

JULY 2024 | SIVAN- TAMUZ 5784





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Why the pro-Hamas demonstrations are different and more dangerous



Ben Cohen, a senior analyst with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, writes a weekly column for JNS on Jewish affairs and Middle Eastern politics.





"It is this movement," according to a British report on political extremism, "that has proven most willing to use law breaking, intimidation, and at times, violence."



A pro-Palestinian protest in London, a week after Hamas murdered 1,200 people in southern Israel and took more than 250 others hostage into the Gaza Strip, on Oct. 14, 2023. *Credit: Alisdare Hickson/Flickr via Wikimedia Commons.*

Over the last eight months, Jewish communities around the world have been both intimidated and repulsed by the surge in pro-Hamas demonstrations.

We've all seen the signs and heard the slogans variously telling us to "return" to Poland, that Zionism is the root of all the evil and cruelty in the world, that Israel has no right to exist, that Jews cry "antisemitism" to divert public attention from Palestinian suffering and Israel's alleged crimes. We've pretty much gotten used to our schools, synagogues, restaurants and community centers being targeted by protesters, to seeing stickers and posters damning Israel's so-called "genocide" as we walk to the subway or the grocery store, to hearing the endless drumbeat of media pundits rounding on the Jewish state and its leaders. We hold up our hands resignedly at the indifference of these protesters to the real

genocides that are taking place right now in Ukraine, Congo, Sudan, Burma/Myanmar, China's Xinjiang province and so many other countries. We feel, in short, that the world is against us.

Much as it might feel that way, we aren't alone. The apologists for rape and murder who clog up our city streets every weekend or vandalize our university campuses with pro-Hamas encampments—and notice, by the way, how the plight of Palestinians in Gaza has been utterly overshadowed by the insistence of this mob in portraying itself as the victim of police brutality and "Zionist" influence!—have managed to alienate and irritate large swathes of the general public. Imagine paying a six-figure sum to have your children educated at university, only to have that precious graduating ceremony wrecked by the boorish chanting of "Free Palestine," "From the River to the Sea" and all the other anti-Jewish chants the protesters recycle endlessly. That's been the experience of too many American parents over the last few weeks.

Since the Hamas atrocities in southern Israel on Oct. 7, each day has been akin to a wrestling match with the principle of free speech attributed (wrongly, by the way) to the French Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire: "I disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." Free speech essentially means giving bad speech a pass on the grounds of individual conscience. That is not a principle that any democracy can compromise on because doing so sets us on the path to becoming Russia, China, Iran or any other authoritarian state where words are regulated and restricted.

Yet the challenge with the pro-Hamas protests is that they can't be reduced to free speech or peaceful rallies alone. The violence that lies at the heart of Hamas's program has been duplicated by its followers in the West. And that should worry us, not least because there is a historical precedent as well.Much as it might feel that way, we aren't alone. The apologists for rape and murder who clog up our city streets every weekend or vandalize our university campuses with pro-Hamas encampments—and notice, by the way, how the plight of Palestinians in Gaza has been utterly overshadowed by the insistence of this mob in portraying itself as the victim of police brutality and "Zionist" influence!—have managed to alienate and irritate large swathes of the general public. Imagine paying a six-figure sum to have your children educated at university, only to have that precious graduating ceremony wrecked by the boorish chanting of "Free Palestine," "From the River to the Sea" and all the other anti-Jewish chants the protesters recycle endlessly. That's been the experience of too many American parents over the last few weeks.

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In the wake of the global student uprisings of May 1968 and their consequent failure, many activists on the far left turned to political violence as a response. Arguably, the most well-known example emerged in Germany, where the Red Army Faction (RAF)-more commonly known as the "Baader Meinhof Group" after its founders, Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof—threw in its lot with radical Palestinian groups like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The wannabe urban guerillas of the RAF traveled to Lebanon, where they were trained by Palestinians in the use of weapons, as well as the planning and execution of terrorist operations.

In 1976, a joint RAF-PFLP operation resulted in the hijacking of an Air France flight from Tel Aviv, which was diverted to Entebbe Airport in Uganda, where the hostages enjoyed the dubious protection of the then-dictator of that country, the mass murderer Idi Amin. During the ordeal, the terrorists—like good Nazis—separated the Israeli passengers from the non-Israeli ones. Once again, the order *"Jews to the left!"* was heard, only three decades after the liberation of German Nazi concentration camps. As is well known, the passengers were rescued in a daring operation mounted by the Israel Defense Forces; otherwise, there would likely have been a massacre described, much as Oct. 7 is now, as the worst act of violence targeting Jews since the end of World War II.

There is a justifiable fear that such violence, zeroing in upon defenseless Jews, could once again rear its head. Last week, the British government's adviser on political extremism, John Woodcock, issued a report that examined the prospects for the aggressive rhetoric found in the furthest corners of far-left and far-right movements to mushroom into actual violence. The report observed that "activism around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stands out as being a focus of incitement and intimidation, as well as the use of law breaking by some activists. There is a distinction here between mainstream campaigners who primarily focus on promoting the Palestinian cause through legal means and those that focus their activism on hostility towards Israel." The latter group is riddled with antisemitism, which is "often presented in connection with anti-capitalist conspiracy theories, such as the antisemitic trope of Jewish bankers controlling the globe."

"It is this movement," the report continued, "that has proven most willing to use law breaking, intimidation, and at times, violence." Much of Woodcock's analysis focused on the activities of a group called Palestine Action-a collective of anticapitalists and anarchists who have engaged in "direct action" targeting Israeli companies with interests in the United Kingdom. As Woodcock noted, Palestine Action has devoted its efforts to Elbit Systems UK. a subsidiary of the Israeli defense technology firm Elbit Systems, vandalizing its offices, intimidating its employees, and preventing Elbit from fulfilling its contracts with the United Kingdom's Ministry of Defense.

The specific targeting of Elbit has now evolved into more general targeting of Israeli interests and the British Jewish community. "Small groups of extreme activists sabotaging businesses with whom they disagree not only create a climate of intimidation for private companies and their staff, but they also have a detrimental effect on local economies and employment opportunities," Woodcock's report added.

In such circumstances, a ban on such groups-not because of their words but because of their actions—is entirely justified. The pro-Hamas movement has, as Woodcock argues, adopted violence as a tactic, but then seeks to hide its use of violence behind the protections of free speech. This is an approach, as the sneering social-media response to Woodcock's report indicates, that carries a great deal of traction among progressives. But whether it's Europe or the United States, violence and the advocacy of violence are quite separate from free speech. As the various pro-Hamas groups, like Within Our Lifetime in America, careen towards a Baader Meinhof-like outcome, our laws need to stay one step ahead. And that begins with the acknowledgment of a basic truth: These are not peaceful demonstrators, and this isn't about freedom of speech.



Ulrike Meinhof, a German journalist and member of the RAF (Red Army Faction). Credit: Private photo from the Meinhof Family via Wikimedia Commons.

JEWISH HERITAGE

A Muslim Country that honours its Jewish Heritage



A synagogue in Sefrou, Morocco, decorated in Islamic style (Deborah Stone).

THE JEWISH INDEPENDENT

BY DEBORAH STONE

Deborah Stone is Editor-in-Chief of TJI. She has more than 30 years experience as a journalist and editor, including as a reporter and feature writer on The Age and The Sunday Age, as Editor of the Australian Jewish News and as Editor of ArtsHub.

Morocco is a place where East meets West, Arab meets Amazigh, Jew meets Muslim, the baguette meets the tagine, and the stork meets the satellite dish.

Leaving the tiny synagogue of Rabbi Chaim Pinto in the Moroccan town of Essaouira, Melbourne Jewish educator Paul Forgasz bumped his head on a low beam.

When he sat down to nurse the bruise, a Muslim woman in traditional dress approached and placed her hand on his head, giving him a Jewish blessing to heal through the merit of the righteousness of the long-dead rabbi.

It was a quintessentially Moroccan moment.

The woman at the Pinto synagogue is part of a Muslim family that has cared for the synagogue and the Jewish cemetery for generations. She is just one example of a long tradition of close relationships and respectful coexistence that seem almost idyllic in the current global climate of interfaith tension.

I recently joined a tour led by Forgasz exploring Morocco's Jewish history. It was a fascinating and remarkably uplifting experience.

Morocco offers what Arthur Miller called "*a view from the bridge*". It is a place where East meets West, Arab meets Amazigh, Jew meets Muslim, the baguette meets the tagine, and the stork meets the satellite dish.

In the old city of Marrakech, a door is marked with both the scar of a mezuzah and shape of a hamsa, which Muslims call the Hand of Fatima. The double signifiers are evidence of a house where Muslims and Jews lived together.

The two communities lived peaceably – not always, but often, for about 1700 years.



Pinto synagogue in Essaouira, Morocco.

Muslim rule did not offer equality until very recently but it gave Jews far more protection and freedom than they experienced in Christian Europe.

Morocco is a place you can see geometric Islamic tile art developed for mosques reproduced in synagogues – uncannily appropriate because both religions reject representative art in religious contexts.

It is a country where there is an Arabic newspaper with a French name (Le Matin) that still includes the Jewish date in its masthead.

It is a place where, despite Nazi pressure, not a single Jew was sent to the death camps, because when the Vichy government demanded Jews, King Mohammed V responded that there were "no Moroccan Jews or Moroccan Muslims, only Moroccan citizens".

A once-great community

There are only about 5,000 Jews in Morocco today, but they are the remnant of a large and important Jewish community. The first in various Arab-Israel peace processes and the normalisation of relations with Israel in 2020.



Al Quaraouiyine, where Maimonides once studied, claims to be the world's olderst university.

Casablanca hosts the only Jewish Museum in the Arab world – run by a Muslim director with a passion for Jewish history. The exhibits include a Torah where the decorations are carved in a traditional Amazigh design.

Many ordinary Moroccans are nostalgic about the Jewish presence and its contribution to the culture. The University of Ifrane, south of Fez, has a Jewish culture club with an enthusiastic list of Muslim members.

Why here?

Painted on a wall in Sefrou, home of Morocco's oldest Jewish community, is a phrase which explains much of Morocco's distinctive culture of co-existence.

"Morocco is a tree whose roots lie in Africa and whose leaves are in Europe," reads the quote from King Hassan II, father of the current king.

As the closest point in Africa to Europe, the country has been squabbled over by the Indigenous Amazigh and invading Arabs, the Spanish, Portuguese, English and French. (The Amazigh reject the term **'Berber'**, an outsider label related to the word **"barbarian**".) It was the refuge for thousands of Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal, developing two largely separate Jewish communities – the Toshvim or settled Jews with their strong links to the Amazigh and Arab communities, and the Sephardi Mgorashim or migrant Jews.

Visiting the surprisingly lavish Jewish club in Casablanca, you can run your eye down the committee list at the Jewish country club and see the history in the names: Chokrouns and Alfassis with their Arabic roots, Toledanos and Castellanos betraying Spanish origins.

Some aspects of Moroccan Judaism feel unfamiliar and even shocking. I was stunned to see graves in Essaouira with representations of human figures, a taboo in both Jewish and Islamic contexts. Forgasz says such images are rare but occur in certain Sephardic communities who brought the influences of Christian imagery when they fled Europe.



Torah decorations in the style of traditional Indigenous Moroccan art.

It was hard too to get my head around the veneration of holy rabbis, imbued with miraculous healing powers. In Essaouira, diaspora Moroccans make pilgrimages to Rabbi Pinto's grave and have recently funded a lavish memorial room dripping with carved



Sefrou wall.

stucco and a glistening chandelier. It feels more like a ballroom than a modest Jewish grave and the idea that visiting it would heal the sick seems more the stuff of Catholic saints' graves than Jewish cemeteries to me.

Forgasz points out that such veneration occurs in Eastern Europe too – think of the Chasidim who make pilgrimages to the grave of Rabbi Nachman in Ukraine.

But mostly Jewish Morocco has an uncanny familiarity beneath these foreign surfaces: the same Hebrew texts on the walls, the same Torah in the ark, the same mikvah down the tiny winding stair in the abandoned Jewish quarter.

We visited the cemetery at Essaouira on Yom Hazikaron, Israel's Remembrance Day, and recited kaddish, echoing the words that generations of Jews have said in this place.

Most Moroccan Jews no longer live in Morocco, but they retain a strong attachment to the country and the specific type of Jewish culture it produced. Moroccan Judaism persists, most strongly in Israel but also in France and Canada, where significant communities live.

In Israel, Mimouna is celebrated enthusiastically, preserving a custom which started when Moroccan Muslims laid on a feast of Pesach-forbidden foods for their Jewish neighbours after the festival.

Moroccan Jews return to visit too, whether as pilgrims or to show their children the treasures of a place where their people flourished for generations.

"You get a sense that Jews who lived here have a second exile. They have a real longing for this place," Forgasz said.

Paul Forgasz will run another Jewish history tour of Morocco in November. For details, contact him on paul.forgasz@monash.edu.

All photographs: Deborah Stone



Memorial for Rabbi Yehuda ibn Atar in Casablanca



Memorial built recently for Rabbi Chaim Pinto in Essaouira

POINT OF VIEW

After 76 years of Israeli independence, Jews must still be Zionists



Jonathan S. Tobin is editor-in-chief of JNS (Jewish News Syndicate). Follow him @jonathans_tobin.

SHALOM MAGAZINE | JULY 2024

As the post-Oct. 7 pro-Hamas protests and resulting surge of antisemitism have shown, it is the idea of a Jewish state that's under attack, not Israel's policies or actions.

Amid the celebrations of Israel's 50th birthday in 1998, there began to be talk of the Jewish state entering into a post-Zionist era. To many Israelis as well as Jews in the Diaspora, the idea of Zionism or identifying as a Zionist seemed irrelevant to the realities of a country that was, for all of its challenges, a firmly established reality. The very term seemed to conjure up a bygone period when advocacy for the right of Jews to sovereignty in their ancient homeland was a heroic struggle against the odds.

On the eve of the 21st century, Israel had not only won its independence but also several wars in its first decades after its Arab neighbors unsuccessfully sought its extinction. Egypt and Jordan had signed peace agreements, and many believed that despite the abundant evidence to the contrary, the Oslo Accords would succeed and end the conflict with the Palestinian Arabs, too. The Zionist movement may have made it all possible. But it had—in the opinion of many—become a vestigial relic that had no relevance to life in a Hebrewspeaking state that had taken its place among the nations of the global community.

Or so many of us thought.

Fast-forward 26 years later, and despite wars, terrorism and the collapse of that peace process, as well as ongoing political and cultural divisions, it can be argued that the permanence of what had come into existence in 1948 is even more obvious than it was when the term *"post-Zionist"* first started being thrown around. It's a nation of 9 million people with a First World economy; a military that makes it a regional superpower; and, barring a nuclear cataclysm or some other black swan event, can no more be wished out of existence than any other established country.



Seeking Israel's destruction

But as we've seen in the seven months since the Oct. 7 massacres perpetrated by Palestinian terrorists in southern Israel—and the subsequent surge in antisemitism and pro-Hamas demonstrations throughout the globe—the debate about Zionism isn't over.

No better example of this could be found than in the controversy over the appearance of an Israeli singer this past weekend at the Eurovision Song Contest in Malmö, Sweden. Eurovision is a remarkably silly annual global television show. It is generally only worth noting because of its enormous popularity and the way it serves as a barometer of how low the standards of what is considered good in popular music and entertainment can sink. But this year, it became one more battleground for the movement that seeks the elimination of Israel.

In this case, the focus of their ire was the appearance of Israel's contestant, 20-yearold Eden Golan. Israeli singers have been a fixture in the contest since 1973 and have won it four times. But opponents of the Jewish state, who claimed to be acting out of sympathy for the Palestinians who they believe shouldn't suffer any consequences for the war they started on Oct. 7, thought Golan should be excluded. Their loud protests forced her to hold up in a hotel room throughout the competition, besieged by those chanting for her country's destruction and the slaughter of its population. But contrary to their expectations (and the booing from members in the audience), she was allowed to compete, did well and went on to make the finals, finishing fifth even after winning a plurality of votes from European viewers.

The protesters, who came not only from Malmö's large Muslim sector (reportedly as much as 20% of the city's population) but also from leftist elites—like the worldfamous environmentalist troll Greta Thunberg—were not merely expressing concern for Palestinians acting as human shields for Hamas. As Thunberg said at a pre-Eurovision protest in Stockholm, her goal is to *"crush Zionism."*

That's the same kind of rhetoric we've been hearing on American college campuses in the past seven months. Supposedly educated young people have been indoctrinated in woke ideologies that falsely label Israel as a "white" oppressor and a "settler/colonial state" that has no right to exist. Yet the conflict with the Palestinians isn't racial. Jews are the indigenous people of that country, and Zionism is their national liberation movement whose triumph was one of the greatest acts of decolonization. But to the intersectional mindset that links underdogs together worldwide, Zionism is racism, and Israel should be wiped off the map.

So, just when many, if not most Israelis were ready to treat Zionism as merely an exhibit in a history museum, the idea of a Jewish state is more relevant than ever in the battle to defend an Israel that, for all of its amazing achievements, is still under siege.

An idea that is integral to Judaism

To take a deep dive into the history of the movement, its leaders and its thinkers, is to see how in the half century before May 1948, the Jewish people sought to take their destiny into their own hands. The basic elements of Zionism—the indissoluble link between the Jewish people and their homeland, and the right of all Jews to live, build and defend themselves in a sovereign state there—are baked deep into Judaism's rituals, prayers and core beliefs. But for a variety of reasons, support for Zionism wasn't unanimous. Some religious Jews believed that only the coming of the Messiah should bring a return to Jewish statehood. Socialists didn't believe in nation-states and thought a European revolution would bring safety and rights to all people, making a Jewish state unnecessary. Some Jews in the free countries of the West wished to strip ethnicity from their Jewish identity



Austro-Hungarian journalist and founder of modernday Zionism Theodor Herzl. Source: YouTube.

and feared that they would lose their rights if a Jewish state were created. And some American Jews thought they had found Zion in a secular republic in the New World.

Throughout the last two millennia, Jews had always been a presence in the land that the Romans named **"Palestine"** in a failed bid to erase them from history. Zionism was also grounded in Jewish rights, not the Holocaust. The post-World War I peace agreements that created the Mandate for Palestine to facilitate the creation of a home for the Jews also grounded it in international law.

Still, Zionist thinkers like Theodor Herzl and, a generation later, Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky were right to prophesize that Jews were living in perpetual peril in Europe.

A new debate about Zionism

The antisemitism of the Soviet Union and the reality of the Nazi Holocaust destroyed the illusions of the Socialists (or at least should have), as well as convinced Western Jews that there was no alternative to a Jewish state. And once Israel came into existence, those who feared it for secular or religious reasons generally made their peace with it. Today, there is a new anti-Zionist movement among the Jews that gets disproportionate coverage in the corporate press, yet represents only a minority of non-Israeli Jews. Unlike past opponents of Zionism, it doesn't oppose Israel's existence because they have a better idea to protect Jews. Rather, these Jews who belong to groups like IfNotNow and Jewish Voice for Peace exalt Jewish powerlessness and twist Jewish beliefs into a creed that believes Jews alone of the peoples of the world ought not to have the right of self-determination or the power to defend themselves.

It is no accident that they also traffic in antisemitic blood libels, such as the claim that Israel trains American police to murder African-Americans. As the reaction to Oct. 7 has shown, these Jewish anti-Zionists may be loud and have strong support from the mainstream media, but they have nothing to do with normative Jewish values and represent only themselves.

Yet the battle over Zionism isn't merely this faint echo of past Jewish squabbles. Today, anti-Zionism is a main plank of leftist activists, whether they are environmental extremists like Thunberg (who want the world to give up air travel, the right to own cars, as well as to eat meat or cheese); Black Lives Matter activists in the United States who smear America as an irredeemably racist nation; or the LGBTQ+ community that sees Palestinians as fellow victims, even though unlike Israel but in most Arab countries, they would be in danger because of their lifestyle.

Another variant of antisemitism

They claim to speak for human rights but have little interest in any conflict or alleged humanitarian crisis unless it can be blamed on the Jews. Like intellectuals of the early 20th century who blazed the trail for the acceptance of Nazism, they claim to be moved by the suffering of victims of war but have a curious blind spot when those victims are Jews. The plight of the hostages or those who were slaughtered in the orgy of rape, murder, torture, kidnapping and wanton



Revisionist Zionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky (bottom right) meeting with Beitar leaders in Warsaw, circa 1939. Future Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin is on the left in the first row. Source: National Photo Collection of Israel

destruction committed by Hamas and Palestinians on Oct. 7 move them not at all.

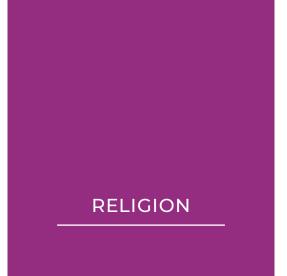
Their nurturing of Palestinian fantasies of Israel's destruction is helping to doom the supposed objects of their sympathy to a future of more war. terrorism and destruction. The fact that their reaction to Hamas barbarism was not merely to oppose Israel's justified war to eliminate a genocidal terrorist group, but to vow to "crush Zionism" and erase it from "the river to the sea." remains proof that it is not so much an intersectional human-rights cause as it is just a new variant on the same old tropes of antisemitism. They aren't merely criticizing an Israeli government's policies or actions. Their problem is with the fact that there is one Jewish state on the planet.

They seem to believe the Jews are the only people on the planet whose right to selfdetermination deserves no respect. While they reject accusations of antisemitism, what else can you call those who discriminate against Jews and judge them by a standard they would never apply to any other people?

Jew-haters are now recirculating tropes that Soviet propagandists first issued a halfcentury ago to label Zionism as racism. The only rational reaction to this is for Israelis and Jews wherever they live to embrace not just the label of Zionist but the ideas behind it. Zionism recognizes age-old ties between a people and their land, and at its core is a fundamental expression of Jewish rights. Zionism has created a nation that for all of its flaws and frailties is a unique experiment in the ingathering of a people in a democratic state. In the last 76 years, Zionist Jews have worked miracles not just in surviving wars waged by enemies bent on their elimination but also in a society capable of enormous economic, technological and cultural achievements. It should be celebrated not reviled—and people of good will, whether Jewish or not, should know that by embracing it, they are identifying themselves with among the most just causes and most amazing stories in modern history.

Israelis are still mourning their dead since Oct. 7 while they battle Hamas and work for the safe return of the remaining hostages held captive in Gaza. But they are also celebrating a nation that needs no permission from any foreign power to exist and, false accusations of antisemites about "genocide" notwithstanding, whose conduct under excruciating circumstances has been exemplary by any standard.

Zionism isn't dead. Nor will it be defeated by Hamas and its leftist enablers in the streets of Malmö or on North American college campuses. It is very much alive, and on Yom Ha'atzmaut—Israel's 76th Independence Day—every Jew with a conscience and sense of self-respect should be proudly calling themselves Zionists.



When they ask about... the 10 commandments



THE JEWISH INDEPENDENT

BY SIDRA KRANZ MOSHINSKY

Sidra Kranz Moshinsky is a writer, researcher and educational leader. Having taught and led in Jewish education for over fifteen years at a number of schools. She is now working on projects across the community, including the Jewish Museum of Australia. Sidra is also a board member of Stand Up Australia: Jewish commitment to a better world

It's not just about cheesecake. Shavuot is a festival that prompts questions about the beliefs and laws at the core of a Jewish life.

Shavuot today is associated in many people's minds with cheesecake, baskets of flowers, and an image of the 10 commandments inscribed on two tablets.

The first two are simple and joyous ways of celebrating. The latter gives rise to many questions about what we believe.

Why these 10 commandments? Are they really more important than the other 603 in the Torah? What happened on Mt Sinai and what can the stories of that momentous event teach today's children?

In ancient times, Shavuot was a harvest festival, one of the three pilgrim festivals when the people of Israel brought offerings to the Temple in Jerusalem. Shavuot means "weeks" and refers to the seven weeks between Pesach and Shavuot during which each day is counted, blessed and correlated with the ripening of barley. It is also known Chag hakatzir, meaning "festival of the harvest".

As Judaism moved from being largely landbased to largely text-based, the festival gained another moniker Zman matan Torateinu, "*the time of the giving our Torah*".

The linking of Shavuot with the 10 commandments and revelation of Torah is anchored in calculations that determine it was exactly 49 days from the time the people of Israel left Egypt until their arrival at the foot of Mt Sinai. On the morning of the 50th day, the Jewish people received the text that gave them their distinctive identity, becoming a nation bound to God and one another through the renewed and extended covenant.

Exactly what was transmitted at Sinai goes to the heart of Judaism itself. Was it the 10 commandments only? Or the five books of Moses that form the Torah scroll? Or all of the written Torah and Oral Torah, even though the latter would only come to light centuries later?

It is clear that there is an elevated sanctity and centrality to the 10 commandments. According to the narrative, Moses stayed up on the mountain for 40 days and nights engraving them, emerging bathed in light and with a miraculous strength that enabled him to hold the two stone tablets in his arms.



Chagall, Moses Receives the Ten Commandments

These 10 precepts convey the essence of Judaism, including fidelity to the one God who created the universe and redeemed us from Egypt; an insistence of God's incorporeality; remembering Shabbat; honouring parents; denouncing murder, theft and wrong speech, and an injunction not to covet what is not yours, a somewhat different inclusion as its focus is on a state of mind, rather than actions.

In Hebrew they are known as aseret hadibrot, which translates as the "10 utterances", a more accurate name as the first of the ten ("I am the God who took you out of Egypt") is a statement rather than a direct commandment.

Given their holy and historic origins, it is fitting that people would assume these ten are the pinnacle of the 613 mitzvot governing our actions and relations in the human and heavenly realms. During the time of the Temple, they were recited as part of the daily service.

Many synagogues today have a depiction of the two tablets above the ark containing the Torah. When they are read out in shul as part of the cyclic Torah reading, it is customary to stand at that moment, thereby collapsing time and showing once more our readiness to accept them and renew the covenant. Their status is certainly special.

But history made this status controversial. Early Christianity elevated the ten commandments, arguing that these were the only laws that were valid and relevant. In response, Jewish tradition downgraded their special status, asserting all the laws of the Torah are equally holy.

The reading of the 10 commandments were thus removed from daily services and have, with some exceptions, rarely featured since in public recitation.

So, is there a most important commandment and, if so, what is it?

The esteemed scholar Hillel taught that the most important precept of the Torah is not one of the 10 commandments. He nominated the commandment "Love your neighbour as yourself", which he rendered as "What is hateful to you, do not do to another".

The commandment to "Choose life that you may live" (Dvarim 30) and ethic of pikuach nefesh (to save a soul) requires that all mitzvot, bar three, should be broken in order to save a life. That teaching suggests that saving life is the most important commandment – perhaps with the exception of the strictures against the exceptional three: murder, sexual immorality and idolatry.

One particularly beautiful teaching about the 10 commandments is simultaneously illustrative of their holiness and their earthiness. When Moses descended from Sinai holding the two tablets, he was greeted by the Israelites dancing around the golden calf - the antithesis of the very teachings embodied in the ten commandments. Depending on interpretation, he smashed or dropped the tablets, shattering God's holy communication.

As sacred objects, these shards were not left in the wilderness, rather they were placed in the ark of the covenant under the second set of tablets and accompanied the people for the next 39 years of wandering.



Ark decoration with the 10 commandments from a US synagogue (Live auctioneers)



The University of Queensland,

a hate story

We're all experiencing first-hand the topsy-turvy, upside-down, inside out and back to front world we currently inhabit. A world where Hamas is supported by a liquorice all sorts of rebels without a cause. A parallel universe where Israel is deemed an apartheid state and the perpetrator of genocide –while pro-Palestinian social justice protestors chant the genocidal cry *"From the river to the sea"* and are calling to globalise the intifada.

It's perhaps therefore not surprising that the University of Queensland (UQ) too has fallen victim to the global pro-Palestinian encampment movement. Universities that not so long ago were bulwarks of robust debate and free speech have now regressed into cesspits that provide platforms for hate speech and, yes, even maniacal jihadist ideology.

Those among us privileged enough to have enjoyed a university education are keenly aware that the days spent at university extend far beyond acquiring higher knowledge. One's alma mater becomes part of the very fabric of one's identity; it makes us who we are and forms a lifelong association. For many Jewish and Israeli UQ students who have been harassed, suffered threats and intimidation, and have been made to feel unsafe and excluded from the university community for months now, and with their calls ignored by UQ, this legacy is now marred.

The real tragedy here is of course that many of the Israelis here in Australia have personally been deeply affected by the horrors of October 7. In contrast to the pro-Palestinian protesters who'd struggle to point out Gaza on a map or name from which river to which sea they so readily chant about.

With the chants growing louder and increasingly aggressive at UQ, a brave group of Jews and Israelis set up *"Camp Shalom"* on April 29, next to a pro-Palestinian encampment. They set out to counter the hate by creating a space of peace. After the Vice Chancellor requested all encampments be taken down, Camp Shalom immediately heeded the call on May 19. However, in pandering to those who can shout the loudest, UQ capitulated to the haters. Their encampment continued for over a week with protesters, emboldened by their defiance, subsequently scaling the roof of the university calling for intifada.

They have now decamped only because as they put it on their Instagram account "...during the uni break there is nothing much to disrupt..." On the same account they have already vowed to return next semester.



Events reached a climax on May 29, culminating in a Student General Meeting held inside one of the UQ halls overflowing into adjacent rooms as well as online, totalling around 1300 attendees with the following Items of Business:

(1) Should UQ sever ties with companies that supply the Israeli Defence Force?

(2) Should UQ shut down the Boeing Centre?

(3) Should UQ financially divest from Israel?

With only half a dozen Jewish/Israeli students present, Yonatan Mendels, a student at UQ, bravely stepped up to the podium to address a very hostile crowd. Conciliatory and compassionate, he made a cogent and eloquent case as to why the resolutions should not be adopted. Yonatan: "When the opportunity came for people to speak during the "debate", I stood up to emphasise how performative and unhelpful these gestures were to real outcomes. My message was about the need for constructive dialogue and the negative impact of the hateful rhetoric". Vastly outnumbered, unsurprisingly, the three points were adopted.

This ought to have been enough for the pro-Palestinian students and you'd expect them to be gracious in their victory. Instead one of their leaders jeered through a megaphone: *"We're not just up against the five lonely Zionist losers that were in our meeting..."*

At least we can take some comfort perhaps from the fact that these principled protesters will henceforth refuse to hop on a Boeing plane. Similarly, they will also stop using their Israeli technology packed phones, needless to say.

And just as Hamas has been rewarded by several countries recognising Palestinian statehood in recent days, UQ has cowered to the racist and hateful protesters and rewarded them in turn with greater transparency into its funding and increased the number of scholarships available to students from Gaza –all arriving on Airbus planes, of course. But, in a twist of irony, UQ has gone further still, in a *"Statement of Commitment between The University of Queensland, UQ Muslim Students for Palestine and The University of Queensland Union",* UQ has pledged to develop and publish *"an Anti-racism Commitment, to operate alongside the University's Diversity, Equity and Inclusive Behaviours Policy"*, instantly rendering such statements into somniferous twaddle.

Jew-hatred is nothing new. We can at least take heart and be thankful that brave people like Yonatan continue to have their voices heard and that those from Camp Shalom made their presence felt for three weeks amid a sea of hatred and hostility.

Name withheld on request



The Jewish National Fund (JNF) has been Building Israel since 1901.

The JNF of Australia is a prominent and trusted communal organisation celebrating over 120 years of life-changing, environmental and social welfare projects, and building communities in Israel all the while maintaining a tangible link between the Jewish People and Israel.

Today JNF Australia is working to ensure that the people of Israel who live in the underdeveloped periphery of the country, particularly in the Negev, have a brighter future and can also share in Israel's success story and ensure its ongoing sustainability.

JNF Australia is a separate entity and independent of JNF organisations in other countries, including in Israel.

However each JNF organisation wherever situated are linked, by a shared history, emotion and mission to further their mutual purposes and objectives for the people of Israel. As David Ben Gurion said, "JNF is an everlasting Jewish fund for the entire Jewish people. It lives and lasts not because of work well done in the past, but because of vital work in the present and, even more importantly, because of the great, important tasks still awaiting it in the future."

Every JNF project is a unique and wonderful way of identifying with Israel and its people and provides all of its supporters an opportunity to solidify their link with the people of Israel.

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Romy Dinte Planned Giving Manager JNF NSW

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Brisbane Jewish & Israeli Community Network Hub

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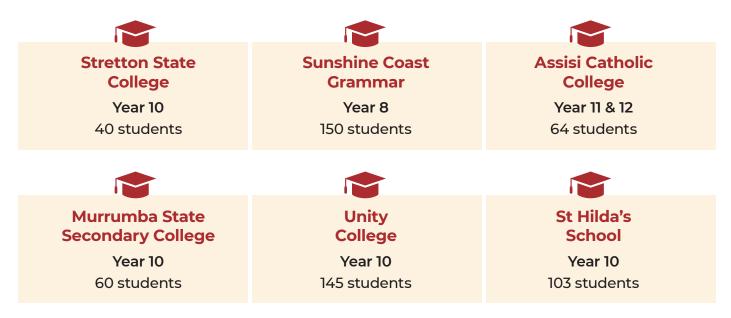
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The Courage to Care Program (C2C) aims to promote social harmony and reduce prejudice by using stories of rescue during the Holocaust, to inspire and empower students to be UPSTANDERS rather than bystanders when they witness discrimination.

As we came to the end of another school term, our Courage to Care Queensland team reflected on the impact our classroom program has had on the **876 students and 86 teachers** who experienced the program, at schools throughout SE Queensland including:



Students and teachers have the opportunity to complete a feedback survey upon completion of the program, and the vast majority of responses have been positive:

91.3%

of respondents have a **better understanding** of what it means to be an Upstander.

93%

of respondents said they **learned practical strategies** to be Upstanders. A.5 Respondents gave an overall rating of 4.5 stars to the Courage to Care program. Some responses from students and teachers this term:



"The information provided to students was invaluable and provided them with a great depth to their understanding. Being able to hear Peter's story and see and hear the impact it had on his life built empathy in students' understanding of the effects it had on not only the survivors but their families as well." Teacher,

Sunshine Coast Grammar

"It was special to hear Peter and "It was special to hear Peter and the volunteers from Courage to Care. "It was performed by put our studies into the volunteers from coursed work the story really put our studies into be performed his family during his by the true kindness of the people "Because I am often quiet and shy, I can't always voice my opinions to others, or stand up to people in a vocal format. Instead I will try to show support in other ways, like body language or words of support, because even small things can make a big difference." Year 8 Student, Sunshine Coast Grammar

"It is important to let people know that they are seen, and give a voice to those who may not have the confidence." Year 10 student, St Hilda's School





Survivor Peter Baruch with students at Sunshine Coast Grammar School.



Survivor Suzi Smeed answering student questions at Unity College.



Courage to Care team with teacher at Unity College: Delwyn Cameron, Debi Grossman, Survivor Suzi Smeed, Lee McNamee, Simone Collins, and teacher Sharna Raddatz.

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Jewish Help in Need Society of Queensland is a registered not-for-profit Charity which provides financial assistance in the form of no-interest loans to members of the Jewish Community in Queensland.

Interest free loans are available for those in dire financial need and assistance.

Confidentiality is respected at all times.

Contacts: Lee McNamee 0417 723 399 leemcnam@gmail.com

Peter Goldsmith 0409 765 394 pgldsmth@bigpond.net.au

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PLEASE HELP US LOCATE THOSE IN NEED





have passed since the Holocaust, an act of unimaginable evil and a continued stain on human history.

Although we can never forget and should constantly revisit this memory we can be proud that Judaism and Yiddishkeit has survived and continues to flourish today.



We remember all the survivors and although many have passed the few remaining provide us with an inspiration TO NEVER ALLOW THE SHOAH TO OCCUR AGAIN.

JCareQld is a charitable association that provides care to the **Queensland Jewish Community**



Particularly the elderly but also the young who need assistance.



PLEASE CONTACT

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If you of any survivor who is struggling in their old age, who needs support and care and who may not be aware of the existence and purpose of our organisation we would like to hear from you.

We can assist 🚓 🗄 🖗

with visits, transport, social contact, arranging medical help, liaison with Claims Conference, and some limited financial assistance.

Brisbane and Queensland JCareQld: Howard Posner Tel: 0424335969 • Email: Jcareqld@gmail.com

NCJWA Gold Coast / Gold Coast Jewish Community Services Inc. Barbara Stewart-Kann

Tel: 0412 377 488 • Email: bkann@bigpond.net.au



Reaching out to support members of the Jewish community in Queensland.



🧲 Coronavirus (Covid-19)







Mental Health 🛛 🦛 Family trauma

🧲 Disability assistance



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Our volunteers are also available to assist with transporting people with mobility issues to social events, shopping, and Shule.

If you think you might need our services, or know someone who might, please contact :



HOWARD POSNER : 0424 335 969 JCAREQLD EMAIL : Jcareqld@gmail.com JCAREQLD HELPLINE :1300 133 660





NCJWA Gold Coast - JEWISH CARE SOUTH-EAST QLD INC Barbara Stewart-Kann Tel: 0412 377 488 • Email: bkann@bigpond.net.au

Reaching out to support members of the Jewish community in Queensland.







THE JEWISH NATIONAL FUND OF QLD (JNF QLD)

has moved its office:

JNF QLD President David Jacobs Vice President Bruce Frey Office Manager Rebecca Frey The new contact details are:

Phone: 3392 9830

Mobile: 0412 578 368

Postal address: PO BOX 3015 Yeronga 4104

Email: jnfqld@jnf.org.au

If you have any queries or wish to discuss anything about JNF QLD please feel free to contact David Jacobs JNF QLD President on 0412 578 368





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for the person on call to assist you.

For other enquiries:

Graham Eshensky President M 0433 414 762 Bernie Goldman Treasurer M 0419 652 441 Paul Gould Vice President M 0422 638 663

Rabbi Levi Jaffe M 0419 136 451

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ORGANISATIONS

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| www.jnf.org.au | jnfqld@jnf.org.au |
| United Israel Appeal Qld | 07 3229 4462 |
| www.uiaaustralia.org.au | |
| State Zionist Council Qld | 07 3229 4462 |
| admin@szcqld.org | www.szcqld.org |
| Maccabi Qld | 0402 428 213 |
| Wizo Qld | 0417788 449 |
| Sylvia Lipski (President) | sylvialipski@gmail.com |
| Qld Jewish Board of Deputies | 0411 239 396 |
| www.jewishqld.com | |
| CSG 24 Hour Hotline | 1300 000 274 |
| BETAR Daniel Mendels | 0468 396 594 |
| www.betar.org.au | qld@betar.org.au |
| AUJS President - Carmi More | |
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| Australia Israel Chamber | 07 3847 0259 |
| of Commerce | brisbane@aicc.org.au |
| QAJEX | lorisr@hotmail.com |
| Qld Jewish Community Services | 0423 194 737 |
| JCare Qld | 1300 133 660 |
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| Lee McNamee 0417 723 399 Peter | Goldsmith 0409 765 394 |
| Courage to Care | 0427 380 235 |
| Kayla Szumer | kayla@couragetocare.com.au |
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| NCJWA GOLD COAST | 0412 377 488 |
| President: Barbara Stewart-Kann OAM | ncjwagoldcoast@gmail.com |
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| Gold Coast Hebrew Congregation | 07 5570 1851 |
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| Temple Shalom Gold Coast | 07 5570 1716 |
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| ALL COMMUNITY DIARY BOOKINGS | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| | calendar@qjbd.org | |
| GOLD COAST - REGULAR EVENTS | | |
| NCJWA Gold Coast | Monthly Meetings | |
| www.ncjwa.org.au | 7:30pm – 1st Monday of each month | |
| Barbara Stewart- Kann OAM | 0412 377 488 | |
| President | ncjwagoldcoast@gmail.com | |
| Temple Shalom | Office 07 5570 1716 | |
| Services | Erev Shabbat 6:00pm Shabbat Morning 10am | |
| | Oneg Shabbat 2nd Friday each month | |
| | following services | |
| | Seíudat Shabbat Last Shabbat each month follow- | |
| | ing Torah Service | |
| Gold Coast Hebrew Congregation | All enquiries call 07 5570 1851 | |
| Services | Friday Night Live | |
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| | Shabbat Kiddish | |
| | Following the service every Shabbat at 9am | |
| | Kabbala and Jewish Mysticism | |
| | Journey of the Soul, | |
| | Monday evening at 7:30pm | |
| | Talmud Classes | |
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