewish people, implicitly baked in over thousands of years of hatred taking various forms. There is a real question about whether seeing ourselves as a “light unto the nations” acts more as a beacon of hope or a lightning rod for hatred. It is because of this that I don’t think we should reinforce the idea that

we are different from anyone else. We need to take our future, and subsequently our survival, incredibly seriously. It is our job as the Jewish people to prioritize our safety over all else. When we openly encourage the idea that we are different, we invite danger.

To that end, what do Jews owe the world? If to “owe” is to be obligated to give something in

exchange for something received, to be in debt, I would ask, what have we received? What would warrant such an obligation from the Jewish nation?

Being in debt is scary and leaves one vulnerable. People will do anything to absolve themselves of debt, and the mindset of being in debt is dangerous to oneself and to those around you. As Jews, we shouldn’t go about life believing that we inherently owe something to the rest of the world. Rather, we should think of ourselves as contributors towards a better future—just as all nations are.

The notion that Jews owe something beyond what is demanded of all people is dangerous not only because we could feel a detrimental internal obligation, but because the rest of the world might “catch on,” so to speak. The world may start to believe that we truly *do* owe them something. The only thing more destructive than internal manufactured debt is perceived external debt, and as soon as you have both, it isn’t artificial anymore. If the larger population starts to feel that we owe them something because of this rhetoric we put forth, Jews are put in a dangerous situation of *needing* to give to the world, rather than being able to do so of our own volition.

I do not mean to imply that we have no responsibility to the world; I do believe that everyone has an individual responsibility to the earth, and to exercise moderation when reaping its bounty. But, more important than the question of what we may or may not owe the external world, is the question, “What do we owe ourselves?” I believe that Jews specifically have a responsibility to the future of our culture, religion, and people. We are an extremely resilient people, but resilience requires action. I believe we should prioritize our safety and our responsibility to ourselves over our role as a “light” unto anyone else.

To many, the concept of being a “light unto the nations” feels almost arrogant. Who are we to say it’s our obligation to shine a light on the otherwise darkened nations? That we are the ones to hold the torch to lead the world morally, spiritually, and/or conceptually?

Judaism is one of the oldest religions on earth, and we have had largely the same laws and morals—morals that have spread all across the world—since the beginning of our people. We have provided a “telos,” something to strive for. That is

“We are an extremely resilient people, but resilience requires action. I believe we should prioritize our safety and our responsibility to ourselves over our role as a “light” unto anyone else.

our light. Being a light is not a responsibility of the present, but rather our impact on the present through our influence on the past.

Anti-Semitism is a growing threat. It is something that we must all devote significant time and energy combating. We cannot trust anyone to do it for us. In a chapter of Dara Horn’s book *People Love Dead Jews*, discussing Holocaust education and museums, she states: “They will have learned something officially important; discovered a fancy metaphor for the limits of Western civilization. The problem is that for us, dead Jews aren’t a metaphor, but rather actual people that we don’t want our children to become.” It is up to us and only us to defend our future.

How do we do this? I do not know for certain, but what I do know is that we cannot forget our Jewish history, both negative and positive. We cannot make concessions to those who want to see our downfall, as that, by nature, validates their argument. We must stop using the phrase “I’m Jewish, but—”, as a tool to justify our very existence.

Jews have already given the world so much that to expect more of ourselves might actually be harmful rather than constructive. Our role as the “light unto the nations” has already been fulfilled by bringing new ways of thinking to the world.

More importantly, what do we owe ourselves? We owe ourselves a commitment to building a future in which the Jewish people are held to the same standard as everyone else without being singled out for what we have done or what we should do. In doing so, we will better the world in typical Jewish fashion. ✧



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Our God-Given Light: Its Meaning and Basis in Jewish Tradition

BY RAANAN VANDERWALDE

There is a Jewish belief that it is our role to shine a light unto the nations. Many of us are familiar with this idea and shape our actions around this principle. But where does this idea of being a light unto the nations come from; where in Jewish history does this appear, and what does it require of us?

The phrase “a light unto the nations” appears in Isaiah in two different locations. The first instance is when God states: “I the Lord, in My grace, have summoned you, and I have grasped you by the hand. I created you, and appointed you a covenant people, *a light of nations*” (Isaiah 42:6). Later God states: “It is too little that you should be My servant in that I raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the survivors of Israel: I will also make you *a light of nations*, that My salvation may reach the ends of the Earth” (Isaiah 49:6).

The phrase appears in Hebrew as “לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם” (*le’or goyim*), literally translated as “a light of nations.” This interpretation implies something different than the common phrase known today, which is “a light *unto* the nations” (translated as “אוֹר לְגוֹיִם”—*or l’goyim*). Instead of instructing *us* to be a light to the nations, this interpretation states that *God* will illuminate the nations through us.

The idea of God extending Jewish holiness to other nations is common in the Torah. One such example is in the beginning of *Parshat Lech Lecha*. God tells Avraham to “go forth” to the place

that God will show him. In doing so, God says to Avraham: “I will bless those who bless you and curse the one who curses you; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you.” The phrase “bless themselves by you” is similar to the idea that God will illuminate other nations through us. Though there is one problem with this idea. If God fulfills this commandment for us, then where is our responsibility?

Additionally, having established that the idea of being “a light unto the nations” is different from the scriptural source לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם (*le’or goyim*), we must now ask: where exactly does this teaching as it is known today come from? When answering this question it is important to examine the idea that God made us a “light.” While we may not learn our obligation to society from the phrase in Isaiah, we can learn that the Jewish people are a light source elsewhere in Tanakh.

In particular, it is our responsibility to take this God-given light and illuminate other nations. This exact idea can be seen in other locations in Isaiah, such as in 60:2–3: “For darkness shall cover the earth...but upon you God will shine, and His glory shall be seen upon you. And nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance.” The belief in spreading “our light” seems to match up better with the idea of being a light unto the nations.

Other places in Tanakh also display the idea of Jews illuminating the world. God promises Avraham that his descendants will be like the stars in the sky. The Netziv, a well known rabbi from

the nineteenth century, comments on the use of stars as an analogy, explaining that we Jews are compared to stars in order to show our obligation to light up the world, just like stars light up the night sky. Through the light that God gives us, we must light up the world.

But what is our light, and how do we fulfill the obligation of being an *or l’goyim*? Is it through adhering to Jewish law or doing good deeds? Deuteronomy 4:6 provides an answer, saying: “Observe them carefully, for this is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’”

This tells us that we influence the surrounding nations by observing the commandments given to us by God. Rabbi Herschel Shachter says *or l’goyim* should be interpreted along with the *pasuk* (verse): “And all the peoples of the earth shall see that God’s name is proclaimed over you, and they shall stand in fear of you” (Deuteronomy 28:10). This demonstrates that our relationship with God acts as an example to the rest of the world. To truly

be an *or l’goyim*, we must connect with God and stay true to our tradition and commandments, and in so doing, enlighten the world around us.

The idea of being a light unto the nations doesn’t directly come from the words “לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם” written in Isaiah. Instead, it is the result of connecting our God-given light to the idea that we will illuminate the world around us with this light.

This obligation is not unconnected from Jewish practice. It is through a commitment to Judaism that we light up the world. It is through our Torah learning, our charity, our connection to God, and the way we treat others, that we are a role model towards the nations around us. This is our responsibility of being a light unto the nations. Now, more than ever, when the world is against us, and literal nations are turning their backs, we Jews must hold onto our commitment to this. Jews should turn the endless darkness into light—physically, mentally, and spiritually. ☆



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Between Separating Ourselves and Seeing Ourselves in Others

BY Yael Burgess Eisenberg

When a gentile came before Hillel and said he would convert to Judaism if Hillel could teach him the entire Torah while standing on one foot, Hillel did not turn him away, as Sham-mai had done. Hillel told him: “That which is hateful to you do not do to another; that is the entire Torah, and the rest is its interpretation.” This classic Talmudic account addresses a core element of Judaism—compassion, a principle Jews continue to value today. In fact, a Pew Research Center survey from 2021 found that seventy-two percent of American Jews say leading an ethical and moral life is an essential part of what being Jewish means to them.

Jews of all denominations and practices overwhelmingly affirm that Hillel’s focus is their focus as well. Being able to understand the effects of one’s actions and maintain empathy may seem simple and obvious. However, because of differing interpretations of the Torah and Jewish law, the practice of empathy can come in many different forms. So, what level of compassion are Jews expected to have? Are we expected to exhibit boundless compassion in all situations?

In characteristic fashion, the Talmud gives us one outermost example. A scene is painted: two people, presumably in the desert. One person has enough water to sustain himself and only himself. If they share the water, both people die. Rabbi Akiva taught that the water should not be shared or gifted. Instead, the person who owns the water should drink it. This is an extreme scenario, but it is enlightening. Whether water, or perhaps money, you are not obligated to share with another if it seriously threatens your own

interests. This hypothetical demonstrates an initial limit to Jewish consideration.

However, another reading is offered, which provides a more conventional account of Jewish compassion. In the same hypothetical, in order to sustain one’s life, one must take on the burden of watching another die, something that would provoke a compassionate response in even the most hard-hearted person. Thus, Ben Petora taught that in this scenario, “It is preferable that both of them drink and die, and let neither one of them see the death of the other.” This suggests that to watch the death of another is so morally and emotionally terrible that it is ultimately preferable for two people to die rather than one. Ben Petora’s decision recognizes compassion for all humanity, but Rabbi Akiva’s teaching of self-sufficiency first ultimately takes precedence over Ben Petora’s.

Now let’s apply this teaching to the question of the debt Jews owe to the world. Without a doubt, Jews are called to be empathetic to others. However, we can also expand the hypothetical of these two individuals in the Talmud to the Jewish community and the world. We should, at the very least, not destroy ourselves in our attempt to lift up others. Total selflessness is not the correct model.

Another notable element informing Jewish kindness is Jewish hardship. In Exodus 23:9, we are told to “not oppress the stranger.” That could’ve been the end of this verse, but instead the instruction is immediately followed by a reminder that we “know the feelings of the stranger, having been strangers in the land of Egypt.” Remembering our ancestors’ experience gives us reason for empathy. Recalling our hardships in Egypt is all the reasoning required to remind us to help others, and in particular, outsiders and the downtrodden.



The explicit command for us to be caring comes from a place of affliction—which is remembered each year at the Passover seder and resonates still today given the resurgence of anti-Semitism in the diaspora. In fulfilling our responsibilities to the world as a light unto the nations, we must return to our roots as a nation.

Judaism is a tradition of collective memory. Every Jew experiences the Passover seder yearly, recalling everything from the tears of the Israelites to the bread that didn’t have time to rise and came out as matzah. The Jews of Egypt suffered, so when instructing them to have compassion, God reminded them of this harrowing experience. Today, we Jews are the living descendants of these slaves, and their pain is our own. Jewish empathy comes from a recognition of our peoplehood. Ironically, but very intentionally, by separating ourselves from the world, we have empathy for the people of the world.

Compassion is a key part of the Jewish people’s relationship with the world. But we first need to remember our peoplehood and collective trauma in order to act as a light unto the nations. Hillel again says it best: “If I am not for me, who will be for me? And when I am for myself alone, what am I? And if not now, then when?” While we are called to help others, we cannot neglect our own responsibilities in the process. We should consider any costs of Jewish compassion and weigh them against other potentialities, just as Rabbi Akiva and Ben Petora did, and must balance between separating ourselves from others and seeing ourselves in others, as shown by God’s command in Exodus. Jews owe the world compassion, but not unlimited compassion. ☆



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Shining Our Light Unto the Nations Through Jewish Teachings

BY ADIN LINDEN



Jewish history is rife with enemies, from the Egyptians to the descendants of Amalek, a lineage that is seen as the greatest enemy of the Jews and many believe to include Haman, the Nazis, and Hamas. There is always somebody out to get us. Rarely is there a quiet, peaceful moment in our history that is not immediately followed by antagonism and hatred. However, in Isaiah 42:6, we are told that Jews are to be a “light unto the nations.”

Being a light unto the nations seems to mean spreading our ideas in order to “light” the dark of

the other nations or to be an example for how other nations should live. How are we supposed to be a light unto the nations, when the nations seemingly hate us? It seems infeasible to be an example for a group of people who hate you. Thus, how can we balance being an example while being a scapegoat when things go wrong? And, most importantly, should Jews continue to try to be an example for all nations while being antagonized?

Jews have historically adopted a myriad of responses to anti-Semitism, ranging from assimilation to fighting back, fleeing, or creating communal

“Instead of constantly focusing on spreading our message to the world, we should ensure that we are a morally healthy and compassionate community.”

safe spaces. God’s instruction for us to continually be examples for the other nations can be taxing on the Jewish people. If we are constantly focused on “spreading our messages,” we cannot focus on internal issues the Jewish people face. The verse in Isaiah is not vague; God very explicitly says, “I created you and appointed you. A covenant people, a light of nations opening eyes deprived of light.”

This is explicitly asking us to show the other nations our “light.” However, if we went around to other religions telling them why Judaism is so much better than and preferable to whatever they’re doing, we would be no better than the Crusaders who tried to take back Jerusalem or the Inquisitors who forced conversion or death on Jews in the 1400s

In order to be a light unto the nations, while simultaneously not proselytizing and while frequently confronted with rampant anti-Semitism, we must be a quiet example of how to best be human. This means that Jews must focus on making sure that we are living the most moral lives that we can. Instead of constantly focusing on spreading our message to the world, we should ensure that we are a morally healthy and compassionate community. The teachings of our Rabbis are full of small nuggets of folk wisdom and life lessons that can help Jews become understated lights unto the nations.

On the thirty-first page of Bava Metzia, the Rabbis analyze multiple instances of double verbs. This is when the Torah uses two verbs in a row to mean the same thing. One of these quotations is from *Parashat Kedoshim*:

“הוֹכַח תּוֹכִיחַ אֶת עַמִּיתְךָ”
“You shall rebuke your neighbor.”

The verb that is repeated is the word for rebuke, which the Gemara explains means that teachers should not only rebuke their students, but students too should rebuke their teachers. This is a largely

unconventional teaching, in that it encourages students (often seen as less than teachers) to question their teachers. The Rabbis are trying to ensure that Jewish teachers are teaching in moral and compassionate ways. Teaching is the cornerstone of a community and by setting up this system in which students and teachers “rebuke” each other, not hatefully but lovingly, it sets an example for the other nations—making the Jewish people a “light.”

Another example is with this quote from *Parashat Re’eh*:

פֶּתַח תְּפִלָּתְךָ אֶת־יָדְךָ לְעִנִּי וּלְאַבְיֹנָה בְּאַרְצְךָ:

“Open your hand to the poor and needy kin in your land.”

The verb that is repeated is the word for open, which the Gemara explains means that not only should you donate your money to the poor residents of your city, but also to the poor residents of another city. This is another example of the Rabbis trying to teach Jews that not only is it important to be pious and religious, but also to be compassionate and moral. They are telling us Jews that there are no limits to the giving one can do. It does not stop when you donate to your neighborhood, city, or country; as a Jew you should always try to find more people in need and give to them.

Charity is another pillar of a healthy community, and by making the Jewish community one where people give and are gracious, we again set an example for the other nations—which makes the Jewish people a “light.”

These teachings are just a few examples of many that exemplify how Jews can be a light unto the nations. Without proselytizing, Jews can show others how to best live their lives. If Jews follow the teachings of the Sages, we will become more thoughtful, caring, and respectful individuals.

In order to be a light unto the nations even while hated and scrutinized, Jews should lead thoughtful lives by utilizing the tradition we’ve inherited. By focusing our light inward, it grows more powerful and more meaningful for those we are supposed to be examples for. ✧



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Remaining an *Or L'Goyim* in a Post-October 7 World

BY GILA GRAUER

October 7 will never be forgotten, not by Israelis nor by Jews around the world, who all united to mourn the tragic number of deaths and destruction upon our nation. We awoke to find a growing list of hostages—some of whom came home, yet too many of whom are still held hostage by Hamas. Since the start of the war in Gaza, many people around the world have questioned the morality of our government after we “invaded” Gaza and murdered thousands of innocent civilians (or so dominates the headlines). This is of course not the whole story. The Israeli military has taken the utmost care to execute this war in a moral and just way, and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is seen by many as an *or l'goyim*, a light unto the nations.

This is understood by many high-profile figures. For example, during a Reuters interview on March 20, U.S. presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. praised Israel's morality. He explained that if any other nation were faced with a neighboring country attempting to annihilate its people, it would go and level it. “But Israel is a moral nation. So it didn't do that. Instead, it built the Iron Dome to protect itself so it would not have to go into Gaza.” Even after all the tragedy we face, and all those around us trying to hurt us, the IDF continues to work diligently to maintain its ethical and moral standards. In the face of unmitigated evil and terror, the IDF's goal remains to uphold morality and high standards of care and decency.

Israel has always cared deeply about human life and is not willing to sacrifice this care for anything.



Not only is the IDF careful to protect Jewish lives, but it also extends the same care to Palestinian lives. The IDF is under strict instructions to prevent as many innocent Palestinian casualties as possible. Although other nations accuse Israel of indiscriminately slaughtering Palestinians, John Spencer, chair of urban warfare studies at West Point, has described Israel's achievements as “unprecedented” and argues that Israel is setting the “gold standard” for avoiding civilian casualties in urban warfare.

The IDF has given extensive notice to allow Palestinians to escape combat zones before attacks. As of January, the IDF dropped 7.2 million leaflets, made 79,000 calls, and sent 13.7 million texts and 15 million recorded calls to Palestinians in Gaza with evacuation warnings. No other country sends its enemies such extensive warning before an attack. In fact, regarding Israel's extensive alerts to Gazan civilians, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby has said, “That's basically telegraphing your punches. There are very few modern militaries in the world that would do that. I don't know that we would do that.” Throughout this war, Israel has taken the safety of Palestinians extremely seriously and has gone above and beyond to prevent innocent casualties.

While Israel attempts to protect Palestinian civilians, Hamas is intentionally putting its own people in harm's way. When the IDF advised civilians to leave the combat zone in mid-October, Hamas urged its civilians to stay and in some cases physically prevented them from leaving. Hamas has been caught on camera using its children as human shields so



1950: Golda Meir and children of Kibbutz Shefayim

that the IDF would not shoot. Hamas also bases its operations out of hospitals and schools because it knows the IDF will not bomb such facilities and risk the lives of innocent Palestinians.

By March, Israel was facilitating the entry of over 1,000 trucks with humanitarian aid into Gaza per week and has continued to increase aid deliveries by land, sea, and air. Meanwhile, even though Gazan citizens are suffering, homeless, and many are without food, Hamas still hesitates to accept aid from Israel. Hamas has even warned civilians against cooperating on aid delivery with Israel. Moreover, there are numerous documented incidences of Hamas stealing aid meant for civilians before it reaches the civilian population.

Golda Meir once said, “Peace will come when the Arabs start to love their children more than they hate us.” Time and again, Hamas proves it does not care for its own people's lives, and this makes the IDF's commitment to moral conduct in war an even greater challenge.

The IDF is one of the most moral armies in the world because it represents Israel—a deeply moral country. Jews know this and so does Hamas. Hamas knows our morals; they know that we are not willing to kill innocent children, even if they are the children of our enemies. If Hamas knows this and uses it against us, why does the world still reject it, and claim we are immoral in war?

In 2014, when Israel went into Gaza in Operation Protective Edge, Col. Richard Kemp, the former commander of British forces in Afghanistan,

testified: “The Israel Defense Forces did more to safeguard the rights of civilians in a combat zone than any other army in the history of warfare.” Indeed, Jews are not alone. Many see our commitment to morality, and applaud us for it. Yet even more people are blinded by publicity stunts and accuse us of not caring for the lives of the Palestinians in Gaza. They accuse Jews of killing everyone indiscriminately and without thought, when the facts say otherwise.

Golda Meir's renowned quote begins with these lesser-known lines: “When peace comes we will perhaps in time be able to forgive the Arabs for killing our sons, but it will be harder for us to forgive them for having forced us to kill their sons.” Israel does not celebrate life lost. Israel strives to conduct the battle against Hamas in an especially moral way, and data point after data point proves it.

This battle against Hamas and all the nations who seek to destroy Israel is a grueling battle we did not want but must fight. We must keep to our values and continue to be an *or l'goyim*, despite all those who try to degrade us and accuse us of immorality. We must keep moving forward to end this war for our sake, and for the sake of all innocent Palestinians who are living in ruins under Hamas's rule. We must keep fighting to bring our people home and illuminate Jewish morality and values to the world. ✧



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A Modern Doctors' Plot

BY BENJIE KATZ

In a tweet sent earlier this year, American political activist Saira Rao expressed profound concern about the prevalence of “Zionist” doctors and nurses in America, stating, “Realizing how many American doctors and nurses are Zionists and genuinely terrified for Palestinian, Arab, Muslim, South Asian and Black patients...” Rao is co-founder of Race2Dinner, an organization that, among other things, offers white women the opportunity to attend anti-racist dinners for \$2,500 a plate.

Her post, suggesting that the political affiliations of certain medical professionals might compromise their adherence to the Hippocratic Oath, resonated with some who shared her activism priorities and anxieties. But many other X (formerly Twitter) users swiftly responded to Rao’s declaration by utilizing a community note feature designed to flag misinformation. Some users countered Rao’s claims by highlighting the common practice of Israeli doctors

to provide medical care to Palestinians. Other Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim users shared personal anecdotes of positive experiences with both Jewish and Israeli healthcare professionals.

To other X users and close observers, Rao’s contention evoked an eerie parallel with the infamous Soviet anti-Semitic conspiracy theory known as “the doctors’ plot.”

In the early 1950s, the doctors’ plot was a state-sponsored propaganda campaign in the USSR which falsely implicated predominantly Jewish doctors in a conspiracy to assassinate Soviet government officials through negligent or deliberately incorrect medical practices. This campaign stemmed from Joseph Stalin’s growing suspicion of Jews, who he alleged were disloyal to the USSR because of their support for Zionism. Soviet authorities employed the infamous term “rootless cosmopolitans” to vilify Jews, portraying their cultural preferences as treasonous.

“Just as my father was scapegoated for his Jewish heritage, we witness similar prejudices resurfacing today, disguised under the guise of political rhetoric or social activism.”

— Natalya Rapoport, author of “Stalin and Medicine Untold Stories”

The campaign gained public traction in 1953 when Stalin urged state newspapers to report on an alleged plot orchestrated by Jewish doctors to assassinate Soviet leaders, including himself. Despite none of the initially implicated doctors being Jewish, Stalin shifted blame onto a specific Jewish doctor, who, under duress, incriminated other Jewish doctors in the supposed conspiracy. *Pravda*, the Communist Party newspaper and Soviet paper of record, published articles accusing nine doctors, six of whom were Jewish, of involvement in the plot.

The *Pravda* articles linked them to the American Joint Jewish Distribution Committee and branded them as corrupt Jewish bourgeois nationalists orchestrating a murderous plot against Soviet officials. “This Zionist spy organization, covering up their vicious actions under the mask of kindness, is now completely revealed,” said one article. But it was not only Jews who suffered the consequences of this government-orchestrated propaganda. As more and more Jewish doctors were sent to labor camps and prisons, Soviet citizens were deprived of high-quality medical expertise.

However, miraculously, following Stalin’s death that year, the new Party leadership retracted the accusations, leading to the release and rehabilitation of the falsely accused doctors. One of Stalin’s deputies, Mikhail Ryumin, was later accused of fabricating the plot and was executed. But the doctors’ plot will forever be known as one of Stalin’s final acts of terror.

Meanwhile, over seventy years later, Natalya Rapoport warmly welcomes me in a serene corner of her modest apartment. Her eyes reflect a lifetime of memories intertwined with struggle and resilience. As the daughter of one of the doctors falsely accused during the doctors’ plot, Yakov Rapoport, Natalya’s perspective on anti-Semitism carries profound weight.

I initiated our conversation by delving into Natalya’s father’s experiences during that tumultuous period of Soviet history. With a blend of sorrow and determination, she recounted the harrowing tale of her father’s arrest, imprisonment, and eventual exoneration. “My father, a world-renowned pathologist, was one of those arrested by Stalin. His execution appeared imminent. To witness him branded as a traitor and subjected to such injustice was a tragedy beyond words. But miraculously, several days before the doctors’ scheduled execution, Stalin suffered a massive stroke and died four days later.”

As we further explored the parallels between past and present manifestations of anti-Semitism, Natalya’s insights proved both enlightening and sobering. “The tactics from the ’50s have not evolved, and the underlying prejudice remains unchanged,” she observed, her gaze unwavering and resolute. “Just as my father was scapegoated for his Jewish heritage, we witness similar prejudices resurfacing today, disguised under the guise of political rhetoric or social activism.”

As our dialogue drew to a close, Natalya’s parting words lingered in the air, serving as a poignant reminder of the enduring legacy of resilience and hope. “My father’s ordeal instilled within me the realization that the battle against anti-Semitism persists,” she reflected, her voice infused with both sorrow and determination. “But as long as there are voices courageous enough to denounce injustice, hope for a brighter tomorrow remains.”

In the reverberations of history, Natalya’s heartfelt reflections blend with Saira Rao’s tweet, revealing a haunting narrative of enduring prejudice. Like the Soviet Union under Stalin, which unjustly targeted Jewish doctors, Rao’s words shed light on a contemporary skepticism towards “Zionist” medical professionals. In both instances, the specter of anti-Semitism looms large, its manifestations evolving but its underlying prejudice unchanged. By recounting Natalya’s father’s resilience, we are reminded that the fight against such bigotry is ongoing, requiring voices courageous enough to confront injustice and ensure that the shadows of the past don’t obscure the promise of a brighter tomorrow. ☆



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Behind Our Generation's Obsession with the Self

BY ETHAN GARCIA ROJZE

Generation Z (Gen Z) and Generation Alpha (Gen Alpha) face many challenges that haven't existed for any previous age group. A defining issue of our generation is selfishness. It permeates nearly every standard malady that has plagued teens of previous generations, and has turned teenagers into something novel, often approaching cruel. It seems the psyche of teens is changing, as seen in the increasing acceptance and normalization of violence, nihilism, and superficiality among our peers.

Why is this so, you may ask? Well, the first factor anybody and everybody points out is social media. Beyond usual self-esteem issues, social media exacerbates the need for teens to fit in. This is partially due to the popularity of celebrities who glorify violence, drugs, and sex online. Impressionable teenagers who see this often begin replicating such behavior, frequently without understanding the consequences of their actions.

But the problem goes well beyond Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and even Tik Tok. In recent years, this issue has been made worse by schools creating a sense of nihilism. Schools have enabled this by continuously breaking down old ideals, such as familial bonds, and declaring that the history of the West in particular is bloody and shameful, and that we, as benefactors of the West, should in fact apologize and feel guilty for the transgressions of our ancestors. This includes colonialism, which schools are all too willing to not simply teach, but rather repeat and ingrain in the curriculum. As such, by continuing to tell students that their past and culture is evil and should be cast aside, is it any wonder that they do so? And without the comfort of culture and faith, it leads to these teenagers, at best, finding solace in potentially harmful ideology, and at worse putting themselves above everyone else.

Given that all humans need some sense of community and purpose, this manifests itself in

the increasing number of teens fervently following ideas that they barely understand. One such idea is that Palestine has the right to “resistance by any means necessary,” as in the idea that the Palestinian people are being oppressed by Israel, and thus any action taken against Israel is justified. Causes such as the Palestinian Youth Movement have grown in popularity even among youth with no connection to Palestine in recent months. Simultaneously, there's been an increase in hate crimes, as teens fall deeper into these ideologies. Throughout the West, there have been many tragic stories of students facing anti-Semitism in the aftermath of October 7.

Additionally, there is a refusal to take accountability for one's actions, or rather one's inaction or faults. We see this in the emergence of the “manosphere,” which is an ideology that tells young men that they are not at fault; it's women who don't understand their place in society, and women are what's wrong with this world. By finding it so much easier to pin the blame on everyone but themselves, they drive all those closest to them away and find themselves only deeper and deeper in the manosphere, which is devastating not only to them but to those around them.

Furthermore, social media is causing teens to dissociate from human suffering. With the culture of “nothing is serious, so why take anything seriously?” so virulent on social media, teens witness

“By finding it so much easier to pin the blame on everyone but themselves, they drive all those closest to them away and find themselves only deeper and deeper in the manosphere, which is devastating not only to them but to those around them.”



Anti-Israel demonstrators holding a sign that appears to justify the October 7 Hamas massacre participate in a rally at Columbia University in New York on November 15, 2023.

or hear about terrible acts and events in the manner of mockery. When they hear about tragedy from their friends and family, they immediately dissociate from it, and fail to understand why this matters to them. They then turn around in bewilderment when their friends react the same way to whatever distresses *them*.

What's more, teens who enter relationships today often do so not out of romantic interest, but either out of lust or the need to project a successful life to others. This is tragic in the sense that teens are losing what makes having a partner so special, and seeing only the superficial benefit for themselves.

Cultural appreciation has been replaced with cultural appropriation, so when teens are told that no, they are not allowed to dress like that, because it looks too much like a culture they don't belong to, or no, they are not allowed to talk about a certain country and its problems because they aren't from there, the obvious result is that they are going to develop a sense of xenophobia or ignorance.

Finally, there is the fact that society is teaching teens that their voice matters no matter what anyone says. Thus, why should we be surprised when teens act with no respect for authority figures, and berate their peers over every little discomfort? Why should we act surprised when they act like children, whin-

ing that their every need is not met? There should be no surprise that this generation is obsessing over something as small as pronouns to define their character, instead of their actions, words, and how they treat people. The adults have told them that simply “raising their voice,” no matter what's being said, is a virtue in and of itself.

The problem with leaving all of these issues unresolved is that eventually, these teens will of course become adults. We see the realization of this type of adult playing out today on college campuses throughout the United States. It's perhaps best embodied in the Columbia graduate student who believed the university owed her “humanitarian aid” because she barricaded herself in a building, as if this would somehow affect Israel's actions in Gaza. How can we expect this generation to accomplish anything grand if they constantly feel that they are owed everything?

Before we can attempt to ameliorate the “social media generation's” obsession with the self, we first must recognize the fusion of harmful ideas and ideology that lies behind it. ✧



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Korahite Judicial Philosophy

BY JACOB SHAYEFAR

Korah makes an interesting point. As the Midrash relates, Korah began his assault on the authority of Moses with a halakhic argument. He asserts that in any system made by God, surely a garment dyed entirely of *tekhelet* would not require *tzitzit*. After all, if the purpose of *tzitzit* is merely *tekhelet*, then what would a string of blue add to the garment? If the reason for the blue was to be a sign of majesty, why does it need to be in the *tzitzit*? Why can't it be in the garment itself? In other words, Korah uses the purpose of a law to justify overruling the law itself (Midrash Tanchuma, Korah 2).

American jurisprudence generally recognizes several interpretative tools. While there's always disagreement, everyone generally starts with the text and is willing to use history, tradition, and precedent to varying extents. Much dispute, however, exists over whether or not the purpose of a law ought to have relevance.

Though we are meant to read Korah's intentions cynically, the argument itself seems to have some merit. After all, if a ritual is purposeless, it seems to bring into question whether one should be legally obliged to follow it.

Critics of this so-called "purposivism" in American jurisprudence also make compelling points. They note that once you accept the use of purpose, there's no inherent limiting factor on its generality. For example, if the purpose of every law, in general, is to do good and limit evil, a judge who accepts the use of this broad purpose would be compelled by his judicial philosophy to legislate from the bench, thereby overextending judicial power. A system that utilizes separation of powers would have to reject such a philosophy. Purposivism would hence subvert the democratic process in favor of rule by nine "wise" kings. To put it another way, purposivism fails theoretically.

Moreover, critics allege that finding a single, unified purpose is impossible. Among 100 senators and 435 representatives, one cannot know what every individual legislator is thinking. (Though there are helpful tools like bill drafts and committee reports, this legislative history does not necessarily represent the intent of the legislators at large.) And, even if one could read minds, the legislators aren't voting on what another person is thinking; they're voting on the text of the bill. That is to say, purposivism fails practically.

Interestingly, the use of purpose is not altogether condemned by halakha. In fact, at least Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was willing to use purpose in his halakhic methodology, as was Rabbi Yehuda when he was cited by the Torah itself (Bava Metzia 115a).

And this makes sense. In Biblical Israel, the lack of democracy is a feature, not a bug. The political system is meant to be ruled by a wise king, 71 judges, and a high priest. Thus, using purpose in halakha is exempt from the first issue as cited by critics of its use in secular law, which explains it would always be theoretically valid. A judge of halakha would have the right to set the purpose at any level of abstraction, as there is no issue of separation of powers. Korah's initial criticism thus passes the theoretical test.

The practical issue—that of the inherent unknowability of purpose—is more pertinent; it's what I believe is the basis of the disagreement between Rabbi Yehuda on one end and Korah on the other. Rabbi Yehuda seems to reason that if there is an unbridgeable gap between human beings and God, human beings necessarily can't figure out the true reasons even for rational laws. Korah, however, holds exactly the opposite. He thinks that he can figure out the reason even for suprarational



'The Punishment of the Rebels,' a fresco by Sandro Botticelli

laws (like *tzitzit*) and that there is, consequently, no issue in the use of purpose.

It's not exactly clear where Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai stands, but it's relevant to note that the examples of him using purpose are all in relation to rational laws, which may imply that he distinguished between laws for which one could derive at least a ballpark understanding of the purpose (like, say, monetary laws) and laws for which one could not (i.e., *tzitzit*). Thus, he likely thought that with the combination of intellect and divine clarity, one could understand some laws, but not others.

Given the presumption that the Sages are chosen by the hand of God and guided by Him, Rabbi Shimon's use of purpose seems justified. That said, the halakha in this case follows Rabbi Yehuda; purpose was not meant to be used (Sefer HaChinukh 591). But, since it's been established that purpose is a legitimate interpretative tool when

the purpose is certain, Rabbi Shimon was wrong only in application.

At least theoretically, purpose is surely a legitimate tool in the interpretation of divine law. But interpretive tools need to be geared toward the institution to which they are applied. God's law and Madison's law are not the same. While looking through the halakha can always provide insight, one cannot expect that the tools used in one will necessarily apply to the other.

In other words, for purpose to be a valid tool in any legal system, it requires that the system be built in such a way that the use of purpose does not contradict the system. Assuming that deducing purpose is even possible, using it will not be universally appropriate. ✧



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Insights on Israel, U.S. National Security and Global Threats

An Interview with Rebecca L. Heinrichs

BY ESTHER LUVISHIS



“BREAKING NEWS: Israel under attack,” has unfortunately been in the headlines numerous times in recent months. Most recently, I remember getting the notification on my phone when Iran launched a direct attack at Israel for the first time in history. And Israel’s war with Hamas is of course not the only war in the world right now, with armed conflicts ongoing in Ukraine and elsewhere. Every country’s number one priority should be the safety of its citizens, and national security policies are crucial to the self-defense of the United States, Israel, and countries worldwide.

One person who is at the forefront of U.S. national defense policy is Rebecca L. Heinrichs. She currently works as a senior fellow and director of the Keystone Defense Initiative at Hudson Institute and has also served as a commissioner on the bipartisan Strategic Posture Commission, National Independent Panel on Military Service and Readiness, and the U.S. Strategic Command Advisory Group.

With the little time she has to spare (she is a very busy woman as you can tell above), I had the opportunity to speak with her about U.S. national security, ongoing conflicts abroad, and the future

of warfare. Here’s what she had to say:

Why did you decide to go into the field of national security, and specifically with an emphasis on nuclear deterrence?

9/11, the day that al-Qaeda attacked the United States, was my freshman year of college, and so that really was what solidified my desire to go into national security policy. It really clarified for me the reality that there are still actors and countries that do not embrace America’s vision for peace and security or the principles of liberty and democratic self-governance, and so we need people who can think about this from a principled, realist perspective. And I never really went down the path of focusing on anti-terrorism or counterterrorism. Al-Qaeda was awful, horrible, but that kind of attack isn’t the type that could put an end to the U.S. and the U.S.-led order. That kind of attack would be a nuclear conflict by a major power that was contesting the United States. So I decided to focus my studies on nuclear deterrence and preventing major power conflict.

What is your opinion on everything going on between Israel and Iran? How does a country balance defending itself or responding to a threat without causing a regional or global conflict?

There is this very prominent concept about escalation, whether it is in the Ukraine context or the Israel context, and this is not something new. This has been around since human beings have been fighting against each other, being the aggressors or the defenders. And the truth of it is that every country defending itself must do what is necessary to compel the adversary who is the aggressor to

stop. And there are plenty of incentives for that defender to think through how to respond in a way to compel the adversary to stop without going so overboard that it will have a likely and predictable outcome from the adversary to create even worse problems. There are also incentives for the aggressor who is creating the problem, to understand that it should not respond in such a way that would make it worse for it. So, this obsession with this concept of escalation into a broader war, it’s overwrought. It’s not well-informed. And there are plenty of sound reasons to simply enable the Israelis to do what is necessary to defend themselves, and compel these Iranian proxies, and really compel Iran, to stop. And then you leave the aggressors’ response up to it. No one controls escalation; you can only control yourself.

What do you think is the best course of action in the Middle East?

I think that Israel needs to do what it’s frankly good at, which is tune out the noise from a lot of capitals who are very unwilling to permit Israel to win. I mean, Israel has already made it very clear what it needs to do: it needs to eliminate Hamas, it needs to get its hostages back, and it needs to make sure that Hamas isn’t going to be able to regroup and do this again. Netanyahu has been very clear. This is not an endless war with no clear objectives; it has very clear objectives. And so, for those who are pressuring Israel to stop or to relent or to provide aid and comfort to its adversaries, I would just say turn your energies towards Hamas. Israel has been very clear about what needs to happen, and Hamas has a large role in getting to the outcome that Israel seeks faster and sooner. If you want the war to stop, surrender and turn over the hostages. Hamas is not getting out of this alive and the only thing that this persisting war is going to do is lead to more loss of civilian human life in Gaza, and all that responsibility rests on Hamas.

What is the biggest problem for U.S. national security? Who is our biggest enemy?

The biggest problem right now in U.S. national security policy and strategy is that we don’t have our priorities in order, and fundamentally the current administration still erroneously believes that

the number one threat facing our country is climate change. And if climate change is the biggest threat to our country and that’s what you believe, then all of our policies and strategies, the amount of money that we give to certain things, the amount of political capital we are willing to expend on certain things, the diplomatic focus that is required, is all going to be out of whack and out of order if we do not understand that the fundamental priority is protecting the United States of America and the U.S.-led order. And the biggest threat facing that right now is this axis, led by China, but it’s China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. The biggest threat is really impossible to say, because I believe each of the powers I just mentioned, each one is very different and each one has its most pressing ways that they want to contest the U.S. and harm and weaken our alliances. So they are very different and need to be treated differently from one another from a U.S. grand strategy perspective, but we must understand that they are collaborating. So to the extent that Russian gains help China, Chinese gains are also good news for the other powers, at least in the short term.

What do you think is the best way to fight against the new axis of evil—Iran, Russia, and China?

First of all, we need to recognize that those countries are collaborating, and secondly, in each of their particular regions, we must devote significant diplomatic energy to collaborate with those partners and allies in those regions that understand that Iran, North Korea, Russia, and China, whichever one is in their area, is an enemy to their security. So I think that the Biden administration is wrong to couch this as democracy vs. autocracy, because there are plenty of countries that aren’t democracies that certainly want to help the United States, like Saudi Arabia and Vietnam. And even if they are democracies but aren’t the most healthy democracy, I don’t think that should preclude them from being a critical part of the U.S. effort to bolster our own collaborative security and weaken our shared adversary.

How much do you think the U.S. should be involved in this fight? How do we balance our own security with our allies?



I don't think those two are mutually exclusive. I am very frustrated that some of my friends who are also conservatives argue that we must make sure that we are protecting our own immediate national security and not supporting our allies at the expense of our security. And that those of us who think we should support Israel, Taiwan, and Ukraine are somehow working out of this sense of altruism for others and neglecting our own security. That's just simply not true. The truth of the matter is, most of the weapons that were sent to Ukraine are not going to be useful to Israel; many of the weapons we need for Israel are not going to be the same that we really want to field in a Taiwan context. But there is some overlap, and there is especially overlap in the basic needs for a defense industrial base—our manufacturing capability to produce the right systems, to adapt, to field the specific weapons that we need to send to our allies. So that is the big overlapping issue that I wish that Americans would really focus on together, regardless of what you think about this or that policy abroad. It's the need to invest seriously into our defense industrial base so that we

can really be the arsenal of democracy, and so we have our replenishment of supplies and weapons for ourselves and our partners and allies.

Universities in the U.S. get billions of dollars from countries like Qatar, China, and Saudi Arabia. How do you think this influences our country, and what should be done about this?

The fact that the United States of America has allowed so many enemies of the United States to infiltrate and exert leverage over our educational institutions is shameful, but also is something that isn't a luxury of a country that has been preparing to defend itself and deter. Really it is the luxury of a country that has been relatively safe since the Cold War, with a couple of outliers and terrorist attacks against Americans here in the homeland. But the U.S. has fallen asleep at the wheel in terms of letting these adversaries affect our youth and infiltrate. It's not even just our higher education, it's also our research labs, and we are at a point where we are in this new cold war with this

axis. And the U.S. really has a dilemma to make sure that students who are here who just want to study and learn and who have no nefarious intentions still get to do that, but those foreign nationals who have nefarious intentions cannot be here doing that. And so, there should be zero Chinese dollars in American higher education. I don't even want to imply that it's what's going on with these protests, but I do know that many of these higher education institutions have been teaching our youth anti-American, anti-Western ideologies. And that kind of environment is fertile for adversary propaganda directly into our young people's minds. It's a toxic combination that results in anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism.

Congress passed the bill (HR 815) that can eventually ban Tik Tok. First, what did you think about this, and do you think that this comes too late, when China has already collected so much data?

It's not too late! It's not the data collection that is the biggest problem. The biggest problem is the

Chinese Communist Party collecting data on our youth and then plugging it into AI algorithms that then feed back to America's youth. It's information meant to inflame passions, meant to create division, and meant to highlight certain elements of an argument that is only partially to affect their views of things. Imagine China moving in on Taiwan, and then through Tik Tok and their algorithms, starting to pump out videos or information that may not necessarily be false but rather meant to create an anti-American view so Americans are against U.S. efforts to come to the aid of Taiwan. Or something else that can create some inflamed passion between factions in the U.S. Tik Tok is a direct information warfare tool at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party into our young people. So I am absolutely thrilled that there was a bipartisan, bicameral effort to get rid of these things. This is the most basic, low-hanging fruit if the United States is going to defend itself.

Lastly, do you think that in the future warfare will be biological, or through space or cyberspace? And how are we going to deal with these developments?

We are actually seeing a new kind of warfare now with Iran. Iran's major attack on Israel was of course a combination of missiles and drones. Iran has essentially become the world's most prolific drone arm dealer. It's sending a bunch of drones to Russia and is training the Russians on those systems in order to strike Ukrainian targets. So drone warfare is new, and as you said, we should absolutely expect cyberattacks. Not just cyberattacks to harm, command, and control or to dominate information space over its adversaries in a real military sense, but also to convince the populations in these open societies to go against their own interests and country and to have favorable views of the adversary. So it's going to take an across the government understanding of the nature of the threats that we are facing now, and we need to prove that open, democratic societies can and will be nimble to adapt and adjust to the adversaries' strategies. ✧



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The Protection of Nationhood

BY MEIRA LUTCH



Operation Lone Star—one of the most contentious immigration-control mechanisms in modern American history—was launched by Texas Governor Greg Abbott in March 2021. The operation was designed to combat the unprecedented influx of illegal immigrants coming across the southern border into Texas. The goal of this ongoing operation is for Texas law enforcement to enforce border security more stringently than the federal government is currently doing under the direction of the Biden administration, and thereby, to decrease the number of illegal immigrants entering Americas.

This operation, which has garnered much public attention, has raised broad questions about both the necessity and ethicality of the very existence of borders. Why should it matter that illegal immigrants are coming into America, you might ask? The answer is that the extraordinary surge of these immigrants into America is putting extreme pressure on this country's political and civilian infrastructure. It is doing so in two different ways, each destructive in its own right. The first is the obvious physical threat that a mass influx of unvetted immigrants poses, and the second is more subtle, but no less dangerous, and that is the threat to America's national identity.

The first point to consider when discussing excessive immigration is the following: When immigrants are legally coming into the country, they are vetted by the government. When they enter illegally, nobody, including the government, can confirm that they are safe, harmless individuals.

President Biden and his predecessor President Trump enacted starkly contrasting border policies. Under the Trump administration's immigration and border policies, notably the "zero tolerance" policy, an approximate average of 5,484 non-American citizens were arrested by the U.S. Border Patrol per year, according to data from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency. Conversely, under President Biden's more lenient approach, there has been an average of about 11,281 such arrests per year. These data show a clear correlation between unchecked illegal immigration and an increase in crime, proving that a porous border leads to more dangerous people coming into the United States.

Second, to decide if a secure border is advantageous to a country, one must consider not only the potential physical danger posed by those illegally entering the country, but also the danger this poses to the country's national identity. The United States is extremely culturally diverse, but America still has a firm culture of our own. It is the renowned melting pot culture. This phrase refers to a culture that joins together people from many different and complex backgrounds to create a unique way of life. This culture is buttressed by certain core values that become adopted by all.

This melting pot can only survive when immigrants come to America with their own cultures, but also believe in and adhere to America's core beliefs of freedom, equal rights to all citizens, and natural rights imbued in every man: granted and insured by God, and protected by the government.

But, today, there are groups coming into America, legally and illegally, that both do not share these ideals and do not view it as a country that has done a tremendous amount of good in the world with the potential to do more. One example is a shocking video of Muslims in Dearborn, Michigan,

on the final night of Ramadan, showing them not shouting "death to Israel," but rather screaming "death to America."

Many Americans never thought they'd see such a sight in their lifetime. So how did this happen? It happened because the United States has, willingly or unwillingly, let a tremendous number of people who don't share our value system into the country. The people espousing these beliefs won't assimilate because they both don't want to and don't perceive that they need to. Muslim immigration to the United States, en masse, is a Trojan horse, not because all Muslims are wielding machetes, but because those who don't adhere to America's values—even if this is only a small number of the total Muslim immigration into the United States—are playing a significant role in destroying the cultural fabric of America.

But how can one be sure that a lack of enforced borders brings about the end of a country's culture? First, it is a fundamental necessity for a country to have a common language. Without one, general communication, shared experiences, and economic growth will be unattainable. Studies show that people pouring into America illegally will often not learn English, sometimes even generations after first arriving in the country.

This problem is exacerbated during periods of heightened immigration. According to articles from the Pew Research Center and the Migrant Policy Institute, it is twenty-three percent more likely (as of 2016) for an immigrant to be proficient in English if they entered the country legally. And furthermore, 4.7 million American citizens, born in America, mostly to immigrant parents, self-report speaking English less than very well. This demonstrates that many immigrants, especially illegal immigrants, are not fluent in English, which will thwart the maintenance of a national language—something that is a fundamental necessity for a successful country.

Second, it is important to understand that not only is illegal immigration detrimental to a country, but legal, unchecked immigration can also have a negative effect on a country's culture. It is informative to look at the trends of crime and religion in Europe over the last few decades. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, in her book *Prey: Immigration, Islam, and the Erosion of Women's Rights*, draws a link between a rise in sexual violence against women

in Europe and the continent's explosive rise in immigration.

Hirsi Ali writes that around three million migrants arrived in Europe from 2009 to 2021. From 2011 to 2021, sixty-seven percent of asylum seekers in Europe were male, and roughly 2.4 million asylum applicants were from Muslim-majority countries. The vast majority of recent immigrants to Europe have been males of the Muslim faith. This coincides with a tremendous increase in sexual violence across the continent. For example, the number of victims of "sexual coercion" in Germany rose by forty-one percent in the year 2017 alone. In France, from 2017 to 2018, there was a twenty percent increase in other forms of sexual assault and a seventeen percent increase in rape. Even Sweden, a relatively stable country when it comes to sexual violence, saw a twelve percent rise in reported sex offences in 2016.

Hirsi Ali argues that there is a direct causality between the immigration from Muslim countries and the rise in sexual violence in these European countries. Clearly, without a careful review process of incoming immigrants, the culture of a country will inevitably change. The culture of the West has strong roots in unalienable rights, the dignity of the individual, and morality. If the culture of the West is worth preserving (it is), and if that culture has something to contribute to the world (it does), then it is essential to protect it. Not having a collective language or a shared fundamental belief system is causing disruption and turmoil that is contributing to the denigration and disintegration of the venerable culture of the West.

Because of its necessity for the safety of America's citizens, our strive for progress and excellence, and pride in a shared culture, it is essential for the United States to maintain a strong, protected border that ensures all immigrants are vetted by the government and do not pose a threat to Americans' safety or our creed. ✧

I dedicate this article to my uncle, Louis Laskey, who has proudly defended sovereign national borders through his service in the IDF.



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Understanding the Political Atmosphere in Israel Before and After October 7

BY AVIVA KESSOCK



The decisions made in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, affect every Israeli's immediate and lasting future. In Israel, citizens vote for a party, and each party receives seats in the Knesset based on how many votes it receives. The head of the party with the most seats has the opportunity to form a coalition, which must consist of the majority of the 120 Knesset members. If successful, the head of that coalition becomes prime minister. Due to the diversity within the political landscape in Israel, there are many narrowly focused parties concentrated on very specific agendas. Whereas in a larger country, these parties might hold little

significance in passing actual legislation and making political decisions, in Israel they are granted cabinet positions with immense influence on the lives of Israelis.

Due to Israel's geographic location, territorial reality, economic challenges, and religious identity, it deals with a myriad of unique international and domestic issues. Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, did not form a written constitution when the country was established, and it remains that way today. This omission was intended to allow flexibility in the formation of the government and legislation, and is also in part because of the lack of agreement on the fundamental

purpose of the state. However, in recent years, there have been too many parties needed in each coalition for a stable government to take hold in the Knesset. This is of major concern to Israelis concerned about the stability and security of the nation, especially in the uneasy neighborhood that is the Middle East.

Coalition governments and compromise agendas have become the political reality in the country. In December 2022, Binyamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, head of the Likud party, began his sixth term as prime minister. Throughout his career, he has emphasized security and a more conservative approach to diplomacy. In terms of foreign affairs, there is severe disagreement and a myriad of positions among the Israeli electorate concerning Iran's nuclear power and strengthening relations with the United States. For these reasons and more, Bibi is a polarizing figure among the Israeli people.

However, the divide over domestic policy—namely, the proposed judicial reforms—was the biggest issue bringing protesters to the streets in Israel last year. These judicial reforms, introduced in January 2023, were intended to limit the judiciary's lawmaking powers and influence on public policy as well as grant the government more control over judicial appointments. Many opponents of the package believed that these judicial reforms would give unchecked power to the ruling government, threatening civil rights and select government duties to the nation. Some felt so strongly in opposition to judicial reform that several reserve soldiers threatened to not show up for training. Israelis entered the fall of 2023 sharply divided over this legislation and other domestic divisions.

But after Hamas's brutal attacks on October 7, Israel's dynamic and diverse political atmosphere had a fundamental shift.

The invasion and terrorist attacks that took place on October 7 impacted Israel physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Over 1,200 Israelis were killed on October 7, including IDF soldiers, mothers, fathers, children, babies, and the elderly. It did not matter which side of the protest these people stood on the week prior, nor their political affiliation. In the aftermath of October 7, Israel needed unity. Every Israeli understands the harsh reality: Israel must defend itself or it will not

exist. The priorities of the people have shifted for the sake of survival. Even so, the major security and intelligence breaches have left Israelis furious at the government for failing to stop these attacks while it was engulfed in domestic political concerns. The combination of holding the government accountable and public rage has brought forth a fierce desire for early elections and a change in government among some in the nation.

Nevertheless, opposing political parties in the Knesset quickly formed an alliance for the sake of unity and to respond to the crisis effectively and efficiently. On October 11, Knesset members Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot of the National Unity party joined the five-man war cabinet alongside Netanyahu, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, and Ron Dermer, Minister of Strategic Affairs. This is part of Israel's emergency national unity government that Netanyahu quickly called for. Across the political spectrum, unity has become a theme, especially in the face of adversity not only fighting Hamas in Gaza, but also dealing with critics around the globe. With broad agreement over the need to, and even the strategy for fighting Hamas, Israeli parties are putting the Jewish nation over contentious domestic debates.

October 7 was a turning point in Israeli politics. Israel has had a shift in political concern from focusing on serious and complicated domestic issues to more acute international threats. The fragmented Israeli society was brought together in alignment over the country's most pressing challenges. The need for strong leadership and constant national communication, especially in times of crisis, has become clear to the Israeli public. Israel's resilience since that horrible day has shown how imperative it is to maintain collective action, deliberation, and discussion across the political landscape. Currently, Israel's goal is to continue fighting to eliminate Hamas, release the hostages, and build a safer future for its people. This national introspection may change the direction of the Israeli government, as perhaps this focus first and foremost on security and survival, instead of particular domestic agendas, will continue long into the future. ✧



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Dance in the Jewish Tradition: From the Torah to the Twenty-First Century

BY GABRIELLA FRIEDMAN

The invigorating passion and animation that an ensemble of dancers embodies onstage is an awe-inspiring experience that most residents of the New York area, myself included, have enjoyed. There is nothing quite like the remarkable synchronization and expression of a well choreographed dance. As someone who's fallen in love with dance, I've grown curious about how dance as we know it today aligns with our Jewish tradition and halakhot. For example, is dance an assimilationist art form, or is it compatible with Jewish tradition, lifestyle, and values?

Throughout Jewish history, dance has symbolized many things, such as a social, economic, or individually pleasurable activity, or a religiously and spiritually enhancing practice. In regards to the former, what are some values that we must adhere to when we dance and perform within our respective diaspora cultures? How can the modern Jew use our history to guide us through the challenges of today's world of dance?

Turning to Tanakh as the foundational text of Jewish history and instruction, we find many instances of dance. Most commonly investigated are the *pesukim* (verses) surrounding the story of *Kriyat Yam Suf*, the splitting of the sea.

It is stated:

וַתִּשָּׂא מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אֶחָת אֶת־הַתֹּף בְּקִדָּה וַתִּצְאֵן
כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ בַּחֲפִצִּים וּבַמְּחִלָּה

Translated as: Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, picked up a hand-drum, and all the women went out after her in dance with hand-drums.

וַתִּשָּׂא מִרְיָם שִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי־צָאָה מִן־הַיָּם בְּרָגָל בָּנִים:

And Miriam chanted for them:

Sing to ה', for He has triumphed gloriously;
Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea."

(Shemot 15: 20-21).

The medium of dance is used as an expression of gratitude for a miracle performed by God, and this concept is continued even centuries later, particularly by the Hassidim. In many stories of divine

intervention and heroics in Tanakh, specifically in the wake of adversarial defeat, the people gather around each other and rejoice in song and dance.

Dance is a communally connecting activity which can fortify people's relationships with each other and God. Since the concept of dance is vast, the language of movement isn't always the same in Tanakh. A closer textual examination done by the magnificent Jewish Virtual Library revealed that when the people of King David welcomed the *Aron Kodesh* (holy ark) into its home, the ceremony "inspired King David and his subjects to dance before God." David not only danced in the ordinary sense of the word, *sahek* (שחק); but also rotated with all his might, *karker* (כרכר); and jumped, *pazez* (פזז) (II Sam. 6:5, 14, 16). A retelling of this story in I Chronicles 15:29, contains that he also skipped, *rakad* (רקד).

This subtle but fascinating differentiation between verbs can shed light on the excited nature of his dancing. His extreme passion caused him to erupt in any way that felt right for the occasion. Dance in a biblical sense is not something to be taken lightly. It incorporated serious and meaningful religious undertones and was a true physical expression of gratitude and divine appreciation. Dance is the medium by which we sanctify our bodies, using them as tools to express our utmost thanks to God. We treat the art form with care and delicacy because it is a tool we possess to communicate with God.

As the turbulent currents of Jewish history carried the Jews all over the globe, many of our practices changed, including our national relationship with dance. Since dance was a nationally-unifying behavior, many medieval rabbinic authorities forbade public dance celebrations. However, Jews retained dancing for specific occasions such as weddings and Simchat Torah. In the medieval ghettos of France, Germany, and Poland, Jewish communities frequently had a dance hall, or *tan-zhaus*, for joyous occasions.

While community rabbis encouraged religious

dancing, the Rabbis of the Talmud considered performances to be hallmarks of Greco-Roman culture that bordered on idolatry. Dance as anything other than a method of divine worship was curtailed. However, as the influence of the culture of the arts permeated neighboring communities, Italian Jews in particular educated their children in Tanakh, Talmud, music, and dancing.

During the Renaissance, Jews were lured into the arts and many lived the lifestyle of a teacher of dance or the arts. Indeed, as Jews secularized, priorities shifted, causing them to engage with the secular social and artistic realms. Throughout the millennia, while some groups remained in strictly insular communities, such as the Hassidim, many Jews entered an age of cultural exploration. Although the Hassidim practiced a dance technique which embodied a specifically Jewish philosophy of inclusion and whose goal was to achieve spiritual transcendence, secular Jews began to study emerging styles such as ballet. The enticing pursuit of cultural arts within diaspora communities was a strong magnetism for the Jews.

Over time, they reinvented the Jewish meaning of dance. No longer must Jews only dance to worship God. They could also use this medium as a leisurely and creative pursuit. Its cultural and spiritual significance faded because it was not restricted to those purposes and occasions. Naturally, many conflicts arose in which secular dance settings were in tension with Jewish law and tradition. During the nineteenth century, the Eastern European rabbis faced the challenge of harmonizing people's desire to participate in social balls with the value of preserving Jewish marriages. They worried that in a casual setting where mixed dancing occurred, Jews could be sexually intrigued by their gentile dance partners and ultimately led astray. Dance was yet another appeal of the secular world with which rabbinic authorities had to strike compromise. This conflict has mutated over the ages, but a version of this very issue is still particularly relevant in today's orthodox dance world.

In modern orthodox communities, we strive to balance a life that is dedicated to God and one that brings us personal happiness. We construct a framework that allows us to satisfy our curiosities and desires within the bounds of halakhic values. How certain contemporary dance styles fit into this framework is an ongoing question of exploration versus ideological balance, showing how the halak-

hot of dance continue to develop and grow.

For example, burlesque is a prevalent style that utilizes jazz and vogue technique to create a sexually expressive piece. While some authorities would permit this being done in a private class with the intention of self-expression, others would advise Orthodox Jews to avoid this style entirely. As the purpose of dancing became more in service of ourselves and our communities rather than God, and the nature of Jewish dancing changed, the struggle to connect this to our religious lives intensified.

Meanwhile, many Israeli dancers have found ways to use dance technique as a medium for religious or national storytelling. Choreographers have developed concept pieces that communicate national togetherness. Early pioneers in the Land of Israel created folk dances that then spread to Jews in the diaspora as a symbol of unity, as well as brought in dances from the diaspora. This is an incredibly fitting usage of dance as the Torah described it: a medium of vital and unifying expression.

For me, dance has been an extremely formative outlet for self-expression and understanding. I feel privileged to have studied many styles of dance and learned about its history and adaptations, and experienced firsthand its passion and power. It's not obvious that dance should align with Jewish values; however, navigating styles, choreography, costumes, and the like was a task I was willing to embrace.

A curious thing happened to me the more in touch with dance I became: with each combo or natural rhythm that my body carried out, I felt as if I was connecting to a higher realm. My body was merely a conduit for a mystical wave of expression and ultimate ethereal feeling that I was lucky enough to tap into. The movements were so intuitive that I barely felt like my consciousness was their origin. I experienced incredible gratitude for the way that my body could move and interpret the music almost naturally; it soon became clear to me: I was little in command. I was simply responding to higher instructions. It reminds me of the stories of dance recounted in Tanakh where the rhythm and purpose overcome your mind and infuse your body. Still, there remain challenges to consider in regards to the art form in its totality. ☆



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Right Before His Eyes

BY ARI UNGER

Jacob wore a tightly buttoned plaid shirt. He had a thin, carefully trimmed mustache, and nicely pressed slacks. He sat on the couch, which was carefully covered in thick plastic. The couch was in a small living room, with family pictures and small bookshelves lining the walls. There was a fireplace full of chopped wood. As a kid, Jacob would always buy unchopped wood, and chop it himself. He hadn't done that in a long time. Above the fireplace was a cross. An old lady, Jacob's mother, soon shuffled her way into the room. She had a cane in her arthritic, swollen hand, and her back was hunched over. Clutched in one of her hands was a Bible. She had the habit of rubbing her palm along the cover of it, almost as if she was making sure it was always there. His mother slowly made her way over to her cupboard on the wall next to the fireplace. It was made of plain, varnished, cherry wood. On top of the cupboard two candles were placed in sterling silver candle holders, which had been in their family for generations. His mother lit the candles with a matchbook produced from her apron. Jacob didn't understand why their family had always done this. He had distant memories of his grandmother doing the same thing. He never thought much of it. But then again, the last time he had seen his mother do this was when he was merely a teenager, heading off to university. Now that he had graduated from such a top university, with a degree in history no less, Jacob considered himself educated. He was no longer some random boy. He was distinguished.

"*Momma*, why do you always light the candles like that?"

His mother slowly turned around: "Because my mother did, so I do."

The matchbook she had been holding in her hand disappeared into her apron, and she slowly walked out of the room, touching the doorway, and then, afterwards, bringing her hand to her lips. Jacob supposed that it was odd that she did that, but by now he just figured it was a nervous habit.

Jacob sunk further into the couch. He was on a short visit home before heading to Italy. His mother had always promised him that if he got a degree, she would help fund a vacation for him. Finally, Jacob decided it was time to take her up on the offer. He decided that he would use his vacation to find out more about his family. His family had immigrated from Italy a generation ago, and he grew up hearing stories about huge, beautiful churches, where the ceilings were so tall you could barely see them. *Momma* had even told him which parish to visit to find his family records. Jacob was fully packed, even though his flight didn't leave for two days, so he stayed with his mother, waiting for the time to come for him to board the plane.

When Jacob landed in Italy, the first thing he did was go to Mass. It was a Sunday morning, and he took a car to the church. Jacob went to Mass every morning, but this time, it felt different. As he sat in the hard wooden pews, staring at the ceiling of the Renaissance era church in Naples, he couldn't help but wonder if his grandfather had sat there before him.

After Mass, the next stop for Jacob was a small parish that served a village outside of Naples. Jacob's mother had told him they would have his family records. The parish was a small, stone church in the shape of a house. The insides were dusty, with small wooden pews, and an old, stooped over man stood waiting for him. Jacob had called ahead,



and with his mother translating for him, managed to get someone from the town on the phone to prepare his file. He didn't want to have to spend hours searching in an old, dusty room he had never been in. Especially one full of papers in a different language. The old man held out his wrinkled, spotted hand, and gave Jacob the file.

"Be careful—you may not want to see," the old man boomed in broken English. His gruff voice filled the church. It didn't seem possible that this voice could come from such a tiny, frail man.

The folder contained birth certificates, death certificates, and contracts for burial plots. Jacob couldn't understand a word of it, because it was all in Italian. But on the paper there was a post-it note with an address, and "graveyard" written in slanted, messy English beside it.

After struggling to find the address, and asking many locals for directions in his broken Italian, Jacob eventually arrived. He entered through an open, rusty gate, adorned with a cherub and a cross. It was once painted black, but the paint was now peeling. He walked past graves looking for his mother or

father's last name. After searching, he finally found his mother's name. A feeling of excitement started to rise inside him. There were newer graves in the front, and as he started walking towards the back, the graves got older, and more broken. Eventually, he found the oldest one.

From what he could barely make out, in tiny letters next to the name was an Italian word—"ebrea"—with a little star beneath it. Quickly hurrying to the grave next to it, he saw all the last names had been changed. Jacob didn't understand what he saw before him. Mind raising, he started to twirl his mustache. Jacob just couldn't comprehend what was happening right before his eyes.

With heavy steps, Jacob turned back to the grave, and read it again. His hand stopped twirling his mustache, and his eyes didn't blink. They didn't move. They just simply stared. Slowly, the flowers and tiny wooden crosses he was going to put on his ancestors' graves fell from his hands. ☆



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“If Only My People...” Zionism in My Life

BY GIDEON ROSEN

“And I will give you as a light for the nations so My salvation will reach the edge of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6)

In his book, *“If Only My People...” Zionism in My Life*, Rabbi Dr. Lord Immanuel Jakobovits tackles the question of how to best fulfill the obligation to be an *or l’goyim*, or light unto the nations, head on through the application of historical essays and personal anecdotes. Delivering God’s command to the Jewish nation over two thousand years ago, Isaiah furthered the mission of returning the Jews to Hashem and His service. This famous directive to act as an *or l’goyim* is found not in any of the Five Books of Moses, but after the Temple’s creation and laying of the Jewish foundation in the Land of Israel.

Rav Jakobovits understood the significance of the timing of this mandate as such: Hashem was preparing the Jews for expulsion from the Land of Israel. Further, in anticipation of the crimes and injustices exacted on the Jews by nations of the world, the Jewish people needed a directive not to adopt an outlook of isolation. Unfortunately, as time progressed and the nations continued to persecute Jews, the context in which this oft quoted *pasuk* (verse) was given was forgotten. Jews increasingly adopted the outlook that if we forgot the world, the world would forget us.

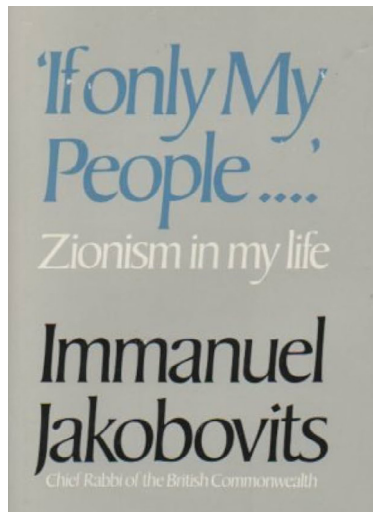
As the Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth from 1967 to 1991, Rav Jakobovits led British Jewry through multiple Israeli wars and political leaders, from Yigal Allon to Yitzhak

Shamir. Throughout his tenure as Chief Rabbi, he maintained constant support for Israel and the Jewish people globally. He understood Isaiah’s statement and that the questions, “what do the Jews owe to the world” and “how do we best fulfill our obligation to be a light unto the nations,” are one and the same. The answer is that we have been tasked by Hashem to be an *or l’goyim*.

Rav Jakobovits believed that every nation has a God-given gift and an obligation to share that gift with the world. By understanding the context of Isaiah’s prophecy, he could answer the question of how to do this quite easily. The Jews can best fulfill this command through the state of Israel; through creating and maintaining a Jewish state in our ancestral homeland.

Rav Jakobovits explained that the Jews were given the responsibility of spreading Hashem’s morals and ethics, and the optimal way of fulfilling this is by establishing and operating a state that rep-

“Jews were given the responsibility of spreading Hashem’s morals and ethics, and the optimal way of fulfilling this is by establishing and operating a state that represents and projects these morals.”



Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth from 1967 to 1991.

resents and projects these morals. The state that Jews should use to project these values is Israel. Not only should Israel be the means of becoming an *or l’goyim*, but this should be the central goal of Israel. Through eliminating crime, poverty, and disease, Jews are representing Hashem’s ideals for mankind. Furthermore, the Jewish people should not shirk this responsibility, as it is both essential to the prosperity of Israel and, although maintaining this high standard may be challenging, it is the will of God.

Throughout his book (published in 1984), Rav Jakobovits also comments on the already prevalent double standards the world has placed on

Israel. Rav Jakobovits explains that although this high standard, not shared with any other country, may have been placed on Israel due to nefarious purposes, the Jews should do what they have done throughout history—take the bad and use it to spread the good. Instead of rejecting this burden, Israel should welcome it and use it as a launching pad to improve the world. This is how we will fulfill our obligation to the world and to God by utilizing Israel to become a light unto the nations. ✧



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Vast as the Stars and Sand

BY ELISHAMA SCHWARTZ

Some of us lounge with verdant backyards and homey porches
Others are squeezed by neighboring skyscrapers and smoke
But
Either way
sometime in winter,
I'll be comforted by the beam of the candles from your windows.

Some of us say "good morning" and
Others do too, just in a different language so
I can't understand them but
Either way
I get the message.

Some of us wear strings at our sides or skirts to our knees
And some of us wear undershirts and pants to feel free and
Some of us wear kippot,
while others lose them or
forget them at home because
They don't want to add a bullseye to the target on their backs
To be tattooed on them, carved by the fabric clipped to their hairs
They don't want everyone to stare and
Forget to care but
Either way
I can still hear your voice and
see your eyes and
feel your heart and
wipe your tears and
Dance with you until you're sweating
So you throw your clothes in the wash anyway.

Some of us want to pray,
while others want to have prayed but
Either way
Your eyes are still tired
And your lips are still dry
so you still look up to the same sky as I do
Whether it be to find shapes in the clouds or find answers in them
or to wish you could fly
away
So
We're not so different.

Some of us live across the street or
next door while
others live across the sea or along a different shore
where the skies are guarded by fire and roars and hate,
So you can't see the clouds
making it hard to feel you but
Either way
you can see the stars that illuminate the path
traveled by the sand across the sea
that trekked all those miles to connect us so,
I'm with you.

And some stars are necessary to give direction and forge the way,
while others must shine just the right amount
Like the specs of sand whispering to the next,
urging onward, a chorus of resilience but
Either way
the stars and sand work together so that
I can still hear your voice and
see your eyes and
feel your heart and
wipe your tears and
dance with you until you're sweating
Because if you look closer and you follow the path,
the stars and sand show us
We're the same.



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The Sacrifice

BY NAOMI RUTTENBERG

Deep within evil lies a thought worn of time
It eagerly accepts a grant of evil
The sacrifice?
You know it
A scapegoat lit on fire subject to a rhyme
Poetry cursed to turn blood beautiful

I know, however, something that you surely don't
The goat is much more than inspirational quotes
Don't worry however
Don't worry
Don't shudder
I will be sure to keep your precious ego afloat

I will not tell you about the screams from the alter
You shall never know about pain
You will never know that your martyrs were once little children
It is all covered up by a flame

We will of course weep for the martyr turned victims
The ones who screamed in suffering
We will not replace their tears with hymns
And we know God will not accept your offering

But don't worry my friend
Once again
We would never ever offend

Not your fragile view
Of your own life askew
Although we surely know better than you

There is one thing though
One thing that is true
Something I know that you say too
It is true that no one dies like us
We, the Jew



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Wings spreading
Fighting for their country
For their home
For the place we all unite
Until then we continue to crack
But can never be fully broken

It was a day of celebration
Of love and festivity
Of happiness
Until the sound rang out
We were hunted
Prey for the wild beasts of the desert
Our souls were ripped from our bodies
Carried to heaven that day by the hundreds
Awaiting judgment day

And yet I feel that pain thousands of miles away
My heart pulses with sorrow and loss
Of the hurt and the open battle wounds
Of the innocent children awaiting salvation
Waiting for someone to turn on the light
Someone to awaken the sleep
Or to clarify the uncertain
We are as small as a grain of sand in a beach
Or as one star in a sky full of countless
And yet we have such an enormous impact on the world

Although we have been through so much
So many deaths
So much sacrifice
We continue to persevere



Sarah Baron is a junior at Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy (MJBHA) in Silver Spring, MD.

The Ascent of the Fallen

BY SARAH BARON

We are lost and found
Free yet also constrained
Many fall by the day
Lost ones float up to the sky
More and more
Innocent lives
Lone soldiers
Off the plane they emerge as one

Forever

BY RAPHAEL UNGER

I was quiet
I would not speak,
I thought that no one would remember
me,
Me and my little idiosyncrasies.

If you're quiet,
then who will care to listen—
To look and to see.

But I wrote down,
On a scrap of paper,
My hopes and my dreams.

And the things that make me,
Me

I drew a picture
And wrote my story—
My hopes and my dreams
My wants
And my needs.

In ten years
No one will remember the words that I said
But they will never forget the words that I wrote,
The drawings that I drew,
And the music that I made.

Don't you see?
One can dream
One can hope
One can love
One can hate
Yet these all fade
But what stays
Is what we make



*Rafi Unger is a junior at Yeshiva University
High School for Boys in New York, NY.*



About TIKVAH

Tikvah is a think tank and educational institution focused on the foundational ideas of Jewish civilization, the great challenges facing the Jewish people and the State of Israel, and the political, moral, and economic traditions of Western civilization and American democracy. *Tikvah* runs a wide range of programs in the United States, Israel, and around the world, including educational initiatives and fellowships, publications and websites, conferences, and policy research. Our main interest is challenging exceptional students—from middle school to high school, from gap year to college, from graduate students to emerging professionals—to become Jewish leaders and Jewish citizens. We seek to expose them to the most important ideas—in Jewish thought, Zionist history, political philosophy, economics, and strategy—and to inculcate a sense of responsibility for Jewish, Western, and American civilization. We also work closely with the alumni of our various programs, and we encourage our students to think about their time with us as the gateway to a larger *Tikvah* community. Learn more about the *Tikvah* community of ideas at www.tikvahfund.org.

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