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**This is the Moral Earthquake**

*How must we respond to the danger posed by Israel’s extreme, ultranationalist government?
Walking away is not a moral choice.
Instead, we must summon courage, imagination and moral clarity.*

**Yom Kippur 5784 – September 25, 2023**

Something miraculous happened in this room, several years ago.

My friend Jami, a beloved member of our community, mother of four beautiful little children, was suffering from agonizing, inexplicable abdominal pain. For months, she tried to ignore it, but every day it grew worse. Until one shabbat morning, standing in the back of this room, Jami turned to her friend, Ellen—a deeply empathic soul—and shared what was going on. Ellen was concerned—she sensed this was serious. She urged Jami to see a doctor, immediately. She gave her the name and number of her gastroenterologist, and over the next few days, followed up with texts and calls to make sure Jami made the appointment.

Ellen’s insistence shook her. Jami finally dragged herself to the doctor, who took one look at her and ordered a full body scan. Within hours, the call came: get to the emergency room… *now*. Tests had revealed that while the pain issued from the abdomen, the real problem was a tumor wrapped around her spine. The doctors had never seen anything like it. They rushed her into surgery, where—to extract the tumor, they had to remove a nerve route, which could have left her experiencing pockets of numbness for the rest of her life. But Jami remembers the surgeon saying to her: *we’d rather take that risk than leave this here, where it will lead to total paralysis.*

The tumor was the size of a grapefruit. Jami is astonished by this detail… “Imagine you have something that big attacking your system,” she said, “and you don’t even really know it’s there, or fully understand the nature of it, until it almost kills you.”

Through a combination of the doctors’ ingenuity, God’s grace, and Jami’s iron will, she survived.

And that abdominal pain? It saved her life. It was the pain that awakened her to the existence of the tumor that could, God forbid, have taken her life.

I have returned to this story again and again during the tumultuous past decade—not only because my friend is a medical miracle, and I thank God that she is still with us.  But also because of the grace that landed her with a clinician who was willing to take a clear-eyed look at the patient before her, in order to discern the right diagnosis.

And now, once again, this story is at the forefront of my mind and heart as we enter today into a difficult conversation about Israel.

These are the first High Holy Days since the election, last January, of the most extreme, right-wing government in Israel’s history. This is a regime that boasts a brand of Jewish supremacy that is anathema to our post-Enlightenment self-understanding and profoundly threatening to Israel’s democracy. This Yom Kippur is also fifty years to the day from the start of the Yom Kippur War, when simultaneous surprise attacks posed an existential threat to the young State of Israel. Today, Israel's intelligence and security apparatus, and the Israeli street, sound a different alarm: the existential threat to the state of Israel is internal.[[1]](#footnote-1) The call is coming from inside the house.

To put it plainly: A few days ago, an Israeli elder stood in front of the Knesset holding a protest sign that read: *The scariest moment of my life was facing the Syrian Tank brigade in ‘73, plowing through our northern border in the Golan Heights…. Until today. What is happening today with this government is even scarier.*

For the past 38 weeks, Israelis of all ages, backgrounds, and socioeconomics have risen up in protest. This is the largest social protest movement in Israel’s history—far surpassing our own protest movements here in the US—a creative, courageous, consistent presence roughly equivalent to seventeen million Americans protesting week after week. There is no question that this is a moment of great collective awakening in the Israeli consciousness.

And what about us, American Jews? How are we to respond to the cataclysmic eruption in Israel, to the messaging from Israeli family and friends: *we need you. We need your help.* What is demanded of us in this time of moral crisis for the Jewish people?

In this season, we open our hearts to the work of *teshuvah*, reckoning and reconciliation, rooted in the deeply held promise that change and repair are possible*.*

It is the Slonimer Rebbe, a great 20th century Hasidic teacher, who offers a simple metaphor I find myself returning to, comparing the work of spiritual and emotional healing to the work of healing from physical illness. “One must take care,” he warns, “before prescribing a cure, to properly identify the nature of the illness… Some illnesses require nothing more than a few days of rest... Others require serious, invasive treatments… and some, life-threatening surgeries.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

This metaphor works on so many levels. As patients, we naturally dread a bad diagnosis, but we also accept that—as Jami’s story attests—healing is only possible if our ailments are properly diagnosed.

Telling the truth is, very simply, essential to healing. We must tell the truth about what is happening. Where we are and how we got here.

I’m speaking especially to those who, like me, see in Israel a miraculous national renaissance, we who celebrate the astonishing revival of the Hebrew language, who take great pride not only in the safe haven, but also in the start-up nation, the flourishing of Jewish art and ideas and culture, the rebirth of academies of Torah learning, the bounty and the promise, the beauty and the bravery, even, or especially, in the face of grave threats. The realization of the Jewish national liberation project.

It is especially *we* who must be honest about the ailment endangering the collective body. We must remember that minimizing or downplaying the illness does not help the patient. In fact, it could be fatal. Those most invested in the health and vitality of this patient need to invest in a fair and accurate diagnosis, even when it hurts to speak or hear the truth.

The emergence of this government, its relentless attacks on Jewish and democratic norms, the ruptures it has produced in Israeli society and throughout the Jewish world—all of this points to symptoms screaming to be diagnosed if there is to be a chance of effective treatment.

To do the work of *teshuvah*, it is imperative that we move beyond the platitudinous: “The protests are a reflection of Israel’s robust democracy.”

The primary driver of the protest movement on the street has been a rift over the nature of judicial power, *but that is not the essence of the ailment*. The threat facing Israel today was not born when the Prime Minister last year, fighting first and foremost to keep himself out of prison, signed a deal with the devil, bringing the most extreme actors into positions of power, including a person barred from compulsory service in the IDF after being convicted of supporting a terror organization and inciting racism.

No, there is a much deeper illness afflicting this body, which we as a Jewish community must finally be willing to accurately diagnose if there will ever be an effective intervention.

All diagnosticians must make tremendous effort to set aside our cognitive biases and see what is truly before us, rather than what our implicit bias orients us toward. But when we do, only then do we see that this government and its maximalist agenda are the natural outcome of a growing extremism in Israeli society, manifesting most egregiously in a half century of occupation. Fifty-six years of too many people allowing our own trauma and fear to justify the denial of basic rights, dignities and dreams for millions of Palestinian people living under Israeli rule. Decades of justifying an unjustifiable status quo as the only reasonable response to the failures and missteps of Palestinian leadership and the violence of Palestinian extremists.

Many of us have spent years trying not to look. We don’t know because we don’t want to know. Because the world is sometimes cruel and unfair to Jews, and yes—delivers to Israel disproportionate opprobrium among all the bad state actors. Because we don’t want to fuel antisemitism. Because accepting the reality of Palestinian suffering under Israeli rule means accepting that the Jewish people can be not only victims, but also be victimizers. It means that our great dream, this monumental national project, has come at the expense of another people’s aspirations, their safety and dignity, and even their lives.

But there, hidden in plain sight, is the toll of decades of occupation, the reality of life under a dual system of justice that renders Palestinians vulnerable to the whims of Israeli laws and forces, with no legal recourse when terrible things happen, and no hope. There stands Adel Abu Badawiyah. A terrible tragedy struck Adel’s family when the Israeli army, years ago, forcefully entered their home in Jenin. Adel’s little brother, Majed, was 5 years old. Terrified of the soldiers, he ran away. The last time his family saw him, little Majed was just by the door. But when the soldiers finally left, the family couldn’t find their boy. They searched for hours… until they finally discovered Majed’s body in a refrigerator. In his terror, he had hidden there to escape the soldiers, and he could not get out. He died there. No mercy. No accountability.

But if we’re honest, it is not only they, the Palestinians, who suffer from this ailment. In April, I watched the *Yom haZikaron*/ Memorial Day [ceremony](https://www.theparentscircle.org/en/pcff-activities_eng/memorial-ceremony_eng/) put together by the *Parents Circle* and *Combatants for Peace*, and wept as Adel shared the story of his little brother, and then was joined on stage by a parade of brokenhearted Palestinians and Israelis sharing the depths of their sorrow.

Yuval Sapir spoke, a professor at Tel Aviv University. His beloved sister, Tamar, had just gotten married in 1994 when a 26-year-old Palestinian man blew up the bus she was riding in downtown Tel Aviv. “Since she is gone,” he said, “a blackhole has opened up beside me, like the center of the galaxy that swallows up all the light and leaves only darkness and abyss,” he said. “My world collapsed in one fell swoop.”

Anat Marnin spoke—she was just a teenager when her two big brothers, Pinka and Yair Marnin, were killed in the Yom Kippur War. “I was 16 when my world fell apart,” she said. I cannot describe the depth of the wound. My family broke.”

But even as Adel, Yuval and Anat spoke, about their grief and their broken hearts, far-right hecklers shouted into bullhorns, blasted music, honked horns… anything to block out the words of these speakers. Think of it! An Israeli Jew stands up to share the story of her beloved brothers, who died protecting the state of Israel, and her voice is drowned out by Israeli protesters who find the notion of shared grief so threatening they’ll do anything they can to prevent the world from hearing her.

And so we see that it is not only Adel and his little brother who are imprisoned by this reality. Yuval and his beautiful sister, Anat and her big brothers, they, too, are locked in that prison of small ideas. Palestinians and Jews alike—those who have lost the most. They must stay silent… out of sight and out of mind, for the machinery of injustice to keep churning.

Listen: the righteous call of this protest movement is *democracy*—and that, we must support. But the careful diagnosis connects the dots between symptoms and root causes, and the fact is: *there can be no democracy with occupation*. A society that fails to honor the image of God among some, will ultimately undermine God’s image in all.

This government’s radical legislative agenda has landed the body on the examination table, and it would be a travesty to diagnose a life-threatening spinal tumor as indigestion. The proposed *judicial overhaul* may be the abdominal pain, but the *occupation*, the many decades of unjust policy and practice, is the grapefruit sized tumor wrapped around the spine of the nation. And cancer cells coursing though the body? That is homebred Jewish *ideological extremism*.

Consider the Jewish terrorists who burned down part of the Palestinian town of Huwara a few months ago, stopping only to *daven maariv*, to pray the evening service—an act so heinous it was deemed a “pogrom” by top Israeli generals,[[3]](#footnote-3) with full understanding of what that word evokes for Jews. What is becoming increasingly clear is that those responsible for the spike in violence in the West Bank are not lone-wolfactors, but represent, instead,a widespread, entrenched movement acting from within the government, a movement so dangerous that one former head of the Mossad now compares them to Klansmen in the United States.[[4]](#footnote-4)

How deep are we willing to go?

You may remember, after Charlottesville, when my friend, civil rights leader Eric Ward, lifted the white hood off the resurgent white nationalist movement, helping us understand the centrality of antisemitism in this dangerous movement to remake America as a white only, Judenrein haven for supremacists. Through his research, we began to understand just how dangerous those chants of “Jews will not replace us” really were. That was one year before the Shabbat morning massacre at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, when eleven Jews were murdered as they prayed by a person intoxicated by that very ideology.

Today, Israeli human rights advocates are similarly working to lift the veil and sound the alarm on the nature of the zealotry endangering the Jewish state. It is imperative that we hear them.

Yair Nehorai is one of those voices. A human rights attorney who grew up in the religious Zionist movement, Nehorai has closely analyzed the doctrine of the extremist rabbis who form the ideological backbone of this movement, especially those who preach and teach in state-funded, cornerstone pre-military academies. He argues that their thinking, once the stuff of the extreme margins, is increasingly mainstream, and in fact “undergirds the ideology of the primary legislative leadership in Israel today.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Theirs is a fight to advance a radical, messianic vision that—if successful—will result in a fascist theocracy. He warns that the danger of this revolution is not that it turns Israel into Poland or Hungary, but into Iran.

Adherents to this movement believe that the messianic age is upon us. Their objective is a Jewish State ruled by rabbis, with criminal sanctions against anyone who fails to observe Torah and mitzvot. This movement is proudly racist, believing that Jewish people are innately superior to all other races. They believe that they have a Biblical responsibility to conquer *eretz Yisrael hashleimah—*a maximalist, ahistoric conception of what’s known as *Greater Israel*—and to wipe out anyone who stands in their way, as the land was promised to them by God. They see any Israeli leader who gives up territory as a traitor who should be executed.

In this messianic fever dream, women must be fully subjugated to men, forced into traditional gender roles that essentially eliminate us from public life to protect against our innate inclination toward prostitution and promiscuity. Any public LGBTQ expression—which they see as a perversion and a disgrace—must be outlawed. Gentiles are to be treated as second class citizens, and all expressions of western culture—like literature and the arts—wiped clean, including democracy itself, for democratic principles, they claim, are fundamentally antithetical to Jewish values.

Remember that this is not the view of one radical actor. This is the collective voice and vision of the leadership of the movement that stepped into power in December, 2022. Theirs is a comprehensive messianic program, cultivated over decades, that has moved in the past nine months from a fringe movement in the illegal outpost equivalent of the dark corner of the internet, right into the halls of power in the Knesset in Jerusalem.

It's important to take a step back and acknowledge that the messianic idea is deeply rooted in our tradition. Some of you know the legend of the haunting melody to *Ani Ma’amin*, sung by many Jews as they marched to the gas chambers. It is said that the melody was written by a Jew in a cattle car on its way to Treblinka. A fellow prisoner who leapt off the moving train miraculously survived and shared the tune widely.

The melody is transfixing, but the words—drawn from Maimonides’s 13 Principles of Faith—are neither accidental nor incidental:

**אֲנִי מַאֲמִין** בֶּאֱמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה בְּבִיאַת הַמָּשִֽׁיחַ וְאַף עַל פִּי שֶׁיִּתְמַהְמֵֽהַּ עִם כָּל זֶה אֲחַכֶּה לּוֹ בְּכָל יוֹם שֶׁיָּבוֹא:

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. [[6]](#footnote-6)

In the context of Nazi genocide, Jewish messianism is not only logical—it is beautiful. It is the very embodiment of hope.

This version of messianism paired an age-old Jewish yearning for a world perfected, with the pain and trauma of Jewish existence. The messianic dream gave spiritual strength to our people through the darkest chapters. The worse things got, in Jewish history, the more feverish these yearnings grew.

But even as messianic yearning has been a part of our tradition for thousands of years, after the failure of the Bar Kochba Revolt in 132CE, the messianic idea for Jews largely became a passive aspiration, the stuff of song and prayer, not swords and guns.[[7]](#footnote-7) Until now. The marriage of messianic fervor to state power is a recipe for extreme violence, abuse of power, and ultimately, I fear, self-annihilation.

It gives me no joy to share this. But we cannot prescribe an effective cure until we understand the depth of the illness.

The danger we face is the existential threat of a messianic state, a state governed by a hardline, religious world view. As Andres Spokoiny wrote in a brilliant piece this past spring, as much as the “Jewish historical experience… should have vaccinated us against [the] illness [of extremism], *we are not genetically immune. We carry the recessive gene of extremism.”[[8]](#footnote-8)*

Without the most dramatic intervention, this is the disease that will ravage the body.

Of course, when we look honestly, we see that this threat did not emerge *ex nihilo*. Back in the 1980s, Amos Oz, beloved Israeli writer and public intellectual, warned that the occupation had already become a monster, one that excused and normalized sadistic acts of violence and revenge. He beseeched us to take this threat seriously.

“Let's remember,” he wrote, “this sect [of Jewish extremists] received the bullets, rifles and machine guns from the State of Israel. From *our* hands. Because the State of Israel did not understand that their ultimate goal is not to mow down Arabs, but rather to eliminate the State of Israel and establish in its place the unhinged, messianic Kingdom of Judah.”

“If we don't all rise up,” he warned, “hawks and doves, religious and secular, rabbis and legislators, and we don't call out sadism and pogrom, Judaism itself will be dragged to the depths of moral confusion and abject misery.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

But not enough people did rise up. Instead, successive administrations, both there and here, and generations of Jewish communal leaders, both here and there—whether from fear, from love or from ignorance—turned a blind eye to the growing threat. As if ignoring the disease ever helps the patient. And today, our beloved Israel—and, arguably, Judaism itself—is being dragged to the depths of moral confusion and abject misery, just as Oz had predicted.

“The hardest and worst of all,” the Slonimer Rebbe writes, “is when one needs to remove part of his foundational nature, to uproot the root of evil that dwells within.”

This really is the hardest and worst of all. What are we to do when we discover, through honest diagnosis, that the disease has been lurking in the system for decades, and has now metastasized?

Henry David Thoreau—a life-long abolitionist—wrestled with this question too. He went to Walden Pond because he desperately yearned to *wash his hands* of the slave state… only to realize that walking away does not stop an injustice from being perpetrated in one’s name.[[10]](#footnote-10)

In other words, abandoning Israel might feel righteous, but it is not a moral choice. Walking away does not help Adel, Yuval or Anat. It doesn’t actually help anyone. In fact, the suffering will likely be prolonged and perpetuated once people of conscience have disengaged.

But if we do not walk away, what path is left to us? There is only one choice:

In Thoreau’s words, “Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

Do not dismiss, disengage, downplay, or disregard the life-threatening illness. Instead, mobilize to treat it, even at great risk.

The establishment of the state of Israel was the most hopeful, definitive response to the slaughter of European Jewry. The Jewish community understood, as Herzl had before them, that Jewish safety was provisional in the diaspora, that we who had been marginalized, persecuted and even genocided would need to *defend ourselves*. And out of the ashes of Europe, from the depths of our trauma, our people midwifed a new reality: a sovereign state for the Jews that would serve not only as a refuge, but hold the promise for an empowered, vibrant, Jewish future, rooted in Jewish and democratic values. Jews in Israel did the heavy lifting and often paid with their lives, but Jews from around the world stepped forward. Our American Jewish communal organizations, our schools and shuls, our grandparents dedicated money, time, and resources, to the project of national Jewish liberation. Every room in every Hebrew school in New Jersey had a *tzedakah* box from the Jewish National Fund. This was the great collective project of the Jewish people.

What we must do now is summon the same urgency and fervency that our grandparents mustered to fight for Jewish liberation in order to counter Jewish extremism.

Is this the greatest threat facing our planet today? No. But it *is* the greatest threat facing the State of Israel and the Jewish people.

I was speaking with Jami the other day about the miracle of her survival from that tumor wrapped around her spine. We found ourselves most grateful, upon reflection, not only for the incredible doctors, but for Ellen, her persistent friend. “Probably in my gut I knew for years that something really wasn’t right,” Jami told me. “But it took a friend to say to me: ‘this is serious. You have to find out what’s really going on…’ for me to take the step that saved my life.”

We—American Jews—need to be real friends now. That does not mean firewalling, soft-pedaling or mincing words. It means speaking truthfully and publicly about the ailment endangering the life of this patient. We must be brave and clear in our condemnation of Jewish supremacy and messianism.

We need to draw red lines:

Say NO to occupation.
NO to annexation.

NO to fascism.
NO to Jewish terror.

And for those waiting to hear if I’ll now say: *No to an apartheid state*, let me be clear: Without a strong, independent Supreme Court able to check this government in the pursuit of its hardline agenda, it will be increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to defend Israel from this characterization.[[12]](#footnote-12) We must fight the conditions of apartheid with at least as much fervor as we do the designation.

Our American Jewish institutions must not offer scaffolding to the occupation or the messianic delusion. Many well-intentioned institutions and individuals on this side of the ocean are unwittingly funding, platforming, and supporting this extremism. These are good people, who don’t want to prop up an authoritative ethno-nationalist, theocratic regime. They don’t share the messianic, supremacist ideology. But whether from love or from fear, they have failed to honestly examine the body on the table.

That ends now. We must do the forensics on our *tzedakah*, refusing to support organizations and initiatives that strengthen the settlement enterprise. It means shifting philanthropic dollars away from institutions that are effectively sustaining an untenable status quo. We must refuse to strengthen the very extremists who demonstrate such profound contempt for our values.

Part of what makes this hard is that it’s not a theoretical diagnosis. It’s our beloved on the table—including Israeli family and friends, and our own diaspora Jewish community. But on this day of *heshbon ha-nefesh*, deep self-reflection, I beg us to recognize that if we’re not willing to do uncomfortable, difficult things, even—as the Slonimer Rebbe wrote: *potentially life-threatening treatments*—we are enabling the disease attacking this body. That we cannot abide.

After all those NOs… we need to step into the fray and say YES.

Yes to a true democracy.

Yes to shared society, with equal rights and dignities for Palestinians and Israelis.

Yes to a thriving, pluralistic Jewish culture.

Yes to women’s leadership.

Yes to LGBTQ liberation.

We must answer the call of Israeli civil society—those in the street protesting the extremism and those lifting up a counter-vision: a true, just, democratic society. We do this through supporting Israeli leaders and organizations on the front lines fighting for Israel’s future.

If you’ll indulge me one final metaphor: instead of planting trees in Israel, let our generation’s project be to plant democracy—supporting the [*New Israel Fund*](http://www.nif.org/), whose grantees work every day to protect the human rights of all people living in Israel and the West Bank.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Let us plant justice, through our support of human rights organizations like [*Association for Civil Rights in Israel*](https://www.english.acri.org.il/) and [*Yesh Din*](https://www.yesh-din.org/en/)*.*

Let’s plant feminism, bolstering Jewish and Palestinian women’s leadership through support of organizations like [*Women Against Violence*](http://www.wavo.org/) in Nazareth and [*Israel Women’s Network*](https://iwn.org.il/english/about-the-israel-womens-network/).

Let’s plant the seeds of shared society through support of [*Omdim b’Yahad/ Naqif Ma'an*](https://www.standing-together.org/en)*,* brave Israelis and Palestinians who remind us every day that *where there is struggle, there is still hope.*

The only force powerful enough to counter a torah of extremism is a torah of love. Let’s plant a torah of love, supporting [*Smol Emuni*](http://www.nif.org/), mobilizing left wing observant Jews, and [*Zion*](https://kbyonline.org/synagogues/zion-jerusalem) in Jerusalem, where Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum counters the annual violent rampage through the Old City on *Yom Yerushalayim* with public, multifaith prayers for peace.

The state of Israel has been the most important project of the Jewish people in modern times. What is happening today is very, very dangerous. But it’s not over.

Listen to Thoreau: *we dare not equivocate in the face of a moral earthquake*.[[14]](#footnote-14) This is the moral earthquake.

My college professor, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, insisted that “Messianism is not the only possible form of human hope.”[[15]](#footnote-15) What other hope is there? The hope of the speakers at the *Parents’ Circle Yom HaZikaron/* Memorial Day ceremony. There’s a reason the hecklers worked so hard to silence their voices. Because these speakers, and their supporters, have chosen not revenge, but love. Not despair, but hope. They have chosen to keep their loved ones’ memories and their own great dreams alive by spreading a message of honesty and accountability, peace and reconciliation. “From the depth of our sorrow,” one said, “we have found a deep desire to work together in order to show that there is another way. *Re’u otanu…* See us, we say, those who have paid the ultimate price. If we can say, *enough*, then all of you can join our call.”

Let us join the call. It’s time to bring the medicine of love and hope—a medicine so powerful it counters the force of extremism, and can be harnessed not only to heal, but also to build a vibrant Jewish future and a truly just society.

1. Tia Goldenberg, *Former leaders of Israel's security services are speaking out against Netanyahu's policies*, [Associated Press](https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/former-leaders-israels-security-services-speaking-netanyahus-policies-103143440#:~:text=%E2%80%9CWe%20were%20used%20to%20dealing,state%20of%20Israel%20is%20internal.%E2%80%9D), Sept 12, 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Netivot Shalom, *Teshuvah 1:4.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Yaniv Kubovitch, *Top Israeli General Dubs Settler Rampage 'Pogrom,' Claims Military Was Caught Off Guard*, [Haaretz](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-02-28/ty-article/.premium/israeli-army-chief-of-staff-vows-to-probe-settler-rampage-in-west-bank-town/00000186-980e-d172-a587-9d5ef8910000), Feb 28, 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Jonathan Shamir, *Ex-Mossad Chief Compares Israeli Right to the KKK*, [Haaretz](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-07-27/ty-article/.highlight/ex-mossad-chief-compares-israeli-right-to-the-kkk/00000189-96cf-d1ae-a38b-f7ef6b960000), July 27, 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This quote and the following are drawn from a private zoom with Yair Nehorai, Sept 2023, and his book, *The Third Revolution.* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Rambam on Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. One notable exception was the 17th century messianic movement around Shabbtai Tzvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Andres Spokoiny, [*The Second Temple’s Destruction Serves as a Warning for Today*](https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/the-second-temples-destruction-serves-as-a-warning-for-today/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Your%20Daily%20Phil%20July%2026%202023&utm_content=Your%20Daily%20Phil%20July%2026%202023+CID_18505fce59e0d5ff699ea07234d09238&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20software&utm_term=Read%20the%20full%20piece%20here), July 26, 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Prof. Fania Oz-Sulzberger, Oz’s daughter, shared this text over the summer. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, Thoreau writes that he searched in the ponds for the beauty in nature, but can find no serenity in the water. “Who can be serene in a country where both the rulers and the ruled are without principle? The remembrance of my country spoils my walk…” Henry David Thoreau, *Slavery in Massachusetts*, 1854. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*, 1849. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Last month Benjamin Pogrund, an Israeli journalist and leading South African anti-apartheid activist published a highly circulated piece: *For Decades, I Defended Israel from Claims of Apartheid*. *I No Longer Can*, August 15, 2023, [Haaretz](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-08-10/ty-article-opinion/.highlight/for-decades-i-defended-israel-from-claims-of-apartheid-i-no-longer-can/00000189-d4ac-d821-afdd-dfacb4060000)/ [News24](https://www.news24.com/news24/opinions/columnists/georgeclaassen/opinion-for-decades-i-defended-israel-from-claims-of-apartheid-i-no-longer-can-20230815). For the past two decades, Pogrund has argued vociferously against the accusation that Israel is an apartheid state. He now writes that his worst fears are being realized in the country: “Israel is going where South Africa was 75 years ago. It’s like watching the replay of a horror movie.” He concludes that “the rightwing government is taking the country into institutionalised discrimination and racism. This is apartheid.”

At the same time, Pogrund acknowledges that “South Africa under apartheid was straightforward: white vs black. [But] Israel is complex. The 21% Arab minority has the vote. Everyone pays the same national insurance and enjoys the same benefits - medical and social welfare. In the hospital, I, a Jew, share a room with Arabs and we are cared for by the same Jewish and Arab doctors and nurses. Everything is open: beaches, park benches, movies, theatres, restaurants.” And so he cautions against too strict a comparison. (This clarification/ warning was written in an addendum to Pogrund’s original piece.) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. I am including links to all the organizations mentioned below, but they can all be supported through earmarked contributions to the [New Israel Fund](http://www.nif.org/). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Henry David Thoreau, *Slavery in Massachusetts*, 1854. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Israel, the Unexpected State: Messianism, Sectarianism, & the Zionist Revolution,* 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)