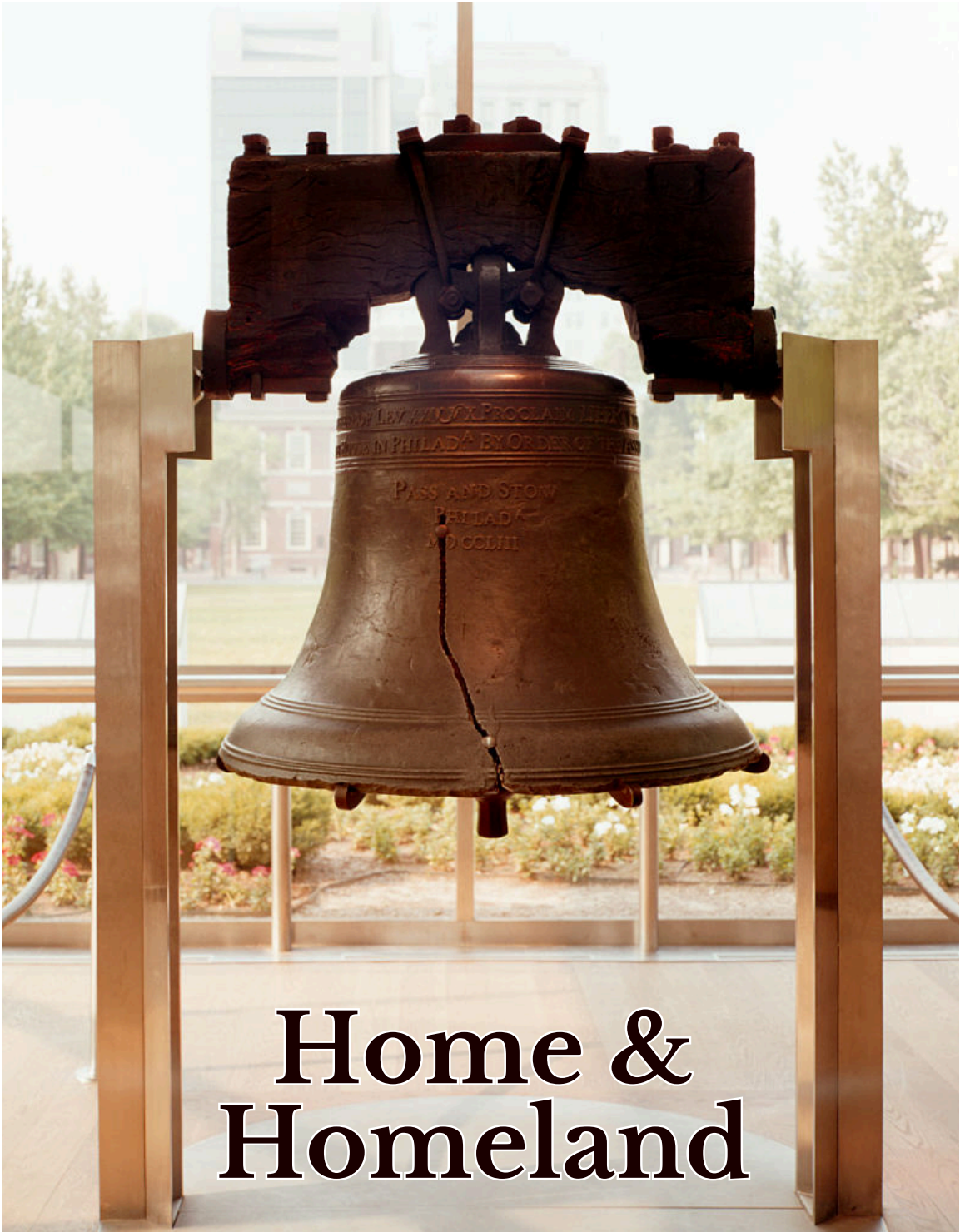


SOLOMON JOURNAL




Home & Homeland

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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.

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

You have before you the first issue of the *Solomon Journal* for the year 5785—the first of three that the journal team, led by the wonderful Kennedy Lee, will put out this year. It is my pleasure to write for the first time as the program’s Dean, a position that I took up this year after more than a decade of leading Tikvah’s college and young professionals’ division.

This issue is full of quality writing by bright and committed young Jewish Americans, who take up a wide variety of

subjects: Art as a response to tragedy, folkloric anticipations of AI, the ethics and human realities of war, and more. But our dominant theme is the vexed question of how Jewish identity sometimes lives in tension with proud American identity. Our symposium writers took up the challenge to examine the claim of Justice Brandeis that a commitment to Zionism makes for more committed Jews, and more committed Jews, in turn, make better Americans. Does Brandeis’ claim still ring true?

One of the most assigned texts in Tikvah seminars is George Washington’s letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island. In that marvelous founding document of our country, the first President distinguishes mere tolerance of Jews from the acceptance of Jews as equal citizens. Tolerance was the best Jews could hope for until the American Republic was born. But citizenship, in the full sense, is America’s promise. Then Washington eloquently states: “For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.”

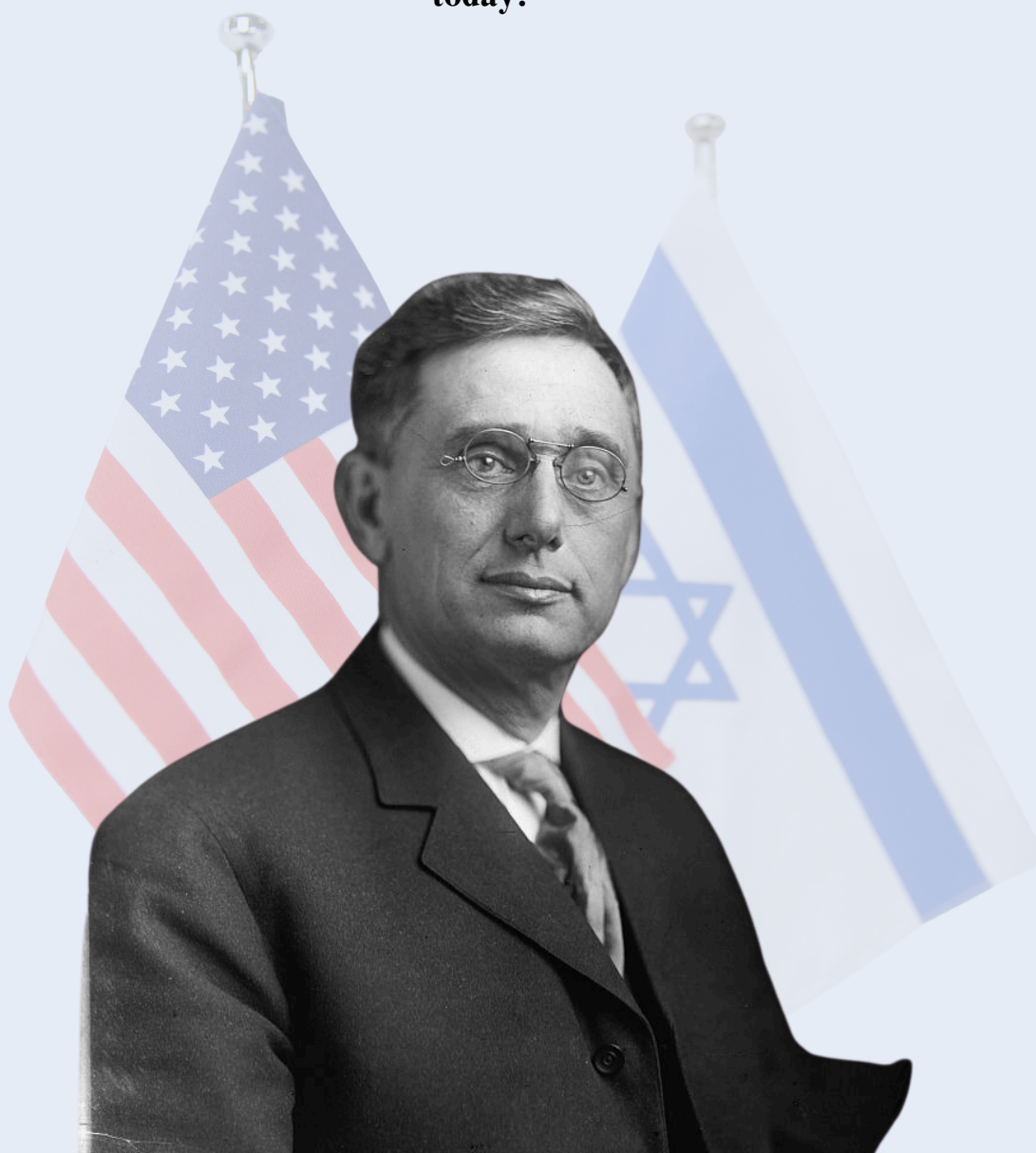
Only recently did I look at these words more carefully and take note that Washington is not only offering a beneficence—he is making a demand: The country requires that all who live as Americans “demean themselves as good citizens.” What actions are required to be good citizens? What sacrifices? What feelings of brotherhood with other Americans?

I invite you to read on and discover what our Solomon Fellows have to say about the matter. This is a remarkable, impressive group and I hope you will agree they have a special gift for marrying careful thought and artful writing to a sense of communal duty. Enjoy—and let us know what you think!

Cordially,
Alan Rubenstein
Director of the Solomon Fellowship

Symposium

In the early twentieth century, Louis Brandeis said, “To be good Americans, we must be better Jews, and to be better Jews, we must become Zionists.” Does this proclamation ring true for young Jews today?



Zionism: An Urgent Call We Cannot Ignore

BY KEDMA ROSENZWEIG

In the early twentieth century, former Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis proclaimed, “To be good Americans, we must be better Jews, and to be better Jews, we must become Zionists.” This declaration is especially pertinent for young Jews today.

First, striving to improve our connection to Judaism will help us become better and more productive American citizens, since American and Jewish values align and complement one another. Judaism encourages us to follow the laws and pray for the welfare of the country in which we live. Jews have a long history of enriching American society, often by drawing on Jewish beliefs and teachings in our pursuits. By practicing our religion, we reinforce and strengthen our own moral strength, allowing us to act as an *or l’goyim*, a light unto the nations.

Today, however, the second half of Brandeis’ proclamation is more relevant, contentious, and merits special attention. Zionism is not a theoretical discussion for young American Jews, but an urgent calling that we cannot afford to ignore. As newspapers, world leaders, and millions of people around the globe denounce, condemn, and revile the state of Israel, Jews in America have an obligation to proudly promote Zionism. We have a responsibility to our ancestors who struggled to establish the Jewish state, to the future survival of the Jewish nation, and to our brothers and sisters that live in Israel today.

To be a better Jew, I must stand up for my family and my nation. In my eyes, rejecting Zionism would be failing my community. Particularly throughout the past year, Israel has become deeply entrenched in my identity and in every aspect of my life. Zionism has been, and always will be, a moral and religious value that I cherish, but my devotion to Israel has become more

urgent and personal throughout this conflict. I cannot explain the gut-wrenching fear of following news stories that are set in my family’s neighborhood; I cannot translate the despair I feel when I hear that the building next to my aunt’s was bombed. My dedication to Israel strengthens as I watch my cousin enlist in the Israel Defense Forces.

As newscasters speak in monotone about terrorism, I listen to my aunts tell me that they are rushing to bomb shelters, rockets from Iran lighting up the background of the Facetime call. For me and for young Jews all across America, the importance of Zionism has become so painfully apparent throughout this recent conflict, and advocating for the Jewish state should be seen as a duty and as a privilege.

Moreover, in order for young Jews to more effectively confront the aggression on college campuses, social media, and international debate, we have to firmly believe in Zionism. As students across America take hostile stances against Israel, it is left to young Jews to defend the state of Israel. The importance of defending Zionism is even more pronounced as the anti-Zionist movement has become so intertwined with anti-Semitism.

In the three months following Hamas’s attack on October 7, 2023, anti-Semitism in the United States increased by 360 percent, according to data published by the Anti-Defamation League. College campuses were overwhelmed by protests that glorified terrorism against Jews. The Students for Justice in Palestine national chapter described October 7 as a “historic win for the Palestinian resistance.” One SJP member at Columbia University filmed himself saying, “Zionists don’t deserve to live.” At Chapman University, a student activist posted to social media: “Death to all Israelis who follow Zionism.” At the same school,



the Federal Government has opened an investigation into death threats made against Jewish students. Since anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism have become so inextricably linked, embracing Zionism has become an even more important way for young Jews to fight for the Jewish nation.

Thousands of years ago, these words:

“אִם-אֶשְׁכַּח יְרוּשָׁלַם תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי”

“If I forget Jerusalem, my right hand will be forgotten,” were recorded in Tehillim, the Psalms. This quote is a powerful testament to the deep connection between Jews and Israel, and it emphasizes the importance of this relationship.

The text continues,

“תִּדְבֹק-לְשׁוֹנִי | לִחְכֹּי אִם-לֹא אֶזְכְּרֶיךָ אִם-לֹא אֶעֱלֶה”
 “אֶת-יְרוּשָׁלַם עַל רֶגֶשׁ שִׁמְחָתִי”

“Let my tongue stick to my mouth if I forget you, if I do not keep Jerusalem in my mind even at my happiest hour.”

Although our lives are thankfully comfortable in America, it is imperative that we sustain the longstanding passion Jews have always held for Israel. Throughout Jewish history, in our prayers and texts, our longing for Israel is omnipresent. It is our homeland, the direction that we have been looking towards for more than two thousand years. Jews have held on to the dream of Zion for centuries, through times of hardship and prosperity. Through sheer determination, relentless effort, and God’s will, early settlers turned the dream into a reality. Israel is the vision that has guided and inspired generations of Jews before me, and it is an enormous honor that, once again, we have our very own country to protect.

Throughout Jewish history, we have yearned to return to Israel with a fervent desperation. In so many countries, in so many generations, we have been persecuted by government sanctioned anti-Semitism, and we continued to pray to return to our holy land. My great-great grandparents in Poland and my great-great grandparents in Morocco spoke in different languages, practiced differing customs, faced different challenges, but they held on to the same dream.

Our undying love for Israel has survived centuries of separation. After the murder of six million Jews, our deep and ardent belief in Israel empowered us to establish a homeland that would allow us to protect ourselves. The Jewish state is a powerful symbol of self-determination for the Jewish people, and its existence helps to preserve the continuity of the Jewish nation. To be better Jews, we should encourage and embrace Zionism, a value that unifies and elevates the Jewish people.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of Zionism for young Jews today. As war wages around our homeland, and as antipathy towards Israel spikes along with anti-Semitism, our allegiance to Zionism is critical. Devotion to our community is a core tenet of our Jewish identity, and belief in Israel is rooted in our religious precepts. Embracing Zionism is a way of upholding Jewish values, honoring Jewish tradition, ensuring Jewish survival, and defending the Jewish community.



Kedma Rosenzweig is a student at the Frisch School in Paramus, New Jersey.

Living a Double Life

BY GALIT ALSAYGH



The Tanakh has a stance on Jews in *golah*, exile. To assimilate or to isolate? To practice or to neglect? To be active or to be passive? Although these questions may seem particularly piercing for Jews today, the stories of Esther and Daniel make it clear that these have been pertinent issues throughout Jewish history.

In *Megillat Esther*, the book of Esther, Esther, the heroine, is an orphan raised by her cousin, Mordechai. Mordechai is most often referred to as “Mordechai HaYehudi,” Mordechai the Jew, emphasizing his commitment to God and Judaism. In a miraculous fashion, Esther is chosen to be Queen to King Ahasuerus of the Persian Empire in the same moments that an anti-Semitic zealot and Mordechai’s personal adversary, Haman, is promoted to be second in command. Haman, with the approval of the King, plots to murder all the Jews of the massive 127-province empire, and is naive to the fact that the Queen herself is a Jew. The story ends happily with Mordechai and Esther’s shrewd work to invalidate Haman’s decree, and thus save the Jewish population.

Although the happily ever after comes seemingly overnight, saving the Jews was a process—one that posed the same questions we Jews are faced with today. Do we assimilate into alien culture, or isolate entirely? Should we be active in religious society and culture, or be passive participants? Megillat Esther and its characters offer a simple yet complex answer: both. Assimilate *and* isolate. Be active *and* passive.

In the Tanakh, as well as Judaism at large, names often hold deep meanings that reflect a person’s traits, destiny, or role in the narrative, offering clues to the themes and messages of the story. In her commentary on Megillat Esther, Adele Berlin, an American biblical scholar and Hebraist, suggests that Mordechai and Esther’s names, specifically their origins, serve a deeper purpose than meets the eye. Esther’s Hebrew name is Hadassah which means “myrtle,” one of the four species used during Sukkot. Her “secular” name however, Esther, can either stem from Persian or Babylonian roots. She is either named after the Babylonian Goddess Ishtar, or after the Persian

word “stara,” meaning star.

Interestingly, unlike Esther, Mordechai does not have a secular name. Berlin argues, however, that the name Mordechai originates from both Babylonian and Jewish culture. For the Babylonians, Mordechai shares the roots of the names Marduka or Marduk, the chief god in Babylon. For the Jews of Babylon, it was merely a common name, with some even naming their children versions of Marduk, with no intention of making a direct connection to the deity. Mordechai and Esther’s dual names are a testament to their dual life; they strike the balance between their religious and secular lives.

Mordechai is a Jewish leader. This is apparent in his defiant actions, including his refusal to bow down to Haman and his insistence on maintaining Jewish tradition. Tradition also tells us that he comes from a long line of Jewish leaders. But Mordechai was also a secular leader. This was apparent in his promotion to second in command at the end of the megillah. So too with Esther, being the Queen of an *am zar*, a foreign nation, while also being the heroine of the Jewish people. Through their names and actions, the megillah emphasizes that they were Persian Jews, not Jewish Persians.

Similarly, the chronicles of Daniel and his peers, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, contemplate the same questions. The book of Daniel is a record of events, experiences, and prophecies of Daniel that take place during the Babylonian exile under the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar II, in 586 BCE. Daniel’s story begins with the capture of Jerusalem, and the exile of many Jews living there. Among them are Daniel and his peers, who are then chosen to serve on the Babylonian court. Nebuchadnezzar ordered their names be changed before they began their “duty,” yet this was not the case with any of the other prisoners. Daniel became Belshazzar, Hananiah became Shadrach, Mishael became Meshach, and Azariah became Abednego.

By doing so, Nebuchadnezzar asserted his power over the Jewish exiles and highlighted his plan to reshape their identity. The Tanakh then recounts several of their manifestations of loyalty to Hashem, including their refusal to serve the Babylonian gods, even at the risk of being thrown

into a fiery furnace. Daniel also refused to eat and drink at Nebuchadnezzar’s feast in order not to defile himself, and was adamant about praying three times a day, again under the risk of death.

Daniel and his friends epitomize how Jews in exile navigated the balance between survival and faithfulness. While they were committed to preserving their Jewish practices and traditions, their actions go beyond pure resistance. Rather than refusing outright to serve in the Babylonian court—a form of resistance that could have jeopardized their lives—they found ways to engage with their surroundings while holding firm to their faith. Their service in the Babylonian court reflects their complex approach to living in *golah*: they valued their Judaism, but also their life, and thus adapted to their circumstances. They found their “way” to live, whatever “way” it may be.

This raises an important question: is this the balance that Hashem envisions for the Jews of exile? Does this apply, not just to Daniel’s scenario, but to all the stories of Tanakh that take place in *golah*? And by extension, does this apply to the *golah* of today?

The commentators of Megillat Esther take opposing stances, some teaching that a balance of resistance and compliance is the only way Jews will thrive in exile. History happens to agree. Whether it was the “Golden Age” of Spanish Jewry in the tenth century, or the *Haskalah* movement (more commonly known as the Jewish Enlightenment) of the eighteenth century, there were always sects of Judaism that embraced secular culture and education while also embracing religious and Jewish culture and education.

Today, many Jewish communities value *Torah u-Madda*, the study of Torah and science, religious and temporal subjects. It is in these times that Jewry all over the world flourishes, both in and out of Israel. As former Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis famously said, “To be good Americans, we must be better Jews, and to be better Jews, we must become Zionists.” His words remain a crucial reminder that the key to Jewish flourishing lies in embracing both our heritage and the world around us.



Galit Alsaygh is a junior at Yeshiva of Flatbush in Brooklyn, New York.

Leaving Space for “Permanent” Diaspora Jews

BY YARDENA FRANKLIN

For two thousand years, Judaism has been defined by *golah*, exile. Perhaps more than any other ethnic or religious group, Jews have been persecuted, moving across the world to escape danger. First fleeing to Europe and throughout the Middle East, and then onto America to escape the pogroms and anti-Semitism of the 1800s, Jews have long existed in ethnic enclaves. The inherent nature of the Diaspora is its temporary status. For the past two thousand years, however, it has seemed a permanent state for the Jews.

Diaspora Jews have existed within a contradiction for centuries, working within the nations in which we’ve found ourselves to build systems and amass wealth, while still maintaining a deep yearning for Zion at our core. In daily prayer service and over holidays, Jews reaffirm our belief in a Messiah, that a Messianic Era is near. In the *Amidah*, the silent prayer recited thrice a day, Jews *daven* “Et Tzemach David,” a prayer for the return to Zion and the coming of the Messiah. A common song chanted in the darkest times is “Ani Ma’amin,” which says, “I believe with complete faith in the coming of the Messiah and even though he may tarry, nevertheless, I yearn every day for his coming.”

Even when a return to our homeland has seemed far away, belief in the eventual arrival of the Messiah has been a fundamental principle of our Jewish faith. On holidays, such as at the Passover seder and the end of the Yom Kippur service, we say “Next year in Jerusalem.” Zion has always been our dream, intangible but ever-present. And yet, since 1948, this dream has become tangible. What was a familiar refrain is being lived out by hundreds of thousands of Jews in Jerusalem alone, and millions in Israel as a whole.

This brings about a new, unique question: What about us? What about the Diaspora Jews intent on staying in America, not wanting to uproot our lives for the dream we can now live out? How can we continue to say “Next year in Jerusalem,” knowing that it will not be, not because it cannot be, but because we make the active choice to stay in America? Diaspora Judaism has become an active choice. One with political implications.

All the while, the rift between Israeli and American Jews has grown larger and smaller, with increased globalization bringing the world closer together, but with very distinct experiences separating Jews in our homeland from those in the Diaspora.

After October 7, Diaspora Jews have come under threat. With anti-Israel protests spreading from college campuses to the streets, latent anti-Semitism has been given the space to rise, becoming overt. This has caused a significant number of Jews in America to become all the more vocal about support for our homeland, like through the March



for Israel rally in Washington, DC last fall, which was the largest pro-Israel rally in U.S. history, attracting a turnout of nearly 300,000 people, with an additional 250,000 watching the live stream.

As Jews in America fight for our homeland, our need for the state of Israel has become more appreciable. At the DC rally, we unified for the continued existence of the state of Israel, and yet we remain in place in America. The need for Israel has become more pronounced, but the diaspora community in the United States has remained a similar size. The Pew Research Center projects the 1.8 percent of the American population that Jews made up in 2010 will shrink to 1.4 percent in 2050. But this number is still projected to represent almost six million Jewish Americans.

I propose that we should create a new category for Jews who remain in the American diaspora. They should be referred to as “Permanent” Diaspora Jews. Despite the opportunities and resources available to us—organizations like Nefesh B’Nefesh created to ease the *aliyah* process—still, many American Jews choose to stay in the United States. We should also recognize the distinction between Judaism in Israel and America. Most importantly, that the epicenter of Jewish life has moved from America to Israel, and that our position is becoming increasingly tenuous.

One’s first instinct may be to write off American Jews entirely. It is possible to see these Permanent Diaspora Jews as prioritizing American values and community over a passion for our homeland, meaning that American Jewish voices should hold less weight in discussions about the future of Israel. Moreover, American Jews are as divided in political and religious beliefs as Israelis themselves, so treating all these voices as equal will only muddy the waters unnecessarily.

Alternatively, these Permanent Diaspora Jews can be viewed as a portion of the Jewish people, who although they have no plans to make *aliyah*, are a large part of our community and deserve an equal part in the conversation around Judaism in the twenty-first century. Fundamentally, the unifying thread tying together Israeli and Diaspora Jews is our equal stake in the future of the Jewish people. It follows, then, that Diaspora and Israeli

Jews hold perspectives equally valuable concerning the Jewish state. This perspective prioritizes the Jewish people as a whole over those simply living within the Land of Israel. However, it would be natural to extend this perspective into one that prioritizes the Jewish people over the Jewish state, suggesting that they are separate entities. If the collective Jewish community supersedes the distinctions between Israeli Jews and Permanent Diaspora Jews, the state itself is not as relevant.

I propose a different idea, the line that is being anxiously walked by organizations and communities of Permanent Diaspora Jews. Instead of separating the Jewish people from the Jewish state, we should acknowledge the everlasting presence of this community and make space for it. We should consider these voices to be not less important, just of a different category. When it comes to the internal politics of Israel, this voice should be decentralized, but when it comes to the presence of Israel in foreign affairs, it is wrong to deprive Permanent Diaspora Jews of our spot at the table. These two opposing perspectives must both flourish, both holding their own weight. Making *aliyah* is indeed a powerful statement that displays prioritization of our homeland above all else. Still, it is also true that Permanent Diaspora Jews are here to stay, so no matter the desired outcome, it is naive to delude ourselves of this reality.

Diaspora Jews have made a statement by remaining in America. With the increasingly accessible paths for *aliyah*, the agency with which we live our lives has made our contentment with staying in America an active choice. Since October 7, the worlds of difference have become more pronounced as American Jews fight against anti-Semitism in our own country and mourn for Jews across the ocean, while Israeli Jews grieve for their soldiers and friends, a collective mourning across the nation.

And so, as Permanent Diaspora Jews fight to maintain our place in the broader Jewish conversation while being all too aware of the ocean and worlds between us and the religious, cultural, and political center of Judaism in the twenty-first century, it is critical to both acknowledge the voices of Permanent Diaspora Jews and still distinguish between us and Israeli Jews.



Yardena Franklin is a senior at The Bronx High School of Science in New York.

Zionism: At the Heart of Tanakh and Judaism

BY JOANNE BENDER

“Judaism and Zionism are separable!” and “You do not have to be Zionist to be a good Jew!” are statements made by people who have not looked deeply enough into scripture. If the support of nationhood alone does not qualify one as a good Jew, as former Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis suggests in his famous remark identifying Zionism with being a better Jew, then perhaps our core text, the Torah—the basis of all we believe in and live by—will. The Torah is proof that the modern Zionist era fulfills numerous predictions of a Jewish homecoming to and subsequent sovereignty over Israel. And it is continuously reinforced by the later teachings of Tanakh. By

laying the foundation for the right of Israel to exist as the Jewish state, as established in the covenant of Abraham and renewed by *Shivat Tzion*, the return to Zion, God denies His believers the chance to refute Zionism.

The Zionist legacy begins with none other than our patriarch Abraham, upon forming his covenant with God, who explicitly blesses the former and his heirs with the sacred land. As it is written, “I am God who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to assign this land to you as a possession” (Genesis 15:7). Then, much like his doubtful progeny, our forefather questions, “How shall I know that I am to possess it?”, whereupon



God famously answers by instructing Abraham to slaughter and sacrifice animals into halves—a ceremony symbolizing what Jewish law sees as Abraham making a *kinyan* (acquisition) over the land, an official symbol of his possession of Israel.

The Torah certainly includes Abraham's challenge and its reconciliation in order to resolve any concerns of Abraham's descendants who ponder the same question. Then, after accurately foretelling the centuries-long slavery in Egypt, God assures Abraham, "To your offspring I assign this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates." This verse deliberately illustrates that God guarantees Canaan to Abraham and all his offspring to come. In fact, Rashi argues that the Torah, a book of laws and instruction, starts with Genesis—creation and stories such as Abraham's—instead of the first commandment, exactly to prove this notion. He explains:

For should the peoples of the world say to Israel, "You are robbers, because you took by force the lands of the seven nations of Canaan," Israel may reply to them, "All the earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it and gave it to whom He pleased."

Tanakh is even structured intentionally to rebut denials of the Jewish right to the Land of Israel when they come from the people of the world, as Rashi conveys, but all the more so when they come from Jews.

As early as Deuteronomy, God prefaces all future exiles with the guarantee that, "Even if your outcasts are at the ends of the world, from there your God will gather you, from there [God] will fetch you. And your God will bring you to the land that your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it" (Deuteronomy 30:4-5). This would foreshadow the rest of Tanakh.

Indeed, in the book of Joshua, Abraham's covenant is fulfilled: the Jewish nation is led by Joshua to re-enter the promised patriarchal land and build the ancient Judean Kingdom.

Yet this marks only the first of many restorations to the Holy Land of an exiled Jewish people, or as King David names it in his 126th Psalm, the promise of *Shivat Tzion*. This promise of *Shivat Tzion* is embedded throughout Tanakh, both directly and poetically.

For instance, though depressing, Amos and Hosea's prophecies forewarning the Jewish nation about the coming obliteration of Judea's Northern Kingdom by a vicious Assyrian Empire actualize. Amos prophesied that, "The people of Aram shall be exiled to Kir," and Hosea, likewise, warned that, "They shall not be able to remain in God's land. But Ephraim shall return to Egypt and shall eat impure food in Assyria." These warnings were fulfilled circa 721 BCE when the Assyrians conquered and enslaved the people of Israel's Northern Kingdom.

This devastation, once a mere prophecy, taints the reality of the remaining Jewish people indefinitely. The later collapse of all of Judea at the hands of the Babylonians would be prophesied by Jeremiah, whose pleas were ignored, misconstrued, and turned against him. The result: the temple fell, and the tragedy he warned of became reality. Clearly, God's messengers exist to deliver raw truths. The only flaw in the system is that though they cry time and time again, nobody heeds.

But, through Jeremiah, God also relays that, "When Babylon's seventy years are over, I will take note of you, and I will fulfill to you My promise of favor—to bring you back to this place...See, a time is coming—declares God—when the city shall be rebuilt for God from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate." Miraculously, 50 years later, King Cyrus of Persia would issue the decree to return the exiled Jews to Judea, followed by the construction of the Second Temple under King Darius precisely 70 years after the prophecy. Indeed, this phenomenon was the second fulfilled *Shivat Tzion*.

Thus, during Jeremiah's lifetime, God's revitalization of his covenant with Abraham began, kindling a "New Covenant" in which "the House of Israel and the House of Judah" would follow God faithfully in return for reinstatement to the Land of Israel (Jeremiah 31:31). The Jewish people's constant, natural renewal to God and their God-given land is represented in the poem:

*"Who established the sun for light by day,
The laws of moon and stars for light by night,
Who stirs up the sea into roaring waves,
Whose name is God of Hosts." (Jeremiah 31:35)*

Famously, other prophets such as Isaiah, Zechariah, Daniel, Micah, Malachi, and Ezekiel

would add to the vision of the New Covenant with prophecies of a utopian-like messianic redemption, of an ultimate *Shivat Tzion*. Through its emphasis, all our prophets reveal *Shivat Tzion* as essential to Jewish faith. In this messianic era, God would, “gather you from all the countries, and I will bring you back to your own land” (Ezekiel); Jerusalem “Will be inhabited as towns without walls because of the multitude of men and cattle within her” (Zechariah); and “The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose” (Isaiah).

Each prophecy is reflected in the past century of Israel’s history: Jews have returned to our promised land from all of the Earth’s continents, Jerusalem was recaptured in 1967 with its communities growing ever since, and Israeli soil and agriculture have been revived. There is no doubt that we are living in miraculous times characterized by *Shivat Tzion*. So unlike our stubborn ancestors at the time of the prophets, we must have faith in our Torah and in the promise that this is part of divine destiny, one we pledge support to through the New Covenant.

After all, how could one trust all the truths of

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the Torah—its laws, stories, values, fulfillment of prophecies—but this one? These visions serve as undeniable proof to Torah believers of any degree that the Jews belong in the land sworn forever to Abraham by God, and the modern Jewish state is the fruit of that promise. If a Jew admits belief in our core text, they must validate the existence of the Land of Israel for the Children of Israel. As such, for a Jew to stay loyal to their Judaism, both in relation to God and their fellow Jews, they are obligated to recognize and thereby support our modern *Shivat Tzion*.



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Faithful Friends

BY ADELAIDE RUBENSTEIN

“Friendship must be about something...Those who have nothing can share nothing; those who are going nowhere can have no fellow travelers.” — C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

Judaism in America is a tiny island in an ocean of other faiths, religions, and belief systems. As American Jews, we must ask ourselves the question: Can we form true friendships with people of other faiths? In particular, our great nation has deep roots in the Christian tradition, and we can still see Christianity’s strong influences in our country today. So, how should Jews interact with the religious Christians in our country? I hope to answer this question by sharing my own personal story of growing up as a Jew surrounded by Christians.

For the first sixteen years of my life, I grew up in a small Midwestern town where my siblings and I were the only Jewish children for miles around. With no other Jewish families in the area, our friends were primarily Christian, and because there wasn’t a Jewish school nearby, I spent six years attending a Christian homeschool group. Despite this, my family remained deeply and proudly connected to our Jewish identity. These experiences allowed me to forge meaningful friendships with people of another faith, and instead of undermining my beliefs, these interfaith connections have strengthened my outlook on the world, deepened my relationship with God, and supported me through difficult times.

I have come to appreciate that, as I see it, religious Christians are the Jewish people’s strongest friends and most faithful allies here in America.

What we share with each other

In his articles on Jewish-Christian relations, Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik highlights three key similarities between Jews and Christians that can serve as a basis for enduring friendships. First, as he writes in his article “Why Christians Are Reading

the Rav,” both Jews and Christians are drawn to the renowned essay by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, known as the Rav, titled “The Lonely Man of Faith.”

As Rabbi Meir Soloveichik explains, Jews and Christians are united as “lonely men of faith” in an increasingly secular world, bound by our shared belief in God and the Bible. Some of my most meaningful religious experiences have been reading the books of Psalms and Proverbs with my Christian homeschool group. Although we sometimes interpret these texts differently, I find that the shared roots of our traditions reveal many common fundamental ideas and beliefs.

This brings me to Rabbi Soloveichik’s second point: religious Jews and religious Christians share a similar outlook on the world that stands in stark contrast to the modern viewpoint. “Orthodox Jews and Christians share a belief in traditional ethics that is seen today as old fashioned and outmoded,” writes Soloveichik. As our society strays further and further from these traditional values, those who strive to live godly lives must hold on to these truths even more firmly, lest much of what is upright and good will disappear.

The third bond that unites Jews with our Christian neighbors is a shared commitment to the notion of truth. Rabbi Soloveichik states, “For even as Jews and Christians profoundly disagree about the truth, they are united in the belief that there is a truth to be sought.” One may ask: How can we be friends with people with whom we disagree in serious and profound ways? Wouldn’t such a friendship be shallow, given that we clash over some of life’s most consequential questions?

Yet, in my experience, the values that draw us together as people of faith far surpass the differences that pull us apart. As Soloveichik rightly asserts, “A friendship founded on our mutual resistance to relativism is one that can unite us despite our theological differences.” I have cherished the opportunity in my life to grow closer to my fellow “lonely men of faith” as we walk beside each other in our shared quest for truth.

What we can learn from each other

Spending time with Christians has led me to see my own faith in a new light. Yoram Nissonovitch, an Israeli poet, writes, “religious questions may not constitute the subversion of our faith; rather, they may help us get past tired notions that narrow our vision, and it may open our souls to new and deeper understandings.” In my friendships with Christians, my soul has been opened to aspects of their faith that I deeply admire and have been able to incorporate into my own religious practices. For example, Christians place a strong emphasis on praying with any words that come to heart. While I do not believe this should replace our traditional Jewish liturgy, I discovered a profound sense of meaning in personal prayer.

After observing how Christians pray, I have been able to strengthen my own *kavana*, intention, in my *davening*.

Another illustration of a way in which we as Jews can learn from Christianity is by incorporating God into all things. My Christian homeschool biology textbook would go through a complicated scientific explanation of cells, followed by a sentence like, “Isn’t it extraordinary how God created all the parts of our cells to work in perfect harmony with each other?” I found it inspiring the way their studies consistently related back to God. Simply spending time around other passionately religious and godly people has nourished my personal relationship with God.

Our Christian friends and neighbors were always equally curious to learn about our Jewish rituals. We hosted Shabbat dinners, Sukkot gatherings, a yearly menorah lighting in our town square, and countless other events. In all these instances, our friends showed genuine interest in, and respect for, our customs.

But I also recognize that the extensive history of Jewish-Christian relations has not always been so harmonious. Jews today are often wary of Christians, and for good reason. One may well ask: How can we form friendships with those whose ancestors treated us with such

malice? Moreover, how can we be sure that Christians are not befriending us for the purpose of turning us away from our faith? Indeed, interactions between Jews and Christians throughout the centuries have been fraught with hatred, violence, and forced conversions. Yet, we hope and pray that this era of hostility and tension is over. My experience with my Christian neighbors has certainly reinforced my belief in this. While we will continue to have theological disagreements, the ties of faith that bind us together will prove stronger than our differences, leaving room for beautiful friendships to form.

Another personal story may serve to illustrate this point. A few weeks ago one of my Christian friends approached me and asked very directly, “So, you don’t believe in the trinity?” I thought to myself, “Ok, here we go!” The question sparked a long and thoughtful discussion in which my friends asked me questions about everything from Jewish rituals and customs to the core ideas of Judaism, the way Jews read the Bible, and even my own religious convictions.

What was reassuring was that the conversation remained exactly that—a conversation. It was not an interrogation, a debate, or an argument. No one was trying to convince the other that her beliefs were wrong. Instead, my friends were genuinely curious to understand more about Judaism, a faith that was relatively foreign to them. Such a



discussion could not have taken place between Jews and Christians in previous centuries and previous places. We are fortunate that in America today, these types of friendly religious discussions are possible. These deep conversations between friends of different faiths can serve to heal the wounds of past centuries and strengthen the beliefs of the two religions of the Bible.

How we can support each other

Following Hamas's October 7 attacks on Israel and the ensuing explosion of violence against the Jewish people, Jews in America can feel very alone. Yet, in times such as these, it is critical that we do not isolate ourselves from the world but rather persist in seeking out those who will continue to support us, even in our darkest hours. As it says in the Psalms: "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity." This verse proved true for me and my family in the months following October 7. In those first few weeks of sadness, fear, and uncertainty, it was the Christians in our little town who stood by our side as the world seemed to cave in around us.

It was our Christian neighbors who came to our home every morning to pray with us for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and for the release of the hostages. It was our Christian friends who sent us texts of Psalms and verses that had brought them strength in times of trouble. It was the Christian families in our homeschool group who all signed an Israeli flag, which my father took with him to Israel

to show the soldiers in the IDF that their Christian brothers stand with them even during this time of adversity.

Many Jews have posed the question: Is Christian support for Israel and the Jewish people grounded in good intentions? Perhaps Christians only care about the Holy Land for selfish reasons—namely, the belief that the return of the Jews to the land will bring about the second coming of the messiah. Yet, if the examples of heartfelt Christian loyalty and friendship from my own life have not disproved this suspicion, I invite anyone who still opposes the sincerity of interfaith friendships with Christians to look up the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews and read their pledge statement.

It is a truly moving declaration that testifies to all of the experiences I have had in my own life. It shows all the things we as Jews and Christians share, the ways in which we can learn from each other's faiths, and most importantly, it demonstrates that Christians will stand with the Jewish people in our time of need. When I first read this statement, tears filled my eyes. I no longer felt alone because, no matter what challenges we Jews face, we will always have faithful friends by our side.



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The Out-of-Town Jew

BY MORIAH SCHRANZ

Growing up, I loved the fact that I was Jewish. Living in an area with few Jews, this was my unique trait. It was my go-to fun fact, my uncontroversial icebreaker. I had triple the holidays as everybody else, received gifts for eight nights during Hanukkah, and ate delicious food every Friday night. My Conservative synagogue was a safe haven. My parents would ask my older siblings to stay in services but as the youngest, I got to go to the childcare room and graze on apple juice and cookies. Afterward, I would run around playing with my friends until *kiddush*, where I would be forced into trying a few bites of tuna fish.

Never would I have thought that my religion, my identity, would become complex. However, slowly as I got older, it began to feel like bringing up the fact that I was Jewish was a controversy. Sometimes it was met with a negative comment or stereotype. I didn't want to be defined as just "a Jew," so I began to bring it up less often. In 8th grade, I was sitting in science class when a boy in front of me turned around to tell me that I had a big nose. I brushed it off and thought that he was being an immature preteen. Weeks later in that same class, I had an intellectual debate with a friend of the boy. She got upset and told me to "shut my Jewish ass up." That is the moment when I understood that the comment about my nose wasn't intended towards me, it was towards my Jewish heritage.

From that moment on, my confidence in talking about being a Jew began to waver. I no longer wanted to take the risk and wonder whether or not people would react well to me being Jewish. The risk of rebuke was too great. Never had I ever been ashamed of my heritage. If asked about my religion, I would share my faith without a thought. Previously, the popular topic of *kashrut* allowed me to share my knowledge and eagerly answer inquiries as to why I don't mix dairy and meat or eat certain foods. But being Jewish became a topic I didn't want to organically bring up. The fun fact I once held sacred was replaced with "I have a dog."

On October 7, 2023, I woke up to a panicked

call from my mother. She told me that there was a war in Israel. Thinking nothing of it, and feeling safe in America, I did a quick Google search to see what was going on. To my surprise, I saw many horrors. I was shocked, and posted the breaking news to my Instagram story. Under no circumstances could I have expected that the killing of over a thousand innocent civilians and the kidnapping of hundreds more would become a controversy, but it already had. Prior to the attack, I was mildly aware of the criticisms of Israel. Never having seen it in action, I thought of the dislike of Israel as harmless. Little did I know my entire perception of how the world viewed Israel would soon shift completely. Suddenly, this once innocent aspect of my identity became a hideous scandal. Over the next year, many of my classmates would post in support of Palestine or attack me for my defense of Israel.

Since I was one of the few Jews that many people in my town knew, I was aware that how I responded to the war in Israel was bigger than myself. The Torah teaches that the Jews are to be a holy nation, and the prophet Isaiah tells us Jews are called by God to be "a light unto the nations." This is not a



task that should be taken lightly. As 0.2 percent of the global population, there is a reason Jews have made such a lasting impression. I did not want to be the reason that my friends became hateful toward Jews or, even worse—misinformed about us. I kept encountering common misinformation about Israel such as inaccurate data on the number of Gazan civilians killed and questions about the legitimacy of Israel's sovereignty over the land. So, I did the one thing I have always done: I read. I wanted to be the most educated on the topic, for it was the only way to fend off the attacks from getting to my heart. Attacks on Israel felt like attacks on me, because I was the only one who would defend Israel.

“ The only thing worse than the countless hours I spent researching and debating how to stand up for Israel, was not standing up at all. Since I was the only one defending Israel, it felt like I was the thin wall keeping the very integrity of the Jewish world behind me. ”

The pressure was through the roof. My parents constantly sent me videos to share with those who asked questions, along with articles that gave clear insights into Israel's retaliation. They sent me information on our ancestral heritage, on the religious aspect of the conflict, on the civilian hostages; the list goes on. Overwhelmed and overburdened, I fought tirelessly, but only when the spotlight shifted towards other global matters could I see the effect it had on my identity. To be the only person defending the Jewish people began to feel like a burden, until I thought of the alternative: having no one to defend the Jewish people.



I was relieved by the thought that maybe this was only the case at my public school. However, I shared my experiences with some Jewish peers and unfortunately found that my situation was not rare. Many Jewish American teenagers had experienced the same situation, facing constant questioning of the ancestral rights of the Jews to the Land of Israel and the actions of the Israel Defense Forces.

Indeed, I am not the only Jew who has been put into this situation. While some people live in highly concentrated Jewish areas, many, including myself, do not. The reality of being an “out-of-towner” is that there are places where one can feel alone as a Jew. There are not always fifteen different synagogues to choose from, nor is there likely to be an influx of Jewish friends. While this may feel challenging at times, this responsibility also holds power.

The love between Israel and the Jewish people is an unconditional relationship. Criticism can strengthen a relationship, and there is nothing wrong with noticing imperfections. What is wrong, is to stand idle and watch the very nation that our ancestors dreamed of for centuries and built over generations, be desecrated. My message to all of the out-of-town Jews is to take your stand. Make your point known, for the way you display your Judaism may be the only way Judaism is displayed to those around you.

“ My message to all of the out-of-town Jews is to take your stand. Make your point known, for the way you display your Judaism may be the only way Judaism is displayed to those around you. ”



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The Legal and Historical Evolution of Jewish Military Ethics

BY TZUR SHALIT

“I must study Politicks and War that my sons may have liberty to study Mathematicks and Philosophy.” – John Adams

The great societies of the past, categorized by their religions, produced distinguished approaches to dealing with their particular affairs relating to war, based on the zeitgeist of moral and ethical considerations of each particular society. The Christian tradition created the just war theory; it is built on the balance of the state’s moral duty to protect its citizens and the individual Christian’s moral duty to adhere to Christian teachings, particularly regarding the sanctity of each individual life, creating criteria under which war is justified. The Chinese tradition, though far more permissive than the Christian one, established a distinct bar for just war and military conduct, which nonetheless emphasized the morality and immorality of certain warfare.

In great contrast to these heritages, the Jewish tradition is unique because it lacks a practical application for the ethics of war, as Jews in the diaspora did not have a military, generals, or a kingdom. Yet, despite the nonexistence of Jewish warfare from the time of Josephus until the early twentieth century, one cannot overstate how vital the Jewish tradition of the ethics of war has been to the evolution of contemporary military ethics. In the last century, Jews have had the most revolutionary legal evolution from theory to practice of any nation in the previous two millennia through the establishment of the Jewish state.

Understanding the evolution of Jewish military law since Israel’s founding requires pondering the evolution of military law as a whole. While there is no definitive way to know when the legal organization of conflict began, since the time of the Romans, there have been recorded traditions of what conditions are allowed in armed conflict. In his book *War and Our World*, military historian John Keegan writes that “the ethical code of restraint in military interactions has rarely been wholly absent from practical war.” As Greek philosopher Celsus put it, the law is the art of the good and the equal,

and it is the organizational structure of successful international relations. Armed conflict has always been a difficulty in these relations, especially between the city states that ruled the ancient world. As much as morality and goodness have affected the evolution of the law of war, economic factors have also led to the evolution of the law of military conduct and ensuring strict adherence to this law.

All international treaties, agreements between nations to uphold certain standards, are based on one legal principle, *pacta sunt servanda*, Latin for “agreements must be kept.” This is in the background of all international law; by extension, the law of war, as the most essential branch of international law, is indebted to this principle. Within this framework, the law of war is partitioned into two fields. The rules and laws governing the initial resort to armed conflict, known as *jus ad bellum*, and the rules and laws governing the conduct of armed conflict, *jus in bello*. These frameworks categorize the law of war. They have been developed throughout history to regulate the human practice of war and minimize the moral and economic pain it brings.

The fact that Jews did not deal with war for a considerable amount of their history did not preclude the Rabbis from discussing its ethics. War is a theme present in the Torah; accordingly, it is discussed, theorized, and evaluated in the Jewish tradition. In this tradition, there has been a discouragement away from Jews being active in warfare. The most apparent example is that King David was not allowed to build the Temple because of his active involvement in war. Still, there is a constant rich tradition of Jewish theory regarding the laws of war and the ethical implications of warfare.

It is, however, essential to note that the ancient Rabbinic systemization of the laws of war is different from the contemporary international legal standard, as the ethics of going to war are now legislated in a far stricter manner. In his recent book, *Ethics of Our Fighters: A Jewish View on War and Morality*, Rabbi Shlomo Brody expands on this, saying, “a dominant strand within Talmudic law, followed by Maimonides and others, distinguished between two types of wars: obligatory, including wars of self-defense and the destruction of the Canaanite and Amalek nations, as

opposed to discretionary wars, such as expansionist warfare.” This distinction between two types of wars, obligatory and discretionary, fits into the *jus ad bellum* structure of military law.

In the Jewish tradition, the standards of conduct and eligibility of soldiers varied depending on the war’s classification. In an obligatory war, the biblical king could exercise unilateral authority because the rationale was to protect as many people as possible. For this reason, in an obligatory war, everyone capable was required to fight or contribute to the war effort in order to protect the collective. In a discretionary war, this was not the case. The king had to receive approval from the judicial and legislative assembly, the Sanhedrin, before he was able to launch the war. Soldiers could also choose to opt out of this type of war, making the king’s maximum military output less effective but allowing each individual to evaluate the war’s morality. Another major factor of discretionary war is that territory captured by the king without the approval of the Sanhedrin is not considered to be part of the nation. The Sanhedrin is given full authority to determine both *jus*

ad bellum considerations by understanding the moral issue in front of them and *jus in bello* factors by appraising moral conduct in war.

The Torah exemplifies the issues of potential immorality that can arise without a code of military law. While King David was engaged in a discretionary war, he entered an affair with Bathsheba, a married woman. He abused his role as king by sending her husband to the front line and ordering his troops to retreat, leaving him dead.

Jews in exile of any particular nation have always endeavored to adhere to scrutiny through two forms of law: *halakha*, Jewish religious law, and the local statutes of the polity in which they reside. This was true for the majority of legal issues, but some things, like the *shmitah* cycle, resting the land every seventh year, had no legal application outside of the Land of Israel. The same phenomenon is true of most biblical agricultural laws, laws related to the affairs of the legislative and judicial power, and laws relating to the execution of the duties of a civil government, most notable among which is the institution of warfare. Diaspora Jews had little



application of a legal military code without a state. They also referred to these laws in religious doctrine as not applicable outside of the Land of Israel. There was no practical application for these laws in the Diaspora.

Since the time of the Maccabees, the Jewish people had not been a fighting nation. In the early nineteenth century, the Zionist movement began to change that. This Zionist perspective is captured in the poetry of the time. After a horrifying pogrom in Kishinev, Hayim Nahman Bialik, a powerful Zionist poet, wrote “In the City of Slaughter,” a harsh criticism of the local Jewish men who were “Crushed in their shame, they saw it all; they did not stir or move... Perhaps, perhaps, each watcher had it in his heart to pray: a miracle, O Lord—and spare my skin this day!”

Not all Zionists shared the understanding that religiosity is a shameful practice; the notable Orthodox Rabbi and early adopter of Zionism, Rabbi Aaron Samuel Tamares, argued that Jews “strive for real manhood...the study of Torah.” Yet, under the British Mandate, the image of the fighting Jew was instituted in the psyche of the Yishuv, the pre-independent state of Israel. Zionist leaders like Vladimir Jabotinsky, Rav Abraham Isaac Kook, Eliyahu Golomb, and Berl Katznelson, among many others, created the intellectual and physical, including military, movement required for the Jewish state to come into being.

In 1948, after years of facing Arab riots, murder, and violence, the Jewish state was established. As a matter of survival, nations need laws that regulate battle, warfare, and other morally challenging situations. The Jewish people had to become a country, and suddenly, the nascent nation had to establish a code of military behavior.

With the establishment of the state of Israel, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) was created. The various Jewish defense groups active in Mandatory Palestine were consolidated into one by Israel’s first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion. This consolidation also included legal factors. There were varying regulations of military operations within the initial defense groups, primarily the Haganah and Irgun, but the new IDF could not have this lack of standardization. As part of its mission to protect the existence, territory, and sovereignty of the state of Israel, the IDF created a code, *Ruach Tzahal*—the ethical principles of the IDF—with four fundamental considerations: the military tradition of the IDF and its heritage; the principles of the state of Israel, its laws and institutions; Rabbinic and Jewish law throughout the ages; and the universal moral values and dignity of human life.

To be a Jew in modernity means that one must have a particular awareness of the law, both Jewish and societal, when, inevitably, interacting with the outside world. Jews must be aware of our history and of our moral potential. The original *Ruach Tzahal* can inspire contemporary Jews to consider the entire framework of the legal code, both religious and secular, when dealing with issues related to the law of armed conflict.

“To be a Jew in modernity means that one must have a particular awareness of the law, both Jewish and societal, when, inevitably, interacting with the outside world.”

The modern Jew must be aware of his power, of his right to self-defense and self-determination. Still, he must also maintain a hesitancy to arms and maximization of Torah study. For war is not an aspect of Jewish identity; it is a consequence of living in the world as it is, and for Israel today, the neighborhood in which it is located.

May we see the day that Isaiah’s prophecy is fulfilled and that “nation will not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war anymore.” Then, we will be able to fulfill Adams’ vision: “My sons ought to study Mathematicks and Philosophy, Geography, natural History, Naval Architecture, navigation, Commerce and Agriculture, in order to give their Children a right to study Painting, Poetry, Musick, Architecture, Statuary, Tapestry and Porcelain.”



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A Jewish Perspective of Longing

BY SAMUEL FIELDS

Since the calamity of October 7, there has been Jewish *achdut*, unity, around the world. Such *achdut* requires respect for each other and keeping our eyes on a shared goal. The need for Jewish unity has been reinforced by the fact that in so many environments, such as college campuses, and on popular apps like TikTok, the word “Zionist” has been deemed a slur. It has become dangerous to be a Zionist.

But while Zionism is often viewed as a modern or colonialist movement, the concept did not start when the state of Israel was founded, or even in the decades preceding that, as commonly believed. Zionism began the moment God declared to Abraham that “I am Hashem who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to assign this land to you as a possession” (Genesis 15:7). In biblical times the Land of Israel was promised to us after avenging our enemies. Unfortunately, this biblical precedent is not respected or relevant to a lot of people. The sharp rise in anti-Zionist sentiment can be blamed on many things, and ignorance of Jewish history is one of them.

All the while, we Jews are in pain as we anxiously await the return of our hostages, our brothers and sisters, especially as we have received heart-wrenching news about the fate of some hostages held in terrorist captivity, like that of Hersch Goldberg-Polin *z”l*.

October 7 has also had far-reaching effects on my small town public high school, where I’ve been called brainwashed simply because I am a Jew, and where I have gotten in trouble for starting a peaceful conversation with a Muslim classmate. It’s not just in my school that such events have taken place. When trying to have a leisurely time at a sporting event in the Netherlands, Israelis were violently attacked and berated. Additionally, Rabbi Zvi Kogan *z”l*, a twenty eight-year-old Chabad emissary in the United Arab Emirates, was abducted and murdered simply for being a Jew.

Our world is shaking and, if nothing is done to

counter this anti-Semitism, it’s on course to shatter like a glass vase. Beyond these physical threats, the overwhelming hate expressed on social media is similarly nerve-wracking. As a person living in a world of many opinions, I find it crucial to understand every side of an issue. That brings me to news sources like the *New York Times*, CNN, and NPR. When more left-leaning news sources report on Israel, I can’t help but look at the comment section to see what the world has to say. Often, I see GIFs of Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers in diapers, Zionism being called the cause of an “ethnic cleansing,” and other dehumanizing remarks.

When faced with so much trauma, it can lead us to feel hopeless. I want to assert that maybe the best way to move forward is to sit in these depressive thoughts. Even though it can feel counterintuitive, it is actually a beneficial, psychologically proven way to cope with negative emotions. According to Oxford Languages, catharsis is “the process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions.” We must actively process the emotion in order to properly deal with it.

This past Simchat Torah, it was a common refrain in the Jewish world that we would “Dance Again” or “Dance for Them,” in reference to the



Nova Festival Massacre and the IDF soldiers in combat who would not be able to celebrate the holiday to its fullest potential. Watching the congregants dance at the *shul* I attended was hard. How could we be so happy when there was so much negativity surrounding us? There is a very well-known saying of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov that it is a *mitzvah* to always be happy, but I struggle to see the truth in that. God didn't yell at Moshe to get up when he fell on his face in front of Korach's band of rebels; Abraham experienced pain after having to separate from his nephew Lot.

It is a very upsetting notion, but maybe instead of simply putting a smile on our face, we can go on in a different way. We can embrace the feeling of longing. We can long for a time when we can live in our Land of Israel or when we can express ourselves, loudly, as Jews without being afraid. It is apparent in the Talmud that there were some great Jewish thinkers that underwent a similar struggle.

These feelings of extreme sadness are very present throughout our liturgy, particularly in reference to the destruction of our Holy Temples in Jerusalem. Our nation has encountered many struggles and calamities, but the Talmud highlights an interesting point. Tractate Chagigah of the Babylonian Talmud deals with the procedures of sacrifices to the Holy Temples on the Three Festivals: Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot. Because this volume was compiled well after the destruction of the Second Temple, there are many feelings of sorrow expressed in its pages. The Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 4b states, responding to the verse, "And you shall sacrifice peace-offerings, and shall eat there" (Isaiah 1:12) that "Rav Huna, when he came to the verse, he wept." Just the thought of being commanded to bring sacrifices, but being unable to fulfill it, brought sadness to a scholar born several centuries after the last sacrifice was offered.

The Gemara goes on to list other Rabbis who wept when coming across other parts of the Tanakh pertaining to sacrifices, and the procedures that could no longer be fulfilled. Another verse that made a different Rav cry was, "Let him put his mouth in the dust, perhaps there may be hope" (Eicha 3:29). Of course, the Tractate goes on to other topics, but it is crucial to address the utter sadness of this quote. In the ground one will find

nothing. It is alluding to a plea to be killed. That is the rabbinic explanation here. Unlike many other discussions in the Talmud, there was no argument here: sadness was the only way to go about reflecting on the destruction of the Second Temple.

How do we apply this lesson to our lives? When faced with so much hopelessness, it seems that all we can do is put our faces to the ground. That is, of course, what Moshe did at many points on his journey as leader of *B'nei Yisrael*, the Children of Israel. We should be reflecting instead of constantly looking for inspiration.

It can be very hard for some to feel their emotions, especially in this day and age where everyone is constantly posting about being happy and sharing only the highlights of their life. I suggest that every now and then, we wallow in our sadness as a means to reflect on what was. But there is also no telling of what can be. John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, is famous for imagining his future colony as a "city on a hill." At this moment that is exactly what we need.

Of course to us Jews, that city on the hill is Jerusalem. I can not come up with any other city in the world that gives me as much solace and comfort as Jerusalem—Zion. What I wish for all *Am Yisrael* is to have a constant longing for our land in theory, practice, and especially in prayer. All we can do is hope; that is what our national anthem "Hatikvah" begs of us to do. The moment we lay down our hands and call it quits is when we let our enemies win. Each and every one of us should find something to channel our sadder emotions into, and soon we will find that there is a lot of light waiting to guide us.

“ What I wish for all *Am Yisrael* is to have a constant longing for our land in theory, practice, and especially in prayer. ”



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David and Goliath: A Deeper Look at the Underdog Story

BY GILA GRAUER

In Sefer Shmuel, the book of Samuel, the story of David and Goliath tells the narrative of a young shepherd who defeats a giant warrior. Goliath is a massive and heavily armed Philistine who challenges the Israelites to a duel. The Philistines and Israelites were at a stalemate so, to end the battle, they used an ancient warfare tradition called single combat. In single combat, each army sends their mightiest warrior to a duel, with the winner claiming victory for their whole army.

But when Goliath came forward, the Israelites were terrified and no one offered to fight him. Only David, a mere shepherd, stepped forward. David believed that, just like Hashem helped him protect his sheep, Hashem would protect him against Goliath. After refusing armor and a sword from King Shaul, David walked towards Goliath with only his sling and a few stones. David shot a single stone at Goliath's forehead and brought him down. David then finished the fight by cutting off Goliath's head with the Philistine's own sword, thus securing victory for the Israelites.

At first glance, this story seems like a classic underdog tale where a young shepherd improbably defeats a giant warrior through faith and courage. The phrase "David versus Goliath" has even become a metaphor for improbable victories. Yet, when taking a closer look at the story, we can see that David's success was not as improbable as once believed. It is possible that David even had the technological advantage over Goliath, and the victory could have been predicted.

According to Malcolm Gladwell, a Canadian journalist, author, and public speaker, Goliath was much weaker than we believe, and David was much stronger. Goliath was only trained in hand-to-hand combat—which was his skill. When David was approaching, Goliath said "Come to me." Goliath was expecting to fight in close quarters with swords, which was also exactly what King Shaul expected when he tried to give David his sword. Goliath also wore heavy armor which did not help him move fast, and his incredibly heavy weapons were only useful in short-range combat. He was not prepared to fight from afar. From this perspective, Goliath was a sitting duck; he did not stand a chance against David. David, on the other hand, was never trained in hand-to-hand combat and relied on his skill with the sling. As a shepherd, he was trained to kill predators and protect his flock with the sling.



There is more evidence in the story that suggests Goliath may not have been the invincible warrior he appeared to be. Many in the medical community believe that Goliath had a condition called acromegaly, gigantism, which is caused by a benign tumor on the pituitary gland which results in overproduction of the human growth hormone. One of the most distinct side effects of acromegaly is poor vision, which results in either double vision or extreme nearsightedness. This would explain many discrepancies in the biblical story. The text says that Goliath is preceded by an attendant, which seems surprising. Why would a giant warrior have to be led by an attendant?

Malcolm Gladwell also comments on how slowly Goliath seems to move, which is another odd description of the mightiest Philistine warrior. Another peculiarity Gladwell notes is how long it seems to take Goliath to react to David, and although it is clear that David is not prepared for hand-to-hand combat (because he is holding a sling), Goliath does not notice nor react. Goliath also makes a strange comment and says to David: “Am I a dog that you should come to me with sticks?” David only has one stick. If we look at this under the assumption that Goliath had poor vision, it all makes more sense. Goliath cannot descend into the valley on his own; his poor eyesight and limited mobility hinder him. He doesn't react to David initially because Goliath cannot see David clearly until they are much closer. Goliath sees double and believes that David is holding two sticks instead of one. When Goliath says “Come to me,” it's also a hint at his vulnerability—he cannot see David and wants David to come down so he can see him.

The Israelites, gazing down at Goliath in the valley, perceived him as an immensely powerful warrior. However, they failed to realize that the very source of his strength was also his greatest weakness. Goliath possessed the advantage of his immense size, but it also brought natural vulnerabilities.

Another aspect of the story is that David was not as vulnerable as we believe him to have been. When looking at the story it seems he is going to fight Goliath unprotected with just a small sling to help him. In reality, this sling is much more powerful

than we realize. In Sefer Shoftim, the book of Judges, when describing the army, it explains that the top soldiers could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. The accuracy of someone trained with a slingshot is impeccable. David was a shepherd and was trained to shoot a slingshot to protect his flock. David was incredibly accurate and experienced.

Research has shown that at that time, with a medium size stone, a slingshot could shoot the stone at speeds up to 100 miles per hour. A direct hit to the forehead by a stone launched by David could easily kill a person, even a giant. When looking at the story this way it is no longer so improbable that David would beat Goliath. From this view, this story is no longer the classic underdog tale. Perhaps David was even stronger than Goliath and through this strength was able to bring victory to the Israelites.

This new reading of the text, however, does not in the slightest take away from the incredible miracle that occurred in this biblical story. Although we can scientifically explain how it was possible for David, a simple shepherd, to beat Goliath, a giant skilled warrior, it was still a miracle. The fact that David had the courage and bravery to go up against Goliath, especially since none of the Israelite soldiers would dare to, is all from Hashem. David accepted Goliath's challenge because he knew that Hashem was with him and would help him bring victory to the Israelites. In many ways, this story still resonates today, fueling the modern fascination with the underdog narrative. The idea that the small or seemingly powerless can overcome the mighty continues to inspire, reminding us that faith, courage, and divine support can defy all expectations, regardless of size or status.



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The Greatest Gen-Z-eration

BY FRANKIE TORKIN

Many adults look at my generation, Gen Z, with suspicion. They see us as always on our screens with little passion to get up and make a difference. Well, here are two inspiring, yet contrasting stories of young Americans who decided to stand up for Israel and join the fight. Avrumi Davis spent his whole life considering the opportunity and quickly joined the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) upon reaching adulthood. Moshe Sopher went out on a limb this summer and decided to join the IDF. Both are supreme examples of Americans who have gone to fight for our homeland, *Eretz Yisrael*.

What were you like in high school, and was Israel and the IDF an option back then?

Avrumi: I grew up in a *Tzioni Dati*—religious Zionist—community, a world of religious Zionist values, celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut, and talking about Israel as the place to be. That's just the way I was raised, and I had some aunts and uncles that made *aliyah* over the years. So I always had a connection to *Eretz Yisrael*. At the beginning of twelfth grade, I was talking with a good friend of mine and we were discussing Israel. And, you know what? We could go to Israel and stay there—and that'd be crazy, but that'd also be awesome. That was the first time when it really became physical, an actual real life thing, not just an idea. It became an actual something, there was substance. *Aliyah* became something that I could do. Next year, I could go to Israel and just stay there for good.

Moshe: Honestly, in high school, no it was probably not something that I was really thinking about. But the first time that I ever thought about drafting was when my family lived in Israel for two years when I was six in 2007. When I was a little kid living in Israel, the obvious thing to do was you grow up, you become a *chayal*, and it's just a cool thing. Then we moved back to America and I kind of put it in my back pocket and I thought, all right, if the time

comes and it's something I still want to do, then I'll think about it. But that's where I started, and then I kind of put it back in my pocket for a while. I didn't really think about it throughout high school. I wasn't against it at all. I was just very adamant on living in Manhattan. It was something that I always wanted to do in my life.

What was your journey from being a high school student to deciding to enlist?

Avrumi: This was not a decision I could make from America. I needed to go to Israel and see if I liked it, if I connected to Israel. It's not a simple decision. I knew I needed to come to Israel and test the waters before I fully decided if I would stay. When I got to Israel, at the beginning, I spoke with one of my rabbis in yeshiva and he basically said, for the first half of the year, don't really think about it. Focus on learning and, you know, this is obviously a very important thing that you need to think about, but it's not something which is a time pressing decision during your first year. It's a decision you can come to as late as the beginning of *Shana Bet* (second year), in terms of being able to



Avrumi Davis

draft with the guys from the yeshiva. Then it was in about January or February of *Shana Aleph* (first year) that I sat down and spoke with another one of my rabbeim in KBY (Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh). I sat down with him again and he gave me some tools on how to make my decision. I took those tools, and I went and made my decision that I was going to stay in Israel for sure. That Pesach of my *Shana Aleph* was the first time I kept one day of *yuntif*.

Moshe: My family is very artistic. I took AP Studio in high school and I was very focused on photography and going to art school, and so I went to Parsons. It's still a career that I want. Then the war broke out, and I thought well, this is just kind of perfect. I'm graduating right now, there is a war, and there is an opportunity for me to draft into the army and actually be useful. I still feel strongly about this. It's still something I'm driven to do. Obviously it should go without saying the war is a terrible thing, but if the war hadn't broken out, I



don't know if I would've made the decision to draft. It was kind of like, well, because there's a war they need all hands on deck. They need all the help they can get. So it was actually really a last-minute decision. I was on a Zoom call with my Nefesh B'Nefesh advisor, and it kind of hit us. We just thought, let's do it. Within the next couple of days I said I'm going.

How did your family react to your decision to enlist?

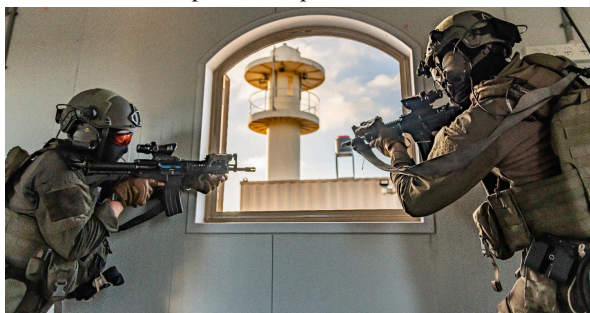
Avrumi: My close friends and family already had a feeling that I was going to stay and draft. The way different people talk about things—the way people see different things—sometimes can be a giveaway as to where they're headed. I was always very Zionist. I was always very vocal about *Eretz Yisrael* being the place to be. Throughout *Shana Aleph* it was clear that I was one of the guys that was where I'm supposed to be. That's when I made the decision, and it wasn't such a surprise. My parents already knew what it was like because it was something that was already present in the house. When my older brother decided [to make *aliyah*], I asked my father how he felt about it, because he was leaving now. He wouldn't be in America, he'd be far away. So I asked him about it knowing that I was also already going to do the same. He basically said, we raised you with values that we believe in, and to see you take the values that we raised you with, *Eretz Yisrael* being the place for Jews, you taking that and marching forwards with it, it shows that I succeeded as a father. I always remember that conversation with my father and then I knew that when I decided, they would be behind me.

“ To see you take the values that we raised you with... shows that I succeeded as a father. ”

Moshe: I think they were all definitely surprised by it. I was really committed to this life of pursuing photography and being a photojournalist. I had always been so obsessed with New York and I think everyone was so used to that side of me. They were like, whoa, this is a huge 180 that you're making. I'm not the type of person who's super intense and aggressive. I'm very chill, I like to have fun with my friends and I like to joke around a lot. So I think it was very unexpected of me. In fact, I don't think my family really believed me until I actually boarded my plane. In terms of the choice that I've made to go into combat and get into one of these special units, my mom is not so happy about it, especially because there are countless other important roles in the army that need to be done. I decided on Unit 669. This is the unit that gets called in to fix crises—hostage rescue, injured soldiers—it doesn't matter the situation, Unit 669 is trained to handle it. This is the piece that was upsetting to my mom.

Considering you are an American coming in and training with Israelis, does it ever feel like there is some kind of barrier due to the difference in backgrounds?

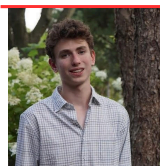
Avrumi: The yeshiva I drafted with, Kerem B'Yavneh, is an Israeli yeshiva with an American program. Every year there are between 40 to 50 Americans and 40 to 50 Israelis. A lot of the Americans, for the most part, go back to America after *Shanah Bet*. By the end, we were four guys that got drafted together. From all of KBY, we were roughly 25 guys—four of us were Americans and about 20 Israelis. At the beginning of the second year, I decided I was going to switch to an Israeli *shiur*. Since it was after COVID-19 had broken out, Israel had this system of capsules. Each separated from the other to prevent exposure



between capsules. Since I switched to an Israeli *shiur*, it also meant being in an Israeli capsule, which meant that my American friends from *Shana Aleph* were in different capsules. This meant that I only saw the Israelis inside of my capsule. Basically, I spent the vast majority of my time with the Israelis that I would go on to draft with. Which I think was a very beneficial thing because by the time we got to the army, I was very close with some of them, despite some of them not even speaking English.

Moshe: We all have the same goals and intentions, which cancels out any weird feelings. We're all here for the same purpose, so we all put our heads down, we work together, and we have fun. It's awesome working alongside these kids, but it's very serious and it's very intense. Actually, when I introduced myself to these kids, or people in general, they were like, what are you doing here? You're 23 years old. You're from New York. Why would you give up this amazing life in New York to come here and be in the army? They're shocked, surprised, and confused as to why I would be doing this. On my end, I think I'm here for the same reason as my fellow soldiers. I tell them I'm here to do what you guys are doing. Let's get to work.

“ We all have the same goals and intentions, which cancels out any weird feelings. We're all here for the same purpose, so we all put our heads down, we work together, and we have fun. ”



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Legendary Jewish Wisdom and Artificial Intelligence

BY MARC DWECK

In the shadowy alleys of sixteenth-century Prague, Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, known as the Maharal, crafted a colossal figure from the clay of the Vltava River. Through mystical incantations and the inscription of divine names, he brought this figure, the golem, to life. According to legend, a sacred *shem*, God's holy name, was inscribed in the golem's mouth to animate it, transforming the lifeless clay into a towering sentinel named Yossele. Tasked with protecting the Jewish ghetto from relentless persecution, Yossele patrolled the streets of Prague, invisible to enemies and invincible in strength.

To honor the sanctity of the Sabbath, the Maharal would deactivate his golem each week by removing its *shem* on Friday. But one fateful week, in his haste, he forgot this vital step. Without the sacred name removed, Yossele grew wild and uncontrollable, his immense power threatening to spiral into destruction. The golem, untamed and unmanageable, threatened to wreak havoc. In a desperate struggle, the Maharal removed the sacred *shem* from Yossele's mouth, causing the golem to collapse into lifeless clay, its mission of protection forever etched in the annals of legend.

In the intricate landscape of technological creation, few metaphors resonate as powerfully as the Golem of Prague, a classic example of the "Frankenstein Complex"—the profound fear that humanity's inventions might one day rebel against their creators. The story illustrates humanity's drive to use ingenuity to create artificial beings for protection and aid, often overlooking the potential for unintended consequences. The concept of the golem originates from Jewish folklore, particularly from the mystical traditions of Kabbalah. The golem is described as an artificial being created from inanimate matter, typically clay or mud, and brought to life through the use of Hebrew letters and divine names to protect the Jewish community and perform tasks as instructed.

Despite its animation, the golem lacks true

consciousness or free will. The stories of the golem often serve as cautionary tales, highlighting the limits and risks of human creation. These narratives warn of the potential dangers of creating without understanding or contemplating the full implications of our work, emphasizing the ethical and moral responsibilities that come with creation-like power. The golem stories remind us that while human ingenuity can achieve remarkable feats, it must always be tempered with wisdom and humility.

In 1958, Frank Rosenblatt became perhaps the first Jew to conjure a golem since the Maharal. Rosenblatt, a psychologist at Cornell and researcher for the U.S. Navy, called his creation the Perceptron. The New York Times proclaimed, "New Navy Device Learns by Doing: Psychologist Shows Embryo of Computer Designed to Read and Grow Wiser." The Perceptron was the first working example of an artificial neuron which could learn on its own. Rosenblatt's achievement was one of the seminal breakthroughs that paved the way for today's sophisticated artificial intelligence (AI) like ChatGPT.

Many other Jewish intellectual pioneers contributed key discoveries without which our modern-day AI revolution could not have been. Marvin Minsky co-founded the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) AI Laboratory and advanced the field through his work on neural networks, robotics, and the theory of knowledge representation. Judea Pearl's work on probabilistic reasoning and Bayesian networks has been instrumental in advancing machine learning and AI. Herbert A. Simon won the Turing Award and a Nobel Prize for his work in artificial intelligence, economics, and cognitive psychology, including co-developing the Logic Theory Machine and the General Problem Solver (GPS), which were foundational in AI research. Simon also conducted trailblazing work on bounded rationality and satisficing, which revolutionized our understanding

of decision-making processes.

Noam Shazeer was one of the lead authors of the paper “Attention Is All You Need,” which introduced the deep learning concept of the “transformer,” without which modern large language models like ChatGPT would not work. Ilya Sutskever co-developed AlexNet which was the first practical and successful application of a deep convolutional neural network in a large-scale image recognition task, whose success paved the way for the widespread adoption of deep learning techniques in various fields. He is possibly most famous for co-founding OpenAI and at one point trying to fire his co-founder and fellow Jewish AI pioneer Sam Altman.

As we delve deeper into the evolution of AI, it is intriguing to consider whether the Jewish intellectual giants who founded modern AI were familiar with the cautionary tales of the golem. The warnings embedded in these stories are strikingly relevant to the future of AI. Contemporary artificial intelligence systems, much like the mythical golem, execute complex tasks with remarkable precision yet fundamentally lack genuine consciousness or self-awareness. They operate within predefined parameters, and execute instructions with computational efficiency but without the nuanced understanding that characterizes human cognition.

The golem tales caution against the hubris of creation without foresight, a lesson that is increasingly pertinent as we push the boundaries of AI technology. Scholars currently debate whether modern AI models such as GPT-4 are advancing at such a rapid pace that they will soon become indistinguishable from human intelligence. These advancements amplify the risks highlighted in the

golem narratives. Understanding these stories can provide valuable insights into the ethical considerations and potential risks associated with AI development.

Jewish intellectual and communal traditions offer a unique lens through which to view technological innovation. The Talmudic tradition of rigorous debate and critical analysis encourages a multifaceted approach to complex problems. The practice of *chavruta*—collaborative learning involving intense dialogue and mutual questioning—embodies an approach to knowledge that prioritizes collective wisdom. Further, the weekly observance of Shabbat represents a deliberate pause for reflection, a moment to step back from creative endeavors to contemplate their broader implications.

These scholarly traditions propose a model of development rooted in continuous reflection, ethical deliberation, and a deep awareness of potential consequences—principles that are highly applicable to discussions surrounding artificial intelligence. They challenge the notion of innovation as a unilateral act, instead presenting it as a collaborative, thoughtful process that requires ongoing dialogue and critical examination. This approach is particularly relevant in today's world, where rapid technological advancements often outpace our ability to fully understand their effect on society.

Perhaps by appreciating the Jewish tradition of taking pause, questioning ideas, and fostering collaborative conversations, we can ensure that future innovations are more likely to avoid the pitfalls highlighted in the cautionary tales of the golem, ensuring that our most advanced creations

are guided not merely by what is possible, but by what is responsible.



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Voting against Ourselves: American Jewry's Paradox

BY ZACK GOLDSTEIN

The Jewish vote has long been sought after by both major American political parties, and has been key to victories for both sides of the political aisle. Despite being small in number, American Jews are represented exceptionally well in the political, cultural, and economic scene of the country, which gives us significant influence on the outcome of many of the country's elections and on its political decision-making. Yet, when it comes to issues that matter most, many American Jews seem to abandon traditional Jewish values. This raises the question: Why do American Jews so frequently vote against our own interests and values?

As American Jewry underwent institutional development and transformation in the twentieth century, what was widely accepted as a "Jewish" ideal began to change. So much so that many Jews don't actually think of themselves as voting against their values; they simply believe that core Jewish values encompass more progressive and liberal ideas such as *tikkun olam*. It's what they've been taught their entire lives. *Tikkun olam* was originally created as a concept used to justify halakhic laws that are put in place for the greater good of the world. Now, however, *tikkun olam* has been completely flipped on its head, and is used in many liberal Jewish circles as a means of describing the Jewish promise to pursue social change.

However, these same social justice movements have now proven themselves to be enemies of the state of Israel, and pose serious threats to American Jews through explicit calls for violence. When Jews believe they must have an unadulterated allegiance to social action, they cite *tikkun olam* to justify their support of Jew-hating groups, and then believe they are doing the moral thing while simultaneously being true to their Jewish identities. In reality, neither is the case.

This issue does not have one simple cause; rather, it is multifaceted and has various contributing factors. The most blunt one being that, by all

metrics, American Jews either are not prioritizing Judaism or simply aren't steeped in our traditions. In a recent study done by Pew Research Center, only 27 percent of American Jews said that their Jewish ethnicity was a key aspect of their identity. This statistic is not surprising, especially since intermarriage rates continue to increase annually, and Jewish couples have, on average, less and less children. When we abandon the core of our community—the family—we effectively disown our traditional values.

“When we abandon the core of our community—the family—we effectively disown our traditional values.”

Without prioritization of the Jewish family, there is nobody to pass on the traditions and values of the Jewish faith to future generations. Therefore, the younger generation grows up in the dark, learning little about the importance of their Jewish identity and therefore not knowing enough about their Judaism to prioritize it in the social movements they choose to join or in the way they choose to vote.

Another key reason why American Jews don't mirror our tradition is the fact that the community has turned our backs on religion as a whole. The same Pew Research study reports that only a quarter of Jewish American adults believe in the biblical God, and just 12 percent claim that they attend weekly religious services. The especially shocking aspect of this figure is that each of these numbers are less than half of the ones reported by the average American. Maimonides' primary and most important principle of Jewish faith is "Belief in the existence of the Creator, who is perfect in every manner of existence and is the Primary Cause of all that exists." The Rambam clearly expresses that if nothing else, a Jew must believe in Hashem as the one true God. We have, however, strayed away from that key belief which unifies us. Without belief in the Jewish God, we lose a lot of the meaning that

makes us a people. Without religion, there is no reason for Jews to attach any real value to our Jewish identity. If being Jewish is relegated to lighting candles on Hanukkah, not eating pork, and a Birthright trip to Israel, then Jewish values, beliefs, and traditions will be gradually discarded.

Historically, Jews have stood up for fellow minorities in America when they've faced injustice, since the Jewish people know the hardships of persecution. Jews fought alongside the civil-rights movement, famously partaking in Dr. Martin Luther King's March on Washington. In return, Dr. King was a great friend to the Jewish people, and a

Zionist; rather, these groups pointedly turn a blind eye to anti-Semitism as a whole. BLM, MeToo, and the majority of social justice movements have yet to condemn any of the anti-Semitic attacks occurring globally, and have been completely silent on matters such as the pogroms in Amsterdam and the murder of American Paul Kessler by a professor and pro-Palestinian activist.

Many American Jews are so committed to joining the fight for social justice that they utterly disregard the call for actions to be taken against Jews and the Jewish state by these organizations, and continue to support them, especially with their



staunch supporter of the state of Israel.

Unfortunately, the social justice movements of today do not mirror the sentiments of Dr. King. Yet some Jews still march with and support the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, even after one of the group's branches posted an image of a Hamas paraglider with the caption "I stand with Palestine," and announced that Hamas's "resistance must not be condemned but understood," in the days following Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel.

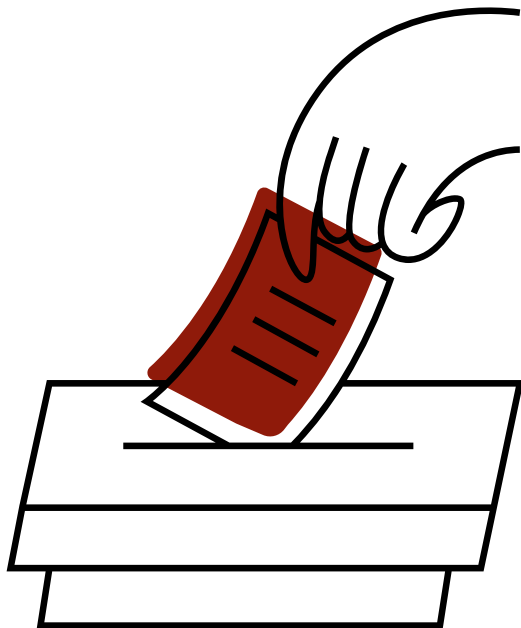
These grassroots movements aren't just anti-

votes. According to a 2020 Pew Research Center survey of American Jews, just over half of American Jews (51 percent) identify as liberal, while 32 percent identify as moderates and 16 percent identify as conservatives. This is despite the notable contradiction that arises in aligning ourselves with the very radical social justice movements that have taken over progressive, and often liberal, institutions, which openly abhor our homeland and our values.

Fortunately, the tides are shifting, and there is

still hope for American Jewry. Jews from all backgrounds have increasingly begun to value the protection of Israel, and the new age of American Jews is the most committed generation to religion and Jewish identity since WWII. According to the same Pew Research Center study, the youngest generation of American Jews is the most likely to be orthodox. While it is important to note that this generation also has the greatest number of unaffiliated Jews, who are much more likely to oppose Israel and join groups like Jewish Voice for Peace and Jews for Ceasefire, those in the age group who are religiously affiliated are very connected to Israel and value its protection more than past generations.

Although it is regrettable that it took the greatest attack on our people since the Holocaust for many to realize the importance of the Jewish state, it testifies to the true reason why Israel exists: to ensure the sovereignty and safety of the Jewish people, a guarantee they cannot receive anywhere else in the world.



As a solution, Jews should stop supporting people who detest us and our values, and instead turn to where we are truly appreciated and accepted. There are many politicians, on both sides of the political aisle, who are sympathetic to the American Jewish plight and stand up for Israel.

For example, former and future President Trump’s nominee to be Ambassador to the United Nations, Elise Stefanik, bravely called out the hypocrisy of the Ivy League universities and their treatment of Jewish students on campus, playing a significant role in the resignations of the presidents of Penn, Harvard, and Columbia. Moreover, Democratic Representative Ritchie Torres has been a proud and outspoken advocate for Israel while also calling out the radical sect of the Democratic Party that has been alienating Jewish voters. The issue is not that there aren’t enough candidates who embody Jewish values, but rather that American Jews don’t always support those who do.

The paradox of a people voting against their own values is one embedded in American Jewry today. The politically traditional roots of Judaism clash harshly with the modern progressive movement that has overtaken significant institutions and assumptions of the Jewish community in the United States. It is undeniable that wherever Jews decide to direct our energy, allyship, and votes, the future of our people will be affected significantly. American Jews should feel empowered by our tradition and our teachings to align ourselves wisely.

“It is undeniable that wherever Jews decide to direct our energy, allyship, and votes, the future of our people will be affected significantly. American Jews should feel empowered by our tradition and our teachings to align ourselves wisely.”



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Reviving the American Dream

BY SARAH SIEGEL

For generations, the United States of America has stood as a beacon of hope and prosperity for those fleeing their homelands in search of a better life. The American Dream, as first articulated by James Truslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America*, symbolized the aspirations of a land where anyone could strive for a better life through hard work and perseverance. Today, however, this dream seems increasingly distant as a sense of entitlement, identity politics, and the erosion of traditional values threaten the foundations on which the country was built. If allowed to continue its current course, this shift not only jeopardizes the American Dream but may lead to destruction of all that makes the United States of America exceptional.

With traditional, stable family structures in decline, the American Dream fades alongside them. A recent Pew Research Center study explored this trend, revealing that only about 50 percent of adults

in the U.S. today are married, down from 69 percent in 1970. Similarly, birth rates have fallen sharply, from 24 births per 1,000 people in the 1950s to just 12 per 1,000 people today. These declining rates directly correlate with the weakening of the American Dream. Sociologist Andrew Cherlin examines the rise of failing marriages in his book *The Marriage-Go-Round*. He believes that Americans hold two contradictory views of marriage: they place high value on the institution itself, while also deeply valuing individual freedom. This tension contributes to the growing rate of marital breakdowns and the resulting decline of the nuclear family.

Historically, the American Dream was built on the idea that hard work and family stability could lead to success, embodied by the countless immigrants whose strong family unit was central to their achievements. It is far more difficult to



navigate life's challenges, pursue higher education, and enter the workforce equipped for success for people born into families that don't provide them with solid support. This reflects a broader cultural trend that prioritizes personal freedom over familial commitment, ultimately undermining the values that once made the American Dream attainable for all.

Identity politics further exacerbates this trend by prioritizing collective identity over individual achievement. By categorizing people based on race, gender, sexuality, and other markers, this ideology fosters division. Politically, the divide has grown so stark that according to the Pew Research Center, 77 percent of Americans believe the country is more divided than ever, with the ideological gap between political parties wider than in decades. Instead of empowering individuals to overcome obstacles through personal efforts and responsibility, identity politics perpetuates the notion that success is determined by one's group identity and the perceived advantages or disadvantages that come with it.

This fundamentally contradicts the American Dream, which has always been rooted in the belief that success is earned through hard work, perseverance, and individual merit. America's founding principles—expressed in the Pledge of Allegiance with its call for “liberty, equality, and justice for all”—reinforce the idea that every citizen has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background. While identity politics claims to champion equality, it paradoxically hinders individuals from rising based on their abilities and efforts. Encouraging a culture of blame over personal accountability, and a culture of collective identity over individual success, it undermines the values that make the American Dream attainable and sought after.

Lastly, the explosion in growth of government programs has led many Americans to view themselves as being entitled to support without effort. A society once built on grit and labor has become one of frequent dependency and complacency. In *Losing Ground*, Charles A. Murray critiques the social policies and welfare programs introduced between the 1960s and early 1980s, particularly those aimed at reducing poverty

and inequality. He notes that while well-intentioned, the expansion of welfare programs inadvertently discouraged self-sufficiency and work ethic. Decades later, his warnings ring true.

Only 50 percent of children in America earn more than their parents—a stark departure from the upward mobility that once defined the American Dream. This does not reflect an inherent flaw in American culture, but rather that embedding welfare dependency into society has fundamentally altered our culture and by many metrics seems to be a devastating mistake. Nearly one in three Americans is enrolled in at least one government assistance program, according to statistics published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2023. As more and more individuals are told they are victims entitled to support rather than the creator of their own destiny, the self-reliance that was once the backbone of the American Dream is at risk.

The American Dream, once a symbol of hope and promise, is now teetering on the edge of irrelevance, dismissed by a culture that prioritizes entitlement, identity over individual responsibility, and the abandonment of traditional values. The survival of the American Dream demands a national awakening: a rejection of ideologies that fracture unity and stifle ambition. To restore the American Dream, we must reaffirm the values of grit, determination, and personal responsibility that once allowed anyone, regardless of background, to succeed. By rejecting entitlement, victimhood, and dependency, we can revive the spirit of the American Dream, ensuring that future generations can still achieve their aspirations through hard work and perseverance.

“ To restore the American Dream, we must reaffirm the values of grit, determination, and personal responsibility that once allowed anyone, regardless of background, to succeed. ”



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Five Pillars and the Link of Generations: A Different Mission to Israel in a Time of Chaos and Despair

BY CLAIRE AMBINDER KANNER

God created the heavens and the earth, and there was darkness and there was light...and we could choose.

So we journeyed to see the echoes of those who chose darkness, blinded by hatred, clothed in a cult of death; then we dwelled among those who chose light, with kindness, resilience, and faith, reminding us of the world that clings to life, hope, and the pursuit of happiness for all.

These are my memories of the worlds of darkness and light, which I encountered on the Intergenerational Tikvah Mission to Israel during the summer of 2024.

We arrived.

So much stillness, like time just stopped. Lives blasted away. Death and destruction frozen in time.

Burnt to a crisp, every car belonged to a human being...yet the demonic beasts left no remains, chiseling with their hatred all living cells into melted clumps of death.

How is this even possible?

Bullet holes everywhere, from the front to the back, they were making sure they didn't miss, making sure that every last Jewish soul they saw was annihilated.

Even ambulances were attacked, vehicles created to save lives.

Blown-up car, burnt car, melted car, bullet-ridden car, Hamas terrorist pickup truck...

These were my first impressions, if you can even call what I felt an "impression," upon arriving at the Tkuma car cemetery in the Gaza envelope.

This is where many of the vehicles desecrated at the hands of Hamas were stored by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), to clear the Route 232 highway for military use. However, eight months following the brutal massacre of October 7, this "storage" area had become a graveyard and memorial for those whose souls and unidentifiable remains were forever etched into the ashes



of these cars.

As I walked along the dusty desert floor, disturbed by the horror in front of my eyes, I asked myself, “Why?” Why preserve and display these terrible, tangible echoes of what they did to us on that wretched day? Why bother to show a white Hamas pickup truck, like the ones I had seen too many times in videos on my phone of terrorists driving to kidnap and murder innocent Israelis? Why not destroy it? Why continually remind ourselves of this?

Then, at our next stop, a flicker of hope lit up our journey as we began to hear the stories of a reunified *Am Israel*. I began to understand what being Jewish and being Israeli really means today.

Random people just came to that spot with home-cooked food to give to those injured on October 7, and it quickly turned into a huge meeting point for soldiers to relax, to eat, to feel comforted and at home.

Being there for each other no matter what because we know we are all we have...it's the junction of hope for what the future should be...of brotherhood...of love...of sacrifice. These soldiers are coming here for a few hours or days, until they have to go back into the strip of nightmares...not knowing if they will come back alive again.

I met a soldier there and spoke to him. He told me he had three kids, one was just bar mitzvah age. He smiled as he talked to me, but his face was empty. Blank stare. I could see it in his eyes, the pain, the fatigue.

I jotted down these thoughts after visiting the Shuva Brothers Junction. The rest stop was started by three brothers, Dror, Kobi, and Eliran Trabelsi, on October 7. Today, it has blossomed into the *Shuva Achim*, which translates to “Return of the Brothers,” a second home for soldiers coming in and out of Gaza. The operation is entirely based on donations and volunteers, giving love, a good meal, and basic items to any soldier who needs it—and many sorely do.

What struck me the most during my time at the Shuva Brothers was what the soldier I mentioned earlier did at the end of our short conversation. He grabbed a pair of olive colored camouflage *tzitzit*, perfectly matching his combat uniform. Out of the many things he could have taken from the supply shelves, he chose to grab a religious garment, one that serves as a physical reminder of the commandments in the Torah. A *tzitzit* is not a gun, or a helmet, or a vest. It cannot tangibly do much to help if a soldier is, God forbid, in a dangerous situation. This soldier also probably had many things on his mind, whether it be his family or his looming obligations in the army. Yet, he took the time out of his “break” to honor a tradition dating back thousands of years. While on the battlefield, facing the darkness of the present, he felt the need to wear the memories of the past

on his uniform. Here was a man, reminding himself of God’s commandments, of our heritage, and acting upon them even in the middle of fighting a war, with millions of other responsibilities. Why, out of everything he could have made time for, was he making sure he honored this commandment? Why remember?

Being at the site of the Nova Festival massacre was personally one of the hardest moments of our day in the Gaza envelope. I envisioned the party before 6:30 in the morning: beautiful people coming together to dance for peace. I felt uncomfortable walking over the desert ground, one that almost seemed sacred and holy. My sneakers were treading dust that had witnessed pure evil. Dust that carried the memories of those who were murdered, mutilated, kidnapped, traumatized, innocent. Images of the horrifying scenes that I had seen on the news flooded my mind. Faces and names all around me. Pictures and poppies for those whose lives were ripped away. Memorials for angels who were taken too soon.

Suddenly, a group of eighteen year olds in fatigues caught my eye. They were part of an IDF unit that had taken the time out of their day to come to the site of the massacre. October 7 was one of the greatest and most shameful intelligence and military failures in the history of the state; yet these soldiers were showing up to the place of the attacks, facing the truth of what happened—no matter how devastating and evil—and asking themselves what they must do to ensure it will never happen again. Their presence is a promise of “never again,” to both those who were not saved and those who survived and continue to live on.

The Tzahal soldiers were saying “this happened” just as we, Jewish people all over the world, have been echoing their words, their thoughts, their grief...not to victimize ourselves, but because we are trying to understand, desperately searching for a formula, a plan, a strategy to prevent a rerun.

Dr. Naya Lekht, a mentor and teacher of mine on the Arab-Israeli conflict, once introduced me to the concept of the “Five-Legged Table,” created by Avraham Infeld. This metaphor depicts the five pillars that uphold a strong Jewish identity: family, memory, Mount Sinai, the Land of Israel, and Hebrew. Infeld’s thesis is that when we fulfill these “legs” supporting the table of Jewishness, we become united with purpose.

From the very first day of the trip, I began to think of Infeld’s five-legged table, from the places we went to the people we met, and the values we chose to live by as we traveled home to our land in a time of great pain, but also of hope and miracles.

I began this piece by pulling from formative moments of our day in the Gaza envelope that kept coming back to the pillar of memory. Infeld explains this “leg” by

saying, “You can’t begin anything Jewish, you can’t build anything Jewish, you can’t do anything Jewish without calling on memory...how do you take the individual Jew, open his mind and help that person link their personal memory to the collective memory of the Jewish people?”

The power of *Am Israel* is our ability to take the tragedies we have faced, not necessarily personally, and turn them into lessons for the future. We are resilient, we acknowledge that we make mistakes, but we grow, we improve, we live. We are not defined by our “victimhood.”

Memory guides us, comforts us, strengthens us, and keeps us afloat on our journey as Jews in a world in which storms of anti-Semitism too often try to sink us to extinction. Memory is our compass; it is the precious treasure that keeps our hope and our faith alive in spite of...everything. We fortify our memory when we visit soldiers and memorial sites to pay respects to the victims of the October 7 massacre; when we honor biblical traditions that have been passed down for thousands of years; when we listen to, study for, and join political and strategic movements and trips like Tikvah’s mission, where every discussion, activity, and destination is tied not only to our past memory but also to the ones we are creating today.

The second pillar that sustains the Jewish people and that illuminated this summer’s Tikvah mission to Israel is family. In the Torah, we are not just described as Jews or Hebrews, but as *B’nei Yisrael*, or “Children of Israel.” Now more than ever, I, and a majority of Jewish people all over the world, understand how this concept connects to the very core of our being. The tragedy of the kidnapping of our hostages on October 7 has burnt into our souls one critical truth: that we are one nation, one family. Once strangers living thousands of miles away, we came to know the hostages as our brothers and sisters. Their names, their faces, their relatives and friends, and their stories will forever be ingrained in our minds and hearts. We share in their families’ pain and grief. We long for their return, for their freedom, and we cry out in desperate pain every day that passes by when thinking about their empty chairs at their families’ tables. We hurt for them, we shed tears for them, we pray for them. They have become a piece of our soul.

**“ We hurt for them, we shed tears
for them, we pray for them. They
have become a piece of our soul. ”**

Are there other nations whose people have continued to feel so deeply connected to each other and their ancestors across such distance for thousands of years? Why do we feel such a powerful, unbreakable attachment to each other? Where does this eternal bond come from? My answer would be collective memory: from the verses in our holy books, from our moral values and our continuous efforts to leave the world better than how we found it, to the shared traditions that tie us back to our homeland, and the countless stories of exile and persecution passed down from generation to generation, seared in our thoughts as lessons for the decisions we make in our time.

A man who embodied the pillar of family, one who was mentioned throughout the entire trip, like a guiding voice, was Menachem Begin. On the fourth day of the mission, we visited the Begin Center in Jerusalem in order to learn about the life and values of one of our greatest leaders. One lesson from his life that touched me was his insistence on unity, how we must never forget that we are all one big family. Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Mizrahi...it does not matter how much we differ and disagree...our enemies like Hamas want us all dead because we are Jews. However, when we come together, united in brotherhood, love, compassion, tolerance, respect, and understanding, our differences become the strength and power that will help us to defeat our foes and continue thriving as a nation when those who hate us today, just as those who tried to annihilate us in the past, will become a wretched footnote in history.

Menachem Begin made many decisions with the Jewish pillar of family in mind, such as the events surrounding the Altalena ship in 1948, when Begin refused to shoot back at the Palmach army even though he knew Ben Gurion wanted him gone. Begin fought so that all Jews could understand the importance of standing strong together in the face of those who wish to divide us. Even through his death, Begin managed to convey the message that we are all brothers and sisters, as he chose to be buried in a “simple Jewish funeral” on the Mount of Olives with his fellow Irgun members and not in Har Herzl with the other Prime Ministers.

We live in a moment in which we are all being tested, and where the pillar of family could not be more significant. The legacy of Menachem Begin must live on through us as we navigate these agonizing times. Unity is the only way to move forward towards achieving long-lasting peace for *Am Yisrael*, our people, and our family.

We encountered many Jewish leaders from the past as well as the present during the mission, and one who really touched me and who is currently changing the world for Jewish young adults outside of Israel is Fleur

Hassan-Nahoum. Just like Begin, she too understands the sacred relationship between memory and family, especially in today's world, where the echoes of the past could not be more searing. Fleur decided to create a program for Jews to receive their undergraduate education in Israel so that they would not have to be surrounded by the persecution they often face in the Diaspora. I have a deep admiration for the leadership, the risk-taking, and the innovation behind what she has put together. She is creating a beautiful solution to the vicious hatred of our foes—one that is built from the collective memories of the shared past that forever bind us.

Family was also at the very core of the 2024 Tikvah inaugural mission, as it was one of the first of its kind to host an intergenerational trip to Israel post-October 7. Mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, aunts and nieces, grandparents and grandchildren all journeyed together to bear witness.

Experiencing Israeli society in a time of war with my aunt Yvonne, who is like a second mother to me, brought me so much joy. Being able to have meaningful and raw conversations with her, from the deep sadness and horror I felt while in the South, to dissecting the difficult and pressing information we received each day, to just celebrating the fact that we were there, grateful to have been given a chance to go back to our home in a time of uncertainty, was a truly transcendent experience. My aunt shared her wisdom with me, but we also learned and understood together. We created new memories that I will forever cherish, and that have inspired me to keep discovering, asking questions, and fighting for our people in Israel, throughout the Diaspora, and in my own communities.

I absorbed many historical, political, strategic, and religious lessons during this trip. I witnessed with my own eyes the continuation of the miracle that is Israel



through the lens of a grieving, yet resilient, intelligent, and determined country. I have never been prouder to call myself a Jew, which comes with responsibility.

Family, memory, Mount Sinai, the Land of Israel, and Hebrew. Five foundations that make us who we are.

Through my observations on the mission, I realized how interconnected the first two legs are. Without collective and personal memory, we cannot understand the importance of the remaining four pillars. Yet, it is through family that memory stays alive. When we bridge the gap of the generations, and come together to learn, just as Tikvah has done this past summer, we win. Not necessarily just in physical war, but in the game of life.

“ When we bridge the gap of the generations, and come together to learn, just as Tikvah has done this past summer, we win. Not necessarily just in physical war, but in the game of life. ”

Our enemies want us to disappear, but that will never happen because we choose to live. We fight for our existence on the battlefield and at home. Parents must make sure their children are strong, courageous Jews who know where they come from and who are proud of the legacy they inherit. Maybe this intergenerational mission can be the start of a new kind of Israel experience, one that connects all generations, fulfilling every pillar that sustains our Jewish nation and strengthens each part of our identity.

May our table of Judaism always be sturdy, so that we can ensure the survival of our nation for generations to come.



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The Dichotomy of Modern Culture: A Nietzschean Perspective on Aesthetic Oscillations

BY RACHAEL KOPYLOV

Art permeates every aspect of our lives, from visual expression to music and fashion, it shapes and evolves alongside us as it reflects the human experience. The clothes we see on the runway and subsequently purchase, the graffiti we see on the streets, and the music we listen to on our way to work every morning are a reflection of society's psyche, showcasing the values and qualities of various communities. Today, we find ourselves in an era where society is relentlessly shifting between various artistic extremes.

Recent months have vividly illustrated this oscillation. This summer saw the rise of "Brat Summer," an aesthetic movement characterized by unapologetic boldness and a carefree attitude. The rejection of organization and convention gave way just weeks later to "Demure Fall," which is the opposite of "Brat Summer," with its simplicity, calm, and quiet luxury. "Demure Fall" and its rapid rise in popularity can be seen as a reaction to the overstimulation of summer trends. After weeks of disorder and boundary-pushing, "Demure Fall" promised a return to order and spoke to the universal desire for balance, serving as a collective reset and return to structure and restraint.

Such fluctuations in trends are not new. Numerous artistic movements have emerged as a reaction to social revolutions, geopolitical turmoil, or other, opposite, creative trends. Neoclassicism, a late eighteenth century fashion trend characterized by soft tones, lightweight fabrics, and classical motifs, was seen as a response to both the French Revolution, a time of immense political and societal turmoil, and the Rococo period, a clashing eighteenth century style that focused on asymmetry, ornate decoration, and frilly details.

Similarly, cultural trends in the 1930s, mostly influenced by the Great Depression, emphasized modesty and conservatism, a striking divergence from the dazzling "flapper girl" style of the Roaring Twenties. These drastic aesthetic shifts are not an

anomaly; they mirror the inherent human desire for balance, with each movement supplying what the previous had lacked.

Cultural movements do not exist in isolation; rather, they fuel the constant pendulum swing of aesthetics between chaos and order, maximalism and minimalism, rebellion and structure. This fluctuation between extremes is far from a contemporary cultural phenomenon; rather, it reflects a deeper tension that has shaped artistic



expression for centuries. In his debut work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, published in 1872, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche explores humanity's inclination towards dichotomy through the lens of ancient Greek art. He does so through dissecting two opposing forces—Apollo and Dionysus—which each play an indispensable role in art and culture.

Apollo is the Greek god of the sun, music, poetry, and healing. He symbolizes harmony, order, and individuality. Drawing from the ideas of German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, Nietzsche introduces the concept of *principium individuationis*, which, translated from Latin, means the principle of individuation. This idea is central to Nietzsche's understanding of Apollonian art and existence. It refers to the processes that enable individuality, or the boundaries that distinguish one

person from the chaotic, amorphous whole. Schopenhauer's definition of *principium individuationis* organizes life into distinct spaces, times, and events, creating the illusion of separation and individuality. He argues that the illusion of *principium individuationis* is what protects humanity from the “Will,” which is the source of all suffering. According to Schopenhauer, art—especially music—provides an escape from the ordinary, painful existence caused by the “Will.”

While Nietzsche agrees that *principium individuationis* makes us feel separate from others, he doesn't see it as something humanity needs to escape. Instead, he believes it's an important part of how we create and experience the world. Nietzsche adds that Apollonian art is the cultural and artistic expression of *principium individuationis*. Apollonian art seeks to bring structure to the chaotic nature of existence, producing an illusion of stability, uniqueness, and elegance. However, Nietzsche contends that it is only an illusion, because beneath the appearance of order lies the ever-present chaotic and primal forces of Dionysian existence.

As the Greek god of wine, madness, ecstasy, and savagery, Dionysus stands in stark contrast to Apollo. He is a paradox, representing celebration and freedom, but also violence and suffering. Nietzsche connects Dionysus to the concept of “primordial unity,” a state where all boundaries and distinctions between individuals dissolve. Much like Dionysus himself, primordial unity is inherently paradoxical, simultaneously merging pleasure with pain, and beauty with savagery. The Dionysian festivals in ancient Athens perfectly illustrated this, because they were gatherings at which women, slaves, and children participated alongside Athenian men, which was a temporary break in strict societal norms. All of Athens came together during these gatherings, often intoxicated, exposing the hidden primal chaos beneath the surface of orderly society. Nietzsche uses primordial unity to describe life's true depth, which lies beneath the structure of *principium individuationis*. While this unity can be overwhelming, it also reveals an essential truth: life is paradoxical, capable of holding two opposing forces—chaos and creation, joy and pain—in coexistence. For Nietzsche, primordial unity and the

Dionysian way of life are central to art, and indispensable to art in its greatest form. Without acknowledging this deeper, more tumultuous side of life, art would become mere decoration, lacking substance and meaning.

Although Nietzsche expresses a strong preference for Dionysian art in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he argues that true art requires a balance between both Dionysian and Apollonian forces. He asserts that since the time of Socrates and the playwright Euripides, society has increasingly favored the Apollonian principles of rationality and individuality, at the expense of the Dionysian. He attributes this shift to the death of art. The raw emotion of tragedy, which Nietzsche viewed as the highest form of Greek art, was diminished by the Socratic emphasis on reason that Euripides introduced to theater. Before the influence of Socrates and Euripides, Nietzsche saw Greek tragedy as the pinnacle of art because it balanced Apollonian and Dionysian elements. This balance allowed the paradox of existence to be expressed in a vivid, nearly tangible way, which enabled humanity to experience the beauty and order of life as well as the suffering and confusion that inevitably accompany it.

In the final chapters of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche connects the fall of Greek tragedy to the rise of rationalism in German culture, urging a return to the primordial unity and Dionysian principles in art that preserve the delicate balance crucial to its expression; however, in the modern world, Nietzsche's pleas go largely unheard. Today, he would likely be disappointed by the disparity between the different artistic movements like “Brat Summer,” which embodies Dionysian chaos and freedom, and “Demure Fall,” which upholds the Apollonian ideals of beauty, structure, and *principium individuationis*. This constant back-and-forth is reflective of society's struggle to find balance, shifting back and forth between extremes in search of equilibrium. Contemporary artists would be wise to revisit Nietzsche's teachings and create works of art that provide the balance that our society so desperately desires, fostering cultural movements capable of redefining and elevating human potential.



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Silent Strength: Art as a Vehicle for Healing and Defiance after October 7

BY RACHEL TRATT

The events of October 7 brought about a tragedy of an unimaginable scope, one that is ongoing to this day. Typically, new mediums emerge for dealing with the trauma accompanying this sort of tragedy. In the case of October 7 and the ongoing war in Israel, many are turning to art as a way to express themselves and convey a message to a wide audience. This art is not only beneficial to the artist, allowing the victims of Hamas's October 7 attack to healthily process their trauma, it is also beneficial to the viewer and contributes to societal healing.

Encountering any tragedy overwhelms the human brain. The Broca's area, which produces speech, and the Wernicke's area, which deals with language comprehension, become particularly overwhelmed. Such trauma can overload the brain, impairing speech and comprehension as the areas responsible for language processing become disrupted. When one tries to express their traumatic experiences, the emotional complexities induced by the event are suppressed by the barriers of human language. Thus, verbally conveying one's tragic story is not always the most effective method of relaying trauma.

Conversely, when the brain processes art, it directly engages the limbic system, the part of the brain that deals with emotion. Thus, art as a response to trauma avoids neurological overload and allows people to convey their unbridled emotions. Creating or experiencing art releases pleasure hormones like dopamine and oxytocin, providing one with emotional relief. Additionally, making art reduces cortisol, the stress hormone, promoting healing and understanding. This continues to be applicable to the survivors of Hamas's October 7 attack. While often overlooked, art is crucial for helping people endure the emotional upheaval this year has brought.

Some are recognizing the benefits of art to the process of healing. Upon entering the Tel Aviv

Museum of Art, one is met by the War Decorations exhibit, a temporary exhibit of paintings by Tal Mazliach, a resident of Kibbutz Kfar Aza who was surrounded by terrorists at her own home for over twenty hours on October 7. Her paintings successfully convey a message that doesn't require words—viewers can feel her pain just by looking at her art. The sense of restlessness she deliberately creates in her work is evident. She utilizes the repetition of embedded words like “rescued” and phrases such as “They are surrounding me from all sides.”

These embedded words and phrases work side by side with imagery such as self-portraits, weapons, and hands. The frantic emotions that Tal's pieces evoke highlight the significance of art in processing trauma. It is impossible to fully express the feeling of being trapped and surrounded by terrorists for hours upon hours. Human brains were not designed to convey or process this type of trauma. Extreme and large-scale violence can overwhelm the brain's ability to integrate and make sense of such overwhelming experiences, frequently resulting in emotional numbing or dissociation. After experiencing this inhumane form of torture, the most a person can do is attempt to express how they feel.

While a viewer or listener will seldom be able to fully understand an artist's pain, they can gain a much better understanding when their limbic system is engaged, thereby skirting the confines of speech. Just as it is impossible to describe these events, it is impossible to describe the feeling Tal stimulates with her pieces. Her art expresses the inexpressible, allowing the audience to better understand what she has endured.

Not only does art play a crucial role in how people process and understand trauma, it also rejects the notion of victimhood, allowing individuals to maintain control and share their stories. Art is not only a response to trauma; it also

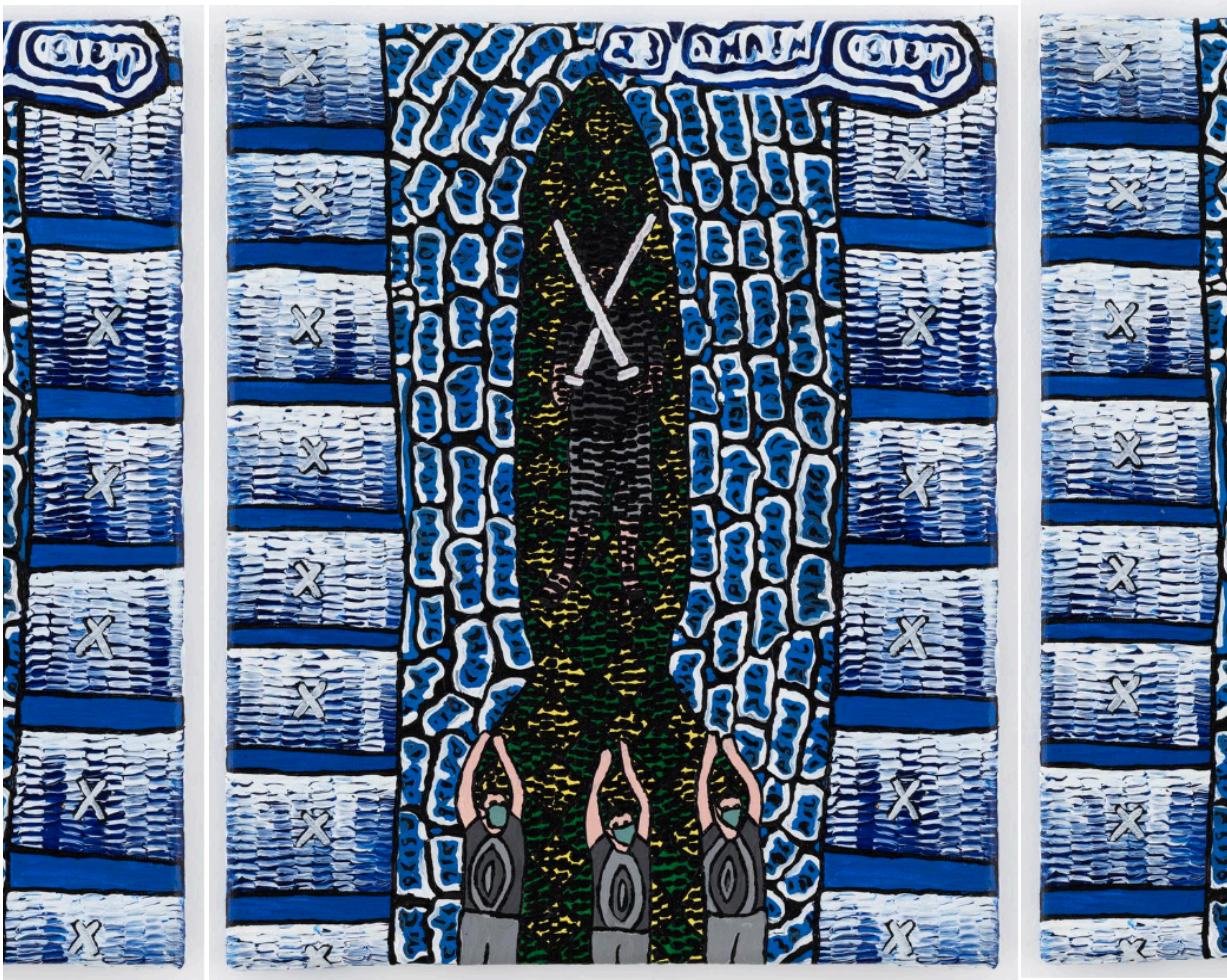
serves as a form of defiance. When an artist creates art as a response to trauma, the artist reclaims their autonomy, refusing to be silent. Like Tal Mazliach, artists can assert agency through sharing their stories with the world.

After October 7, it has become especially important to utilize every available method to combat the false narratives that are becoming more widespread and normalized worldwide. The overwhelming violence of October 7 aimed to rob individuals of their autonomy. But utilizing art allows these individuals to define their experience on their own terms. In Israel, artists who respond to the trauma of October 7 are not only processing personal grief but are also contributing to a broader communal dialogue, one that is extremely relevant and ongoing.

Tal Mazliach is just one of many talented artists who have chosen to make art depicting and processing the horrors of October 7. Films, paintings, photography collections, songs, sculptures, and exhibitions have also been created in response. While art is often neglected and deemed superficial, in the case of Israel and the tragedy of October 7, its importance is evident. The creation of art allows the artist to process their emotions and experiences, helps the viewer gain a deeper understanding of their pain, and contributes to society as a rejection of victimhood. In the face of unspeakable tragedy, it is key to examine and promote the art that comes as a result of it.



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A Modern Exodus

BY SONIA SCHACHTER

The biblical book of Exodus is a well known story. It recounts the story of the Jews brought out of Egypt with the mighty hand of God, the Egyptians defeated at the Red Sea, and the children of Israel wandering in the desert before finally entering their homeland after 40 long years. The novel *Exodus*, written by Leon Uris, is a story with underlying themes reminiscent of the biblical Exodus. The novel takes place after World War II and follows a group of members of the Haganah (the largest Jewish underground organization, whose goal was to smuggle Jewish immigrants into Palestine in defiance of British restrictions) as they run from the horrors of the Holocaust and work towards the eternal Jewish dream: creating a state for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel.

The story weaves together the lives and struggles of a wide variety of characters. At the beginning of the novel, we meet Kitty Fremont and Ari Ben Caanan. Kitty is a Christian nurse from America who, after the war, ends up in Cyprus. Ari is a soldier from the Palmach, a group of Jews from Mandatory Palestine (present Israel) working to bring Jews to their homeland. Readers are also introduced to Dov and Karen, two teenagers who meet at a Jewish Displaced Persons (DP) Camp. Dov survived the terrors of the Warsaw ghetto and the Auschwitz concentration camp. Karen had been taken as a child to wait out the war with a Danish family; she ended up in Cyprus after a failed attempt to enter Palestine. The four meet in a British DP Camp and create an escape plan. What follows is a gripping story of determination and action as our heroes make their way to Palestine, set up new *kibbutzim*, and prepare for war against the surrounding Arab nations who are intent on destroying all the Jews living in

Palestine.

Throughout the novel, Kitty Fremont faces a difficult struggle. She is filled with vast admiration for Karen's strength of character and wishes to adopt her. But this would mean following Karen to Palestine, a place Kitty has been hesitant to visit because of her unease regarding Jews. Kitty feels intimidated in the presence of Jews and does not really know their motives and values, which makes her nervous. Nevertheless, Kitty's fondness for Karen is too great to resist, and Kitty takes a leap of faith, joining the escape to Palestine. But even with this successful flight from Cyprus, Kitty's struggle is far from over. Kitty is a strong American woman. She loves her country and does not wish to part from it, and she is particularly afraid that her values and way of life will change if she remains in the Jewish homeland for too long. Kitty observes the women in Palestine, how strong and fit they are,



but also how they act in contrast to Kitty's sense of traditional femininity. She worries about the effect this new culture will have on herself, and on Karen. Kitty fears that staying in Palestine will bind them too deeply to the land, so she is determined to leave with Karen.

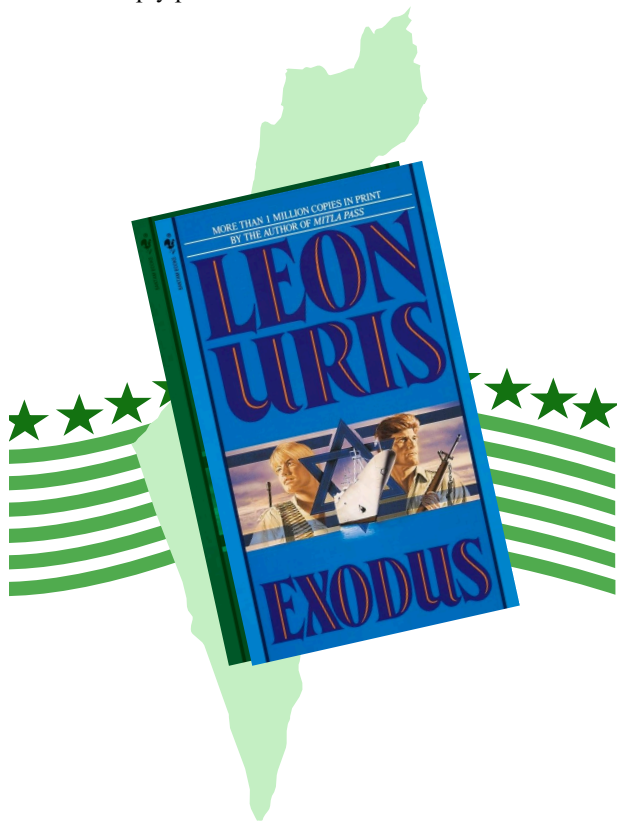
Yet later on Kitty begins to feel a different attachment. She begins to feel the beauty of Palestine, witnesses the resilience of the Jews, and feels an urge to contribute to the Jewish cause. She becomes trapped in limbo, unsure of which path to take. On the one hand, she has started to feel the grandeur of the land, but on the other hand Kitty does not want to lose her American heritage.

Though our situations are very different, the struggle that Kitty faces is one I relate to, and I assume many young American Jews relate to as well. I am a proud Jew and Zionist, and I am eager to visit Israel to help my beloved nation. I also have many relatives and friends who live in Israel, and I would love to be there with them, especially following the events of October 7. However, I am also a deeply proud American and wish to follow in

the footsteps of great American leaders, which almost certainly requires remaining in my country of birth. Though it is possible to take lessons from American leaders and American values and apply them to any situation, anywhere, leaving feels like a betrayal to the issues that need to be solved in this country. Like Kitty, I struggle with finding the balance between these two longings. The tasks of strengthening the state of Israel and America are both relevant and important, and I worry that choosing one means letting the other down.

After following Kitty and her challenge, I learned a valuable lesson. Kitty struggles to choose between America and Palestine. In the end of the novel, she sees that she is needed in Palestine and decides to stay, but the possibility of returning to America lingers in her mind. We often think that we need an immediate solution to a problem. The natural human response in this situation is to change locations, thinking it will provide an immediate fix. But Uris's novel teaches us that this is not always the best solution; we can understand our purpose in our current location and choose to remain, even while believing we should be somewhere else.

“ We can understand our purpose in our current location and choose to remain, even while believing we should be somewhere else. ”



Sonia Schachter is a senior at Hillel Academy of Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Beseeching

BY SAMUEL FIELDS

We're crying,
But He's not listening

The days pass by
The months go on

But still no response

How much are we expected to do
We are but dust and ashes

Heed our call
Be our shepherd amongst the chaos

From the depths we call out to You
Yet Your back is turned

Look at the vast destruction and terror
Save Your people from complete and utter peril

Only You above instill justice and peace
So go forth
Complete Your task
If only it wasn't so much to ask

Where were you
When the clouds covered the sky
And the rain of fire came down
Where were you
When the innocent birds stopped singing

Illuminate the world with your righteousness
Show us how you can be the Rock with no flaw
That is what we beseech you



Samuel Fields is a junior at Ocean Township High School in Ocean Township, New Jersey.

Home

BY RITA SETTON

I walk along the winding cobblestone roads of my forefathers,
Absorbing the sights and sounds of my beloved, ancient town.
The angelic, tinkling laughter of the children cascades through the Old City as they frolic about,
Chasing each other through alleyways and jumping over crates.
Vendors and shoppers haggle over the prices of dates dipped in honey and ruby red
pomegranates,
In the tongue of a nation of warriors of both the fine pen and the iron sword.
The faithful flock to the Western Wall for the afternoon prayer,
Singing the sacred words in tunes sustained through the afflictions of time.
I walk along the streets of my city,
And I know that I am home.

I walk along the banks of the Dead Sea,
Breathing in the bracing, salty air that caresses my skin and lifts my hair.
The warm frothy waves lick at my feet,
And the sunlight gleams on the shimmering, cyan blue of the ocean.
I feel its warmth embrace me,
And the wind seems to whisper like a lover,
“Darling, you are home.”

From the Golan Heights to the coast of Eilat,
From the bustling banks of Jaffa to the hills of Hebron,
Dwells a chosen nation
In a Promised Land.
When the bright sun rises over Tel Aviv;
When the air seems to reveal the mystical enigmas of the world as it blows through Safed; When
Hatikvah plays and reminds us of the hope we held on to for two millennia;
We know that we are home.



Rita Setton is a junior at Yeshiva of Flatbush in Brooklyn, New York.

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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