

DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Issue No. 37, Spring 2022

POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND SCIENCE: WHAT JEWISH STUDENTS OF TODAY HAVE TO SAY



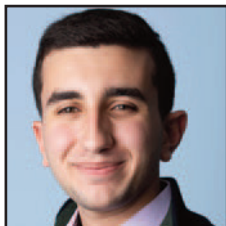
- Afghanistan, Israel
- Instagram disinformation, antisemitism
- UN, America and the far-left's Jewish problem
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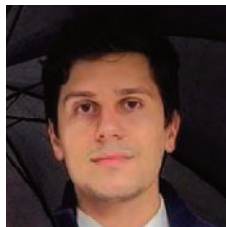
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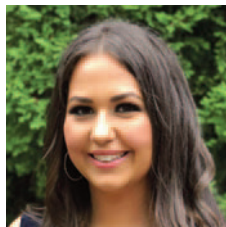
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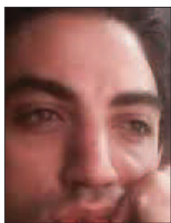
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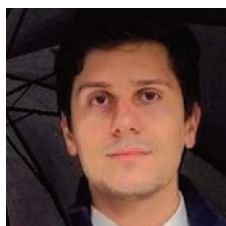
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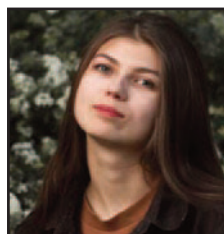
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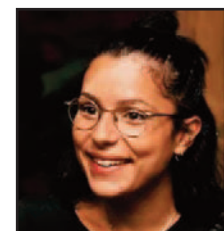
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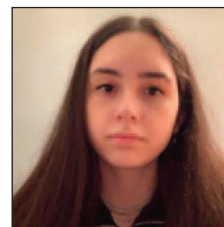
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EDITORIAL

JACQUES CHITAYAT

In much of the Western world, people's everyday and social lives remain in limbo. Across the globe, however, dramatic events continue to erupt. The Afghanistan fiasco, the May conflict between Israel and Hamas, and the accompanying surge in antisemitic attacks worldwide come to mind. But these are only the tip of the iceberg.

While we try to make sense of these unfolding events, *Dateline: Middle East* is, once again, fulfilling its mission of enabling Canadian Jewish students to express their concerns, analyze current events, and discuss myriad topics they feel passionately about, whether politics, Jewish philosophy, religion, and, of course, Covid. Readers will recognize familiar faces in this issue. However, the *CIJR* has also welcomed new student interns and contributors who provide added perspectives.

Kicking off *Dateline's* political segment is **Raphael Uzan's** exclusive in-

terview with Hillel Neuer. Neuer, executive director of *UN Watch* – and former *Dateline: Middle East* editor – steps beyond his usual role as one of Israel's leading advocates to discuss the sorry state of international human rights. In a candid exchange, Hillel elaborates on what global institutions such as the UN and human rights NGOs do – and don't do – to alleviate the plight of hundreds of thousands of victims worldwide and hold their abusers to account. Also, what pressures ordinary citizens can exert on their governments to stand up for individual freedoms and minority rights.

Moving on, the Democratic Party's so-called "support" for Israel is closely analyzed. In an in-depth analysis, I argue that the Democratic Party has drifted away from America's traditional friendship with Israel due to far-left influences within the party. The recent Israel-Hamas conflict, which put the Biden administration to the test, and its determination to renew the JCPOA, regardless of Israel's existential concerns, clearly demonstrated the Democratic Party's abandonment of Israel. I delve further into Biden's Iran strategy and the Democrats' passiveness faced with rising antisemitism within its realms and urge Jews, traditional Democratic Party voters, rethink who of the two parties is really a friend of Israel and Jewish communities worldwide. In a separate article, I explore the aftermath of the Biden administration's disastrous pullout from Afghanistan and its implications for the US, the

West, its enemies, and the global threat of radical Islam.

Toronto-born intern **Sophie Sklar** tackles the Hamas-Israel conflict from a media perspective, analyzing Instagram disinformation, a new and worrying online trend. She explains how online activists quickly spread lies about Israel through eye-catching and seemingly "factual" infographics. The ease and speed of sharing these disingenuous infographics contributed towards an eruption of disinformation about the Arab-Israeli conflict and Jews during the May 2020 Gaza War, and further rise in antisemitism globally. This new assault on Israel and Jews is not easy to combat; she argues for sustained efforts towards promulgating fact-faced online advocacy, reminding young advocates that the first step is to educate themselves about Israel and Jews.

Writing more personally, in her second article Sophie, a Baruch Cohen intern, exposes antisemitism and anti-Zionism at her alma mater Montreal's McGill University. Pro-Zionist voices, she claims, are intentionally silenced on-campus, often finding themselves excluded from debates of vital concern to them in favour of the "progressive" and Palestinian wings that comprise much of McGill's student body.

Long-time *CIJR* contributor and doctoral student **Bernard Bohbot** takes the systemic antisemitism of progressive left-wing ideology head-on. He exposes the hypocriti-

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I would like to thank my fellow CIJR members Professor Frederick Krantz and Machla Abramovitz who continually give our Editorial group (*Students for a Just Middle East Peace*) invaluable guidance in writing, research and journalism. Working with them has proven to be a gratifying learning experience. – Jacques Chitayat

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cal attitudes and veiled antisemitic tropes that comprise the discourses of leading left-wing voices, whether establishment political parties, writers, or media figures. After identifying their three major “Jewish problems,” Bernard lays out a structured argument to counter each problem. When it comes to Jews, he argues, far-left progressives apply distinctions they would not dream of using against any other minority group, such as denying Jews’ very existence as a people. This article is a must-read on combatting “progressive” attacks against Jews and Israel.

Closer to home, Toronto intern **Jakob Glogauer** argues for Canada’s banning of Huawei’s 5G network from all activity on Canadian soil. While most Canadians and all opposition parties support banning Huawei, he points out; the federal government has yet to address the threat of Chinese espionage. Many Western and Asian countries have barred Huawei from their infrastructure systems; why does Canada not do likewise? Moreover, recent actions by the Trudeau government are particularly concerning: It purchased Chinese software for use in every one of Canada’s embassies and diplomatic offices, possibly enabling China to download crucial and secret information. It also refused to recognize the Uyghur genocide.

Baruch Cohen Interns **Hailey Oldfield** and **Salomé Assor** explore the thoughts and writings of two giant Jewish philosophers. First off, Hailey examines the writings of the German Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, who sought to modernize Judaism in the 19th and 20th centuries: Hailey examines his main philosophical theories, such as the “I and Thou” concept that expounds on an integral aspect of man’s relationship with

God, as well as Buber’s view of Zionism, which he saw as a political doctrine and a means of social and spiritual enrichment. Hailey also details his controversial positions on early Israeli politics following the Jewish State’s foundation in 1948.

Salomé, a published author and philosophy student, writes an ode to the Lithuanian-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas whom she greatly admires. Writing in French, she delves into his early life and wartime experiences as a German POW before moving to France and argues that memories of war and human cruelty and his Jewish upbringing left their mark on his work. Inspired by Jewish tradition, Levinas clarifies what he sees as man’s duty of hospitality and kindness to strangers and his “*philosophie du visage*,” which Salomé expounds on in detail, addressing the question: Is it possible to adhere to a philosopher so influenced by religion in this modern age?

British Columbia-born **Joshua Schecter** explores the issue of religion and modernity from a more immediate – and personal – perspective. Why should secular Jews embrace traditional Jewish learning? What can the Torah teach “sophisticated” Jews with a decidedly scientific worldview? Few secular Jews, he points out, know Jewish law or are familiar with the biblical characters, such as Cain, Abel, Jacob, and Esau. Why is this familiarity necessary? Because these stories offer deep insights into human nature and interpersonal relationships. He explains that the Torah remains a literary and psychological gift to humanity even today. Learning the Torah’s lessons can help us develop better judgment by furthering our insight into human nature. It also al-



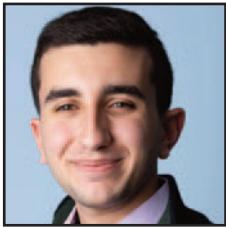
Jewish and Israeli philosopher Martin Buber

lows us to delve into morality, ethics, and the pursuit of personal goodness and responsibility.

Finally, Montreal intern **Judith Ibarra**, a health sciences student, examines Israel’s successful vaccination campaign. Despite the gravity of the Covid spread worldwide and shortages in vaccines, she describes how the Netanyahu government managed a rapid and efficient health campaign thanks to a few decisive factors: Israel’s wartime investments in a highly effective centralized health system, the country’s leadership in technology and medicine, and its small geographical size, which Israel used to its advantage. Judith then ponders the future of the pandemic and how prepared Israel is to deal with future pandemic outbreaks.

Hopefully, this new year will bring reasons for optimism. Meanwhile, the *CIJR*’s talented students will continue unravelling current events, delving into further aspects of Jewish culture, and providing much food for thought.

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FOR HILLEL NEUER, IT'S NOT THE INSTITUTIONS; IT'S THE PEOPLE USING THEM!

RAPHAEL UZAN

The challenges posed by the novel virus that left millions of people dead were more than medical. Also at play were human rights issues, as democracies weighed the complex tradeoffs between civil liberties and public health.

According to a 2020 report by Freedom House, a Washington DC-based think-tank, in 73 countries, including Canada and the USA, individual rights declined during these last two years. There is little hope that this figure will have much improved in the upcoming 2021 report.

Last December, I discussed these worrying trends with Hillel Neuer, a renowned human rights advocate and former *Canadian Institute for Jewish Research (CIJR)* intern. I found him to be informed and extremely forthcoming. We also talked about the state of human rights globally and what steps young people can take to speak out against abuses happening thousands of miles from home.

Montrealers are exceedingly proud to call Hillel Neuer their own. The 52-year-old executive director of UNWatch, a human rights NGO housed in Geneva, grew up in the De Vimy and later Cote St. Luc boroughs of Montreal, where he attended the Hebrew Academy, a modern Orthodox, pro-Zionist day school. His teachers and rabbis remember him as outgoing, friendly, articulate, and bursting with personality.

Even at such an early age, he employed much of his abundant energy advocating for Jewish causes, especially regarding Soviet Jewry, the *cause célèbre* of his time. No wonder. Jewish advocacy came naturally to him. His grandparents were Zionist activists in Poland in the 1920s and 1930s. As a teenager in the 1980s, he remembers protesting, in the dead of winter, in front of the Soviet consulate in Montreal, located then and now on Avenue du Musée, demanding freedom for Soviet Jews.

Although not quite as anti-Israel as today, Concordia University, where he obtained his undergraduate degree, leaned leftward and pro-Israel voices were stifled even then. The young Hillel was, therefore, fortunate to connect with the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research (CIJR) and come under the mentorship of its founder and director, Prof. Frederick Krantz, who helped guide him towards his



UN Watch Executive Director Hillel Neuer

future path. In many regards, he found the CIJR offices were a home away from home for him.

"I will always cherish the opportunity I had to work with Prof. Krantz. At Concordia University, the student-led newspaper would not publish our articles if they weren't radical or anti-Israel. *CIJR* was a place where we were able to write!" recalls Mr. Neuer. He also edited and contributed to the institute's unique-in-Canada student magazine, *Dateline: Middle East*.

Another inspiration was the renowned pro-Israel, human rights activist Irwin Cotler, his professor at McGill University Faculty of Law. Prof. Cotler later served as Justice Minister and Attorney General under Prime Minister Paul Martin.

Mr. Neuer then moved to Israel to complete his education at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel, obtaining a Master of Law degree.

His career skyrocketed from there. He clerked under Justice Yitzchak Zamir at the Israeli Supreme Court, where he learned "how to speak truth to power," powerful lessons that serve him well today when up against virulently anti-Israel voices at the United Nations, especially at its Human Rights Council. After a brief stint working at the Shalem Centre, a Jerusalem-based think-tank, he moved to New York to practice litigation.

Moving on to U.N. Watch, an NGO that 'monitors the performance of the United Nations by the yardstick of its own Charter,' wasn't much of a leap, given his profoundly held

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views on human rights and his love for Israel.

It wasn't long before the international community started noticing him. His short and biting speeches denouncing anti-Israel double standards at the United Nations were soon watched and shared thousands of times on social media. Most famously, "Algeria, where are your Jews?" was viewed more than 6 million times.

Hillel Neuer's name is now renowned in Jewish and non-Jewish circles as an active critic of virulently anti-Israel behaviours taken by members of the U.N., who he accuses of "trying to hijack the institution."

However, it takes more than excellent writing, speaking, and debating skills to get his points across and make a difference; he also learned to maneuver within an intensely political environment. A primary example is his brilliant orchestration of a campaign to counter the 2009 antisemitic United Nations' Durban Review Conference, dubbed "Durban II."

It took intensive lobbying, ingenuity, and protest, but he defeated the anti-Israel forces determined to make Durban II a repeat of the notorious first World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban, South Africa (Aug. 30 – Sept. 8, 2001). Irwin Cotler used Nazi analogies when referring to the conference. "If 9/11 was the Kristallnacht of terror, Durban was the Mein Kampf," he wrote. He was correct. Durban II was a hatefest against Jews and Israel, where participants, among other atrocities, blamed Israel for 9/11."

His counter-conference highlighted actual victims of human rights abuses and exposed much of the hypocrisy taking place at the U.N. Conference Center. A U.N. conference session devoted to promoting human rights and combatting racism and xenophobia featured as keynote speaker no less than Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a Holocaust denier who repeatedly called for "the elimination of the Zionist regime."

He attributes the counter-conference's success, which featured Prof. Cotler and Elie Wiesel, to the "many friendships with local human rights activists" he developed over the years. "Through UNWatch, we created a coalition in many different countries from Venezuela to Russia, China, and Cuba. Through our position at the U.N., we give these people a platform."

The following questions and answers are edited for length and clarity.

That was then; what is the state of global human rights today?

There is a sense that human rights are in bad shape. There were times where it was otherwise. In the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, we felt a flowering of democracy. But not today, where human rights appear to take a back seat to other concerns.

For instance, we are seeing very worrying situations develop throughout the world that are not only virus-related. Russia allegedly tried to suppress a political opponent; protestors in Belarus are desperately trying to get their voices heard; Uyghur Muslims are suffering under terrible conditions in China, and Thailand is inching closer to a constitutional crisis every day."

Is the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) part of the problem or the solution? How did it elect Russia, hardly renowned for its human rights, to its Council?

Officially, the Council should consider human rights criteria when choosing countries for the HRC; in fact, it rarely does. The U.N. is essentially political; countries vote according to their political interests or their perceptions of them. So, this year Russia, China, and Cuba were elected; last year, it was Venezuela and some of the worst dictatorships in the world. A lot of deal-making goes on; you vote for me, and I'll vote for you.

The procedures and structure of the UNHRC enable their candidacies and election since votes take place by secret ballot. Meanwhile, the Council's members will permanently block China's mistreatment of its Uyghur minority from the discussion. Why? Because countries vote in a bloc, they form coalitions to support one another and block condemnations of each other regardless of how egregious their actions are.

How to resolve these inherent challenges? There is no magic solution. We must pressure our government to do the right thing. Canada didn't speak out against the candidacy of China, Russia, or Cuba, and that's unfortunate. Neither did it introduce any resolutions supporting human rights in Cuba; when the issue arose, Canada voted "No." It also voted "No" to a U.S. resolution against Cuba. This is shameful. PM Trudeau should speak out for victims of human rights living in the world's worst dictatorships. Because there will be prices to pay for doing so, Canada should not act alone but with other like-minded democracies. It's harder to impose sanctions on many countries than on one."

Is the institution reformable?

Many global institutions like the U.N. depend on what governments do. If governments want the U.N. to work and

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get together, they could achieve reforms. Much of what's wrong is not structural but purposeful—things don't change because those running the U.N. institutions are not doing what's right."

Which human rights crises keep you up at night?

One of the worst cases is the Uyghurs, the Muslim minority group ethnically related to the Turks. They live in Xinjian, China, incarcerated in prison camps. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) attempts to eradicate their culture and history; it's a type of cultural genocide. And the U.N. isn't doing anything about it; there's no inquiry commission.

Neither is anyone doing anything about Syria, which has imploded. North Korea continues to have prison camps, which constitute some of the most horrific places on the planet.

The threat of Iran aligned Arab countries with Israel. More specifically, with regards to Israel and the Middle East, Iran gets more and more dangerous. They've taken over parts of Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen through the Houthis and support Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza. Iran represents a gathering storm.

Albeit not on the same scale as what is happening in these dictatorships, the West doesn't seem to be immune from gathering storms. Political extremism has taken over the U.S., where extremists on the political left and the right assert more and more influence. This trend is also evident in Western democracies, including Canada, to some degree. Is a consensus possible regarding human rights?

A consensus is challenging to achieve. Mainly because there are different visions of human rights; conservatives

might say it involves property rights, yet human rights declarations don't include property rights. Some on the more radical left want to include social and economic rights. Anything you don't like today becomes a human rights violation. Also, previously stalwart groups like Amnesty International have lost their way and become anti-capitalist, anti-Israel."

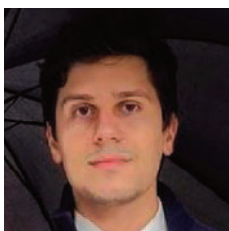
Can ordinary citizens influence international diplomacy?

Again, here is no magic solution. Citizens must hold their government accountable for their behaviours before international institutions. In Canada, PM Justin Trudeau and the cabinet set policies that diplomats follow. Electors must urge their officials and representatives to act responsibly and defend human-rights values within such institutions.

There are many ways to do it! Through social media. By lobbying your M.P., your Prime Minister, and speaking up publicly and in the media. This battle is for all of us to fight, especially young people. And we need to do it now."

How can young people become advocates of change in the global fight for Human Rights? What message would you give them?

Your voice matters. In this past year, we saw tensions arise over race and women's rights. Some protesters expressed themselves overly aggressively and in a Bolshevik-like manner, especially in their willingness to quash and extinguish differing voices. This fight for human rights is the fight of young people. However, always remember the importance of freedom of speech and open debate. Do not succumb to issues like group identities, and don't close your minds. There is too much that still needs doing, and these ideologies are not helpful.



THE MYTH OF THE PRO-ISRAEL DEMOCRATS

JACQUES CHITAYAT

As Israel pulls itself back together after its worst confrontation with Hamas since 2014, political leaders have finally agreed to form a new coalition government consisting of parties from across the political spectrum – except for Likud, Israel's largest party. What remains to be seen is how stable a government can be that is made up of progressives, centrists, and conservatives, as well as religious and secularist Jews and, for the first time, Islamists.

With the ground still shaking beneath this coalition government, the consequences of America's stance on Israel will be even more significant than usual.

Regarding American foreign policy on Israel and the Middle East, some political commentators and Jews were re-joining at the start of Biden's term in January. According to them, while more pro-Israel than Obama, he will also

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adopt a more “balanced” and “reasonable” stance on the Israel-Palestinian conflict compared to Trump’s “blind” support of Israel.

However, these analysts seldom mention the increasing influence of overtly anti-Israel politicians in the Democratic Party, nor whether Biden can keep this worrying trend under control. The *New York Times*, for example, called his approach more even-handed and “traditional”. They believe that a real opportunity to end the unending cycle of violence in the Middle East has developed.

Half a year into his Presidency, the confrontation between Israel and Hamas has put this new President’s foreign policy to the test. Is this Administration a trustworthy and reliable friend of Israel and American Jews, as those hopeful enthusiasts claimed, or is he merely a superficial ally?

Years ago, there was a worry that a large-scale war in the Middle East, started by Iran, was imminent. Signed in 2015 with the then-US government under Obama, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also called the Iran nuclear deal, lifted many previous economic sanctions in return for a supposed halt in Teheran’s nuclear development. It thus permitted a large inflow of money to Iran’s government that Iran used for terrorist and military purposes. Indeed, the regime funneled hundreds of millions to proxy terrorist groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis which destabilized the Middle East.

Moreover, even though this deal permitted Iran to pursue nuclear research if limited exclusively to its energy sector by limiting its centrifuges and enrichment production



The “Squad” (left to right) Ayanna Pressley (D—Mass); Ilhan Omar (D-Minn); Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY); Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich)

levels, Tehran blatantly ignored this condition. It continued manufacturing fissile material, researching nuclear weapons, and perfecting ballistic missiles, thus threatening its enemies, especially Israel, whose destruction it repeatedly avows. This reality was made clear by Netanyahu’s detailed report submitted in 2018 to the U.N. and his accompanying “Iran lied” speech. He showed evidence captured by Israel that the country was committed to producing nuclear warheads after telling the world community that this was not the case.

Under President Trump, the U.S. left this deal, imposing harsh financial sanctions on Iran and limiting its oil exports. Iran’s economy took a quick dive; money it sent to terrorist groups dried up, and the war scenario that many predicted became much less likely. It seemed safe to say that the Iranian threat was under control. In reality, however, as many nuclear and political analysts indicated, Iran had never relinquished its nuclear weapons ambitions, no matter the multiple layers of sanctions imposed on the country. Despite this, critics have often blamed Trump rather than Iran for the Islamic Re-

public’s reckless pursuit of nuclear warheads.

Last April, following Joe Biden’s election, American and Iranian officials met in Vienna. The new U.S. Administration immediately proclaimed its interest in lifting sanctions and renewing the nuclear deal *if Iran would no longer produce weapons-grade atomic materials*. Iran, for its part, insists that its nuclear program was and is purely for peaceful purposes, despite Israel’s exposure of captured archival material to the contrary.

A renewed deal would unlock billions of currently frozen dollars. Based on its track record and hegemonic aspirations, Iran would resume more extensive terrorist activity while also being permitted to continue producing materials related to nuclear energy. Hence, renewing the earlier understanding could potentially prove disastrous for the Middle East by enabling a dangerous regime obsessed with destroying Israel to become a regional hegemon, funding terror groups, and threatening other countries.

Given Iran’s imperial ambitions and untrustworthy atomic history, con-

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cluding this deal would seriously threaten world peace. If the purpose of their nuclear program is indeed peaceful, why do they need intercontinental missiles that can carry nuclear warheads?

So why does America even consider going this route, let alone whole-heartedly pursue it? According to Michael Doran, an American specialist in Middle Eastern politics, modern leftist-progressives try to reduce American support for Israel. However, knowing that the American people are predominantly pro-Israel, they have cleverly found methods of achieving their goals without stirring up opposition. He argues in "The Realignment" that instead of coming out as explicitly anti-Zionist, the Biden administration (except for a few outspoken politicians) is quietly carrying out political and diplomatic moves that might seem unrelated but which ultimately downgrade Israel while upgrading relations with Iran.

Doran further asserts that when Biden took office, he faced a fork in the road. On one path stood a multilateral alliance designed to contain Iran. It had a proven track record of success and plans for even better things to come (for example, the recent act of sabotage at Natanz, where Iran was increasing its centrifuges and uranium production, supposedly in retaliation for the U.S. leaving the deal). The leading members of the anti-Iran alliance, namely Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, were beckoning Biden to work against their common foe. They also wished to promote greater cooperation and possibly even arrive at an official peace agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel.

On the fork's other path stood the Shi'ite Islamic Republic of Iran, hated by its people and most Sunni peoples in the Middle East. It offered nothing but the same hateful rhetoric it has spewed for decades. And standing by its side is terrorist Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis, and the bloody Syrian dictatorship. Looking directly to Tehran for leadership and military-financial support, they thrive on the chaos it sows.

In the end, Doran says, Biden chose Iran, fracturing the U.S. alliance system, setting back the cause of peace, and harming Israel. His choice also delivered a victory to China and Russia, each in its way looking towards America's undoing. In a perverse effort to liberate itself from its natural allies, the United States, Doran maintains, is soiling its own nest. Essential here is a calculation made by the Obama Administration, based on the mistaken belief that empowering Shi'ite Iran will enable the U.S.

to free itself from unending wars in the Middle East and pivot to confronting China in the geopolitically more significant Asia. Perhaps tired of its ongoing involvement in the Middle East, the money wasted, and the farce it is making of itself (see: Afghanistan), America would instead leave the area to a country aching to take its place and push its weight around.

Therefore, Biden's approach to Iran is not merely a matter of nuclear arms control, since the JCPOA will not prevent Iran, sooner or later, from obtaining nuclear weapons. Instead, it is a realignment of America's Middle East dynamic, shifting away from their close partnership with Israel towards a worrying rapprochement with the Islamic Republic.

This Iran policy goes hand in hand with the Administration's shifting relations with Israel, as antisemitism creeps into the Democratic Party. When Biden named his Cabinet secretaries, he surprised many by the number of Jews included, such as Antony Blinken, David Cohen, and Rachel Levine: These appointees indicated to many American Jews that his government would take the issue of antisemitism seriously. The Biden administration recently appointed Holocaust historian and Emory University professor Deborah Lipstadt, an anti-Trump liberal, to serve as a special envoy to combat and monitor antisemitism. She has her work cut out for her.

Sadly, whenever Israel is involved in a conflict with the Palestinians, it is not uncommon to see people blaming, intimidating, and attacking all Jews under the guise of protesting against Israel's actions and the perceived oppression of Palestinians. Last May, as 4,500 Hamas rockets rained down on Israel, dozens of anti-Israel protests spread across Europe and North America, chanting "Death to Jews" and other hateful slogans. Jewish leaders advised Jews to avoid Sabbath synagogue services and hide their religious symbols. Islamic fanatics and supporters vandalized synagogues and viciously beat up Jews. Could the signs of rising antisemitism possibly be any more apparent and more alarming?

Yet, with the Jewish community facing such blatant hate, why did most pro-Israel politicians –including the progressive Biden Administration Jews – remain silent or only mention the issue seemingly *en passant*? The Democratic Party establishment briefly addressed the spike in antisemitic incidents (in a general document condemning *all* manifestations of "hate"), yet this paled in comparison with the sustained large-scale campaigns they have led

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concerning anti-Black or anti-Asian discrimination.

It is a sad truth that Jews have almost always had to fight discrimination by themselves. Self-proclaimed internet activists who brand themselves as defenders of human rights and warriors against racism have shown their double standards by turning a blind eye to the recent rise of antisemitism. But one should expect a much more substantial reaction to antisemitism coming from a government committed to fighting hate, especially, again, with so many Jews in its Cabinet.

During the Israel-Hamas confrontation, the U.S. government's stance left much to be desired. Biden's main statement, "Israel has a right to defend itself," was too little and came too late. Israel does not need another country's permission to defend itself; such a statement feels trite and devoid of conviction, especially coming from its supposed closest ally. It is not even a statement of support but merely a statement of fact that applies to any country.

Additionally, the \$735 million weapons sale to Israel that the U.S. recently approved faces heavy opposition. Many progressive Democrats introduced resolutions to halt the sale, including far-left politicians Rashida Tlaib and Bernie Sanders. Not to mention that at no time did Biden criticize or even acknowledge Hamas-backer Iran's role in the conflict, no surprise considering his kowtowing to Iran. Even worse was how the Democratic Party equated the actions of both sides: The progressives amongst them argued that while Hamas is at fault for aiming rockets at civilians too, Israel has caused irresponsible destruction. Subsequently, both sides need to calm down their aggressive and violent tendencies.

Why such reluctance to affirm clear support for a country legitimately defending itself against a terrorist group while minimizing civilian casualties as much as possible? Why ignore the fact that Hamas started this whole confrontation with the explicit intention of indiscriminately killing Israelis? And why no recognition of Iran's role in supplying Hamas and instigating the conflict?

In reality, there is a growing wave of anti-Israel sentiment in the Democratic Party, reflecting Obama's eight years in power and illustrated by the tone adopted by its current members. The influence of overtly anti-Israel and possibly antisemitic politicians such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, Ayanna Pressley, Cori Bush, and others is growing. Maintain-

ing, for example, that Israel is an apartheid state and that the country should be boycotted, they have moved from the fringes of the Party closer to its center. And Biden, whether by personal conviction, by weakness, or because he needs their support, is not countering this negative tide. He knows that going against this trend would cost him precious support among the progressives. "Anti-colonialist" ideology and left-wing anti-Israel sentiment, no longer a campus-only folly, are now becoming part of the mainstream left with little or no resistance in the mainstream agora.

To quote the late Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: "Antisemitism becomes dangerous when three things happen. First: When it moves from the fringes of politics to a mainstream party and its leadership. Second: When the party sees that its popularity with the general public is not harmed thereby. And Three: When those who stand up and protest are vilified and abused for doing so."

Leading members of the Democratic Party have not only failed to condemn their elected officials' bigotry but have defended them and vilified those who stood up and protested, such as accusing anyone who criticized Omar's and Tlaib's comments of being Islamophobic. Despite that, public support for Democrats has remained strong, not least among liberal Jews.

When we examine the Biden administration's weak and faltering support for Israel, their dangerous strategic game with Iran and the increasing and unhindered antisemitism rising in his party, the signs of trouble ahead cannot be more evident. It is time for U.S. Jews to start demanding the Administration take antisemitism seriously and that they halt their disastrous diplomatic trajectory. It is crucial to make distinctions when judging who is a friend of Israel and Jewish communities worldwide. On the one hand, are the true allies those whose words match their actions? On the other, are they false friends whose nice words, rosy promises, and attractive masks fall away when antisemitism threatens Jews, who abandon support and enable aggression against the vulnerable Jewish State? If U.S. Jewry does nothing, Israel will have no stable ally in the U.S., allowing Iran to attain its dreams of hegemony in the Middle East and a possible military confrontation with Israel.

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ISRAEL'S UNEXPECTED ENEMY: INSTAGRAM DISINFORMATION

SOPHIE SKLAR

From campus clubs to media journalists, the voices spreading anti-Israel rhetoric and biased coverage during the latest Israel-Palestinian conflict are diverse yet recognizable.

However, for many, there was a noticeable difference in the coverage surrounding the latest outbursts in Sheikh Jarrah and Gaza and previous battles across this long-standing conflict: There was an increased spread of pernicious disinformation and misinformation on social networking sites, to such a degree that it was dubbed the “social media pogrom.”

Disinformation entails purposefully misconstruing facts and generating downright falsehoods, while misinformation is the unintentional spread of false or misleading information.

These unregulated sites include Tik Tok and specialty channels controlled by rogue states and enemies of Israel and the US: Iran through *Telegram*, another such site, secretly disseminated disinformation against Israel amongst its 7000 followers, as one example.

Heading the attack against Israel is Instagram, where users share informational graphics (“infographics”) on other users’ profiles. Infographics are images that condense information into visually appealing formats.

These incendiary, eye-catching graphics are often factually dubious. The posts originate with one user and are re-shared by others spreading them to possibly millions of people within minutes. In this way, uninformed opinions presented as objective information gain massive traction.

As such, biased Infographics quickly turn disinformation into misinformation. In the fallout of the tensions and protests over property rights in Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem and Hamas’ showering of 4,300 rockets into Israel, many infographics intentionally or unintentionally misconstrued significant facets of the conflict, an easy feat to accomplish given the general ignorance about Israel amongst young people, including Jews.

For example, the Instagram account @thecrediblehawk compared Israel to Canada and the United States, labeling all three countries as “white ethno-state[s],” that “relocated indigenous inhabitants to a tiny area of their



FIGURE 1: Infographic found on thecrediblehawk, who adds, “in case you aren’t understanding this properly, this is referring to the type of state. Read it.” It has since been deleted.

original land.” (Figure 1)

The account also characterized resistance as “terrorism” [note the quotation marks], inferring that labelling groups such as Hamas as terrorist organizations is incorrect or misleading, despite their intentional targeting of Israeli civilians.

Moreover, this infographic contains multiple layers of disinformation: From asserting that Jews are not indigenous to the land of Israel to the claim that Israel allocates to its “white” citizens different rights and privileges than to its “non-white” counterparts. Originators do not present credible source materials to substantiate their claims. On Instagram, this is unnecessary. Regardless, this post amassed over 3,000 “likes” [downloads].

Another outrageous example is @mindovermoon’s post that asserts that Zionists have no legitimate claims to the land in Israel/Palestine. (Figure 2) Instead, it reduces Zionist aspirations to greed. According to the post, Zionists

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are motivated not by a legitimate desire to defend their land and families but by their greedy desire for oil, preposterously asserting that Israel and the Palestinian territories have “more oil reserves than anywhere else.”

Moreover, Jewish families such as the Rothschilds, it absurdly claims, have invested in oil, which explains the media’s bias towards Israel.

The post, packed with lies, also relies on antisemitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories: Jewish monopolists, Jews controlling the media, and so on. Astonishingly, this particular post amassed over 780,000 “likes” and was viewed by thousands more users.

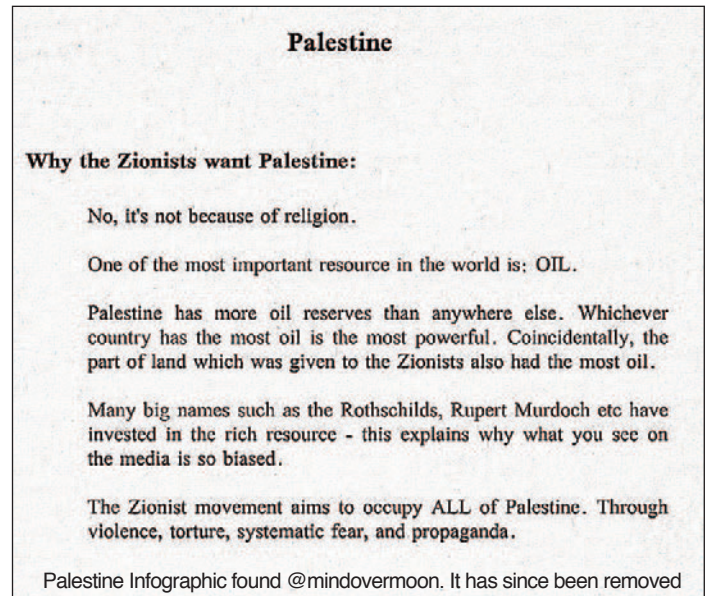
Other culprits of the Infographic battle are celebrities and influencers. Take the American supermodel and daughter of Palestinian multi-millionaire Mohamed Hadid, Bella Hadid, as an example. Labelled a “freedom fighter” on Instagram during a Los Angeles rally for Palestinian Liberation (*Figure 3*), Bella shared many inaccurate and down-right antisemitic posts.

One such post, created by the user @key48return, states that Israel is not a country but a “settler colony” that replaced the “native population” of the land that today is Israel, a standard theme. (*Figure 4*) Sharing this post with her 43 million Instagram followers, Bella promoted a fake narrative that outrightly denies Jews their indigenous status to the land.

With large-platformed celebrities and “influencers” such as Haddad circulating like-minded posts, it’s no wonder that the spread of misinformation—if not outright disinformation—about Israel is so rampant on social media today with real on-the-ground consequences.

So, while the usual suspects, such as the *New York Times* and other mainstream media outlets, continued their barrage of op-eds against Israel, online activists created a climate wherein users shared infographics that encourage disseminating lies.

So, while the usual suspects, such as the *New York Times* and other mainstream media outlets, continued their barrage of op-eds against Israel, online activists created a climate wherein users shared infographics that encourage disseminating lies.



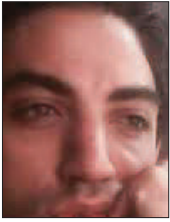
For those looking to fight back against this toxic and misleading “infographic culture,” it is critical that advocates for Israel also generate unique content to be shared on social media. However, they should support any claims with factual evidence and citations from reliable resources to prevent the recycling of online misinformation. Remember, the facts are on their side.

Even more critical is educating oneself about the facts – historical and sociological – about Jews, the modern State of Israel, and the Middle East. Too few American Jews – especially young people - know enough to challenge the lies intentionally being disseminated by these advocates of BDS and online trolls whose intention is to delegitimize the Jewish State. On the contrary, many young Jews buy into the fallacy that Israel is an apartheid, genocidal country with no right to exist.

Overall, the ease and speed of sharing factually flawed infographics translate into widespread misunderstandings about Israel, Jews, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. This generates no positive outcomes but maintains division and hinders – rather than helps — Middle East peacebuilding efforts. Combatting these mistruths with fact-based online advocacy is essential to curbing the spread of toxic and harmful cycles of misinformation.

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FORGET SEMANTICS; THE FAR-LEFT HAS A REAL STRUCTURAL JEWISH PROBLEM

BERNARD BOHBOT

The debate about the “working definition of antisemitism” is mainly semantic. If one believes that discrimination is always racist, then wanting to destroy Israel (and no other state) is definitely antisemitic. But if one subscribes to a more restricted definition of antisemitism (*i.e.*, explicit Jew-hatred), only avowed Jew-haters can be called antisemites. That said, it is puzzling to see people so prompt to subscribe to the concept of “systemic racism,” or “implicit bias,” justify unjustified discrimination against Jews with all sorts of semantic acrobatics.

However, they can’t deny that the radical left’s (everything to the left of well-established center-left social-democratic parties) attitude toward the Jews is problematic.

The far-left’s Jewish problem is threefold (there is a fourth one related to the far-left’s problem with the memory of the Holocaust, but that would be for a follow-up article):

- 1 It calls for the dismantling of Israel (and no other state).
- 2 It uses age-old antisemitic tropes and conspiracy theories against Israel.
- 3 It denies the existence of the Jewish people only.

1. The far-left denies that by calling for the dismantling of Israel, it singles out the Jews. It cites the example of the South African apartheid regime that international pressure forcefully dismantled. This comparison is preposterous. Apartheid South Africa had an illegal government wherein a minority denied a vote to the majority. By contrast, within the 1967 borders, Israel is a legitimate state recognized by the international community: The UN Security Council resolutions and the International Court of Justice reiterated its right to exist. Even though Israel’s presence in the West Bank is controversial within Israel itself among left wing and centrist parties, this issue does not justify questioning Israel’s right to exist. Those who oppose Moroccan sovereignty in Western Sahara do not claim that Morocco must disappear altogether. What is more, the Palestinians have rejected three peace plans in 2001, 2008, and 2014, enabling them to recover virtually all the West Bank. Palestinian terrorism, which increased when the Israeli left was in power, also stymied Israel’s left.

In a [Toronto Star op-ed](#) against the IHRA definition of an-



Far-left writer Naomi Klein and filmmaker Avi Lewis running for Canada’s far-left National Democratic Party (NDP.)

tisemitism published last year, Avi Lewis and Michele Landsberg evoked another argument to justify destroying Israel: Israel is a “colonial-settler state” based on the dis-possession of the Palestinians.

Most states were born in sin. The Arabs have conquered and colonized the Near East and North Africa. Should we then dismantle all Arab States outside the Arabian Peninsula? Perhaps, Lewis and Landsberg are among those simpletons who believe that only whites (and Jews) have engaged in colonialism. They should know that this is a universal phenomenon. The Iroquois destroyed the Huron homeland. Does this mean that Mohawk national demands are necessarily a “racist endeavour”?

Moreover, those who reject the claim that Israel is a colonial-settler state argue that as a homeless people, Jews had the right to return to their ancient homeland to exercise their universal right to self-determination. As for the Arab presence in the land, Israel’s founders invoked a strong universalist argument to justify the establishment of a Jewish homeland in a land inhabited by other people: the wealth redistribution principle (distributive justice).

Zionist leaders such as Zeev Jabotinsky, David Ben Gurion, Berl Katznelson, and Chaim Weizmann argued that the Arabs, blessed with a vast territory in the Middle East, should share a small part of these expanses with the Jews who had no home. (At the time, Arab nationalists sought to establish a united pan-Arab state encompassing all the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire).

Zeev Jabotinsky, in ‘The Ethics of The Iron Wall,’ published in 1923, wrote the most eloquent defence of this argu-

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ment:

“The principle of self-determination does not mean that if someone has seized a stretch of land, it must remain in his possession for all time and that he who was forcibly ejected from his land must always remain homeless. Self-determination means revision – such a revision of the distribution of the earth among the nations that those nations who have too much should have to give up some of it to those nations who have not enough or who have none so that all should have some place on which to exercise their right of self-determination.”

One can disagree with this claim and argue that the territorial integrity of Palestine takes precedence over Jewish self-determination (even though there was no formal Arab sovereignty in this land during the advent of the Zionist movement, as this land was under Ottoman rule before the British conquest in 1917).

What is “racist” about arguing that homeless people have the right to return to their ancient homeland and the land redistributed so all peoples can have what Trotsky (who appeared to depart from his anti-Zionism at the end of his life) called a “rich spot under the sun.”

Lewis and Landsberg invoke the *Nakba* (Palestinian exodus) to delegitimize Israel. Referring to the partial expulsion of Palestinians without mentioning that Arabs had first attacked the *Yishuv*, which became Israel, is disingenuous.

2) If their anti-Zionism is devoid of antisemitism, why do they rehash conspiracy theories about Jewish money, Jewish hidden power, and their so-called superiority complex toward non-Jews, among others? And why do they then transpose these traditional anti-Jewish tropes onto Israel? Undoubtedly, some people bear no grudge against Jews yet subscribe unconsciously to anti-Jewish tropes. But implicit bias does not become legitimate only because people subscribe to it unwittingly.

For generations, antisemites accused Jews of thinking they are superior to non-Jews by misinterpreting the concept of Chosen people. This concept has always been subject to interpretation and does not necessarily entail a sense of superiority (since the Middle Ages, rabbis have stressed that Jews were “chosen” for a specific mission, not because they are “superior” to others). Radical anti-Zionists now recycle this accusation against Zionists. But why is wanting self-determination, a right invoked by most peoples to achieve statehood or autonomy, deemed “supremacist” for Jews only?

‘The Protocols of the Elders of Zion’ accused Jews of con-

spiring to control the world through financial means. Radical anti-Zionists are obsessed with the so-called unlimited financial means of the Zionist lobby, which allegedly “controls” the foreign policy of Western countries, especially the US. Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) insinuated this when she contended that US support for Israel was “all about the Benjamins [\$100 bill].” This claim is baseless.

Also, is it rational to posit that Zionists helped the Nazis exterminate the Jews? (The famous filmmaker Ken Loach is the latest proponent of this conspiracy theory.) The Zionist movement did desperately try to negotiate with Nazi Germany, most of the time unsuccessfully, to save Jews. Were they wrong to do that?

3) The far-left opposes not only Zionism but Jewish peoplehood itself.

Marxist scholars of nationalism have opposed the very concept of Jewish peoplehood since the end of the 19th Century, before the advent of Zionism. Russian Marxist thinker Georgi Plekhanov, for example, referred to Bundists as “seasick Zionists.”

Marxist theorists contend that Jews are not a “genuine” people and do not deserve collective rights. Shlomo Sand’s book *The Invention of the Jewish People* is a favourite among the far-left. It dwells on this tradition that Marxist thinkers such as Otto Bauer, Stalin, and Abraham Leon developed in the early 20th Century. I can hardly imagine the far-left denying the existence of other people with such passion.

These deniers on the left have a structural (or conceptual) problem with the notion of Jewish peoplehood, which seems to disrupt their rigid categories. They usually invoke the “strangeness” of the secular Jewish identity that mixes religion and nationality to explain their unease with the very concept of Jewish peoplehood. They find it somewhat archaic and “primordial,” as it does not privatize religion. Hence, although there is such a thing as atheist Jews, the “entry ticket” to join the Jewish people remains religious conversion (not getting a new passport!). Why aren’t Jews allowed to shape their identity the way they see fit?

Interestingly, the far-left, which is so prompt to denounce “Eurocentrism” and “Orientalism,” argues that Jewish identity is guilty of not following traditional Western categories. It seems like ethnocentrism is acceptable only if its victims happen to be Jews!

The far-left’s irrational attitude toward the Jews may not stem from sheer hatred. There is good reason to believe that it falls in the category of “unconscious bias.” Former

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radical anti-Zionists have explained that third-worldism (not Jew-hatred) is the main reason they insisted on Israel's destruction in the past. Hence, they felt the need to accept all the demands of the Palestinians blindly.

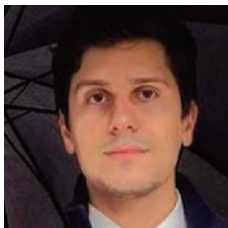
Nathan Weinstock, a former leading figure of the anti-Zionist radical left, wrote in 1969 what used to be the "Bible" of far-left anti-Zionism, *'Zionism: False Messiah.'* Weinstock later reconsidered the anti-Zionist views of his youth. In the 2006 article "*Témoignage d'un ex-antisioniste*" (Testimony of a Former Anti-Zionist), he explained that the third world was an extension of far-left activists for his generation of the proletariat. As victims of imperialism, they believed the left should always uncritically champion their cause. Therefore, if Palestinians, part of this mythical third world, called for Israel's dismantling, so be it. Third-Worldism more than Jew-hatred motivates radical anti-Zionism. However, he nevertheless admits that many unconsciously use anti-Jewish tropes against Israel.

Let's play a mind game for those on the left who still cannot understand that their attitude toward the Jews is problematic. What if, in 1995, Quebec had become independent? I can hardly imagine an international "solidarity move-

ment" calling for a blanket boycott of Quebec (and no other state) until Quebecers accept to dissolve their country into Canada, despite its colonial origin. I can hardly imagine people on the left saying that nationalism is acceptable for Scots, Irish, or Catalans, but when it comes to Quebec, it is akin to Nazism. I can hardly imagine progressives worldwide declaring that all national identities are legitimate, except for the Quebec one, or using old anti-French Canadian clichés to attack modern-day Quebec nationalism.

So, the far-left is not "antisemitic": It just calls for a double standard against Jews, recycles antisemitic tropes and conspiracy theories against Israel, and claims that the concept of Jewish peoplehood is a fraud. With friends like these, who needs antisemites!

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THE AFGHANISTAN RETREAT, OR THE KICK THAT STIRRED THE HORNET'S NEST

JACQUES CHITAYAT

We have all been glued to our screens, greedily drinking in all the news and images coming from this remote Middle Eastern country: Ecstatic bearded men wildly firing shots into the sky in celebration, tragic scenes of fundamentalists painting over posters of women in the street, and panicked people frantically grasping onto American planes fleeing the Kabul airport, some falling to their deaths.

We all know the last twenty years' context, America's response to 9/11, defeating the Taliban and attempting nation-building in Islamic tribally-divided Afghanistan. We certainly have read and heard a great deal about current events there. The region was ravaged by terrorism and parts were taken over by



Photo credit: APF

Taliban defeat Afghan army
August 2021

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different terror groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Pakistan served as a safe haven for the world's most dangerous criminals, such as Bin-Laden. The Middle Eastern crisis seemed to have surmounted its worst years after the death of Ben-Laden and Al-Baghdadi, the destruction of ISIS and continued Western presence. But the recent Afghanistan events stirred up all the instability once more. What does this all mean for the future?

President Biden's decision – obviously with an eye on the approaching September 11th anniversary – immediately to pull the plug on a twenty-year long project, no matter how flawed – can only be considered senseless. Compare Biden's exit plan to the previous president's: First, Trump stated the evacuation would be conditional on negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban about power-sharing. Next, the pull-out would have been gradual. He also wanted to keep control of Bagram airport, a strategically important airspace near China, and evacuate all US weaponry before leaving. None of these very sensible plans were retained by Biden: The retreat was sudden and total, leaving all strategic advantages behind, no agreement was reached between Afghan parties, billions worth of high-tech weapons and vehicles were left behind – now being sold on the black market or being used for less than noble purposes – and many have died, including thirteen Americans.

Who could be surprised that this only resulted in a power vacuum, immediately filled by the next most powerful force in the country, the Taliban? Biden certainly was not: his military advisors had warned him time and time again that it would turn out exactly this way, yet he ignored their counsel.

Even the usually-sympathetic mainstream media could not cover up or sugar-coat this enormous mistake. Because of this slap in the face to all fallen and injured soldiers and the immense resources squandered (some estimate total over \$5 trillion), America's hard power has taken a terrible blow. The once strong and respected image of America's army has now been replaced with scenes (reminiscent of 1975 Saigon) of helicopters hurriedly airlifting people off the U.S. embassy building and the American army scrambling to exit a disastrous situation they could not (or were not allowed to) resolve.

This signifies a huge victory for enemies of the West: First of all, China, and to a lesser extent, Russia and Iran, which are already forging alliances with the Taliban. China is advancing its long-term goal of becoming not only the southeast Asia hegemon, but the next global superpower, even as radical Islamism, which now controls this strategically important region, shows no current sign of slowing its expansion down.

The losers here are, of course, Joe Biden and America's global influence generally, but also all Western countries who, once again in the crosshairs of radical Islam, will also

Just as Communism was the last century's greatest threat facing the West, radical Islam is today's. [...] After the Afghanistan debacle, however, we are unsure its leaders will find the same kind of strength and courage.

be the destination of large migrant influxes, raising real security concerns. As one out of many examples, in late August, France already arrested five Afghans who had entered the country, because of their alleged links to the Taliban.

How many more have already slipped through the cracks, and how many citizens will in future be put in danger, because America's President made a ridiculous decision? America indiscriminately airlifted over 100,000 Afghans out of Kabul, without Covid tests or vaccinations, while leaving many U.S. citizens and Afghans with green cards and S.I.V. [special immigration visas] behind. Since the US opened the floodgates of mass-migration, Europe, recalling the massive 2015 Syrian immigration disaster, is trying to strengthen its border to limit entries. In the end, Western Europe may still unfairly be made to pay, in part, for Washington's mistakes.

Very importantly, of course, the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan also directly threatens Israel, in a two-fold manner. Radical Islam – and, importantly, Iran, renegotiating the JCPOA nuclear deal with Biden – is now emboldened both by its Afghan victory and strong hold on the region, and by America's perceived division and weakness. Can Israel, traditionally its most stable ally, expect strong American support if it must defend itself against new waves of attacks? And even if America is forthcoming, will it be sustained, considering the current state of their Administration's leadership?

Just as Communism was the last century's greatest threat facing the West, radical Islam is today's. At the end of the Cold War, the Western bloc, led by a resolute United States, prevailed thanks to its determination to hold its ground and not back down before the adversary. After the Afghanistan debacle, however, we are unsure its leaders will find the same kind of strength and courage. Unless a bold shift in attitude arises, the West's problems are only starting.

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THE RIGHT TO SAFETY ON CAMPUS: ONE EXCEPTION APPLIES

SOPHIE SKLAR

As a recent graduate of McGill University in Montreal, Canada, an institution heralded for its multicultural and welcoming campus, my years on campus left me, as a Jewish student, feeling marginalized. These experiences are, given the student body's so-called commitment to "campus safety" for minority groups, ironic – and contradictory given the ideology McGillians frequently reference and promote in all aspects of student life.

This ideology is not unique to McGill. There has been an increasing trend sweeping across North American university campuses of maximizing "campus safety" for minority and vulnerable groups in recent years. Some campuses have instituted actual "safe spaces," — meeting places reserved for marginalized individuals to come together and discuss their varied experiences. Other campuses try to create an overall campus environment wherein marginalized and minority groups feel secure and fully included.

However, there is one exception to this on-campus development — Jewish and Zionist students on campus. Their exclusion from the "safe environment" movement repeatedly played itself out during my own McGill experience. I constantly saw friends and colleagues labeled as "good Jews" or "bad Jews," depending on their stance on Israel's conflict with the Palestinians, and, subsequently, denied access to "progressive" environments and discourse. This trend towards ostracization under the guise of "liberalism" is alive and well on Canadian university campuses.

What is the "Safe Space" Movement?"

Many Jews on North American university campuses identify with Zionism and Israel. Unfortunately, progressives regard the world's only Jewish state as antithetical to their ideology; they claim it upholds colonial structures and apartheid.

Many campuses embody "progressive" ideologies and exclude those who fall out of line with this mindset. Jews unwilling to denounce Israel even face harassment and violence on some campuses. According to a 2015 Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) study, Israel is continuously delegitimized on US university campuses. Jewish and Zionist students are viewed as "im-



Montreal's McGill University

perialists, racists, and even Nazis and white supremacists."

Further, the study found that a significant minority of Jewish undergraduates are uncomfortable expressing their opinions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As such, Jewish students are repeatedly excluded from the "make campuses safe" movements; on the contrary, their positions are construed as antithetical to the cause of safety on campus.

For instance, in a November 2020 email sent to the McGill student body, the Student's Society of McGill University (SSMU) condemned the attempted introduction of a chapter of Students for Western Civilization (a white nationalist group) on campus. It argued that it would negatively impact the wellbeing and safety of Jewish students on campus. Sounds good, right?

Except in so doing, the SSMU did not consult with any of McGill's most prominent Jewish student groups, such as Chabad on Campus, Hillel, or other non-partisan Jewish groups. Neither did it ask them to sign a letter of protest. Whom did they ask? Only McGill's chapter of Independent Jewish Voices - an anti-Zionist group - was afforded this privilege.

How shameful of them to exclude such a substantial portion of McGill's Jewish student body. How can Jewish students critically engage in campus discourse and

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discussions concerning safe campus environments when excluded from such opportunities?

Attempts to Shut Down Zionist Voices on Campus

If that's not enough, these 'progressive' student bodies often attempt to eliminate outrightly Zionist voices on campus. Falsely equating Zionism with white supremacy and racism, "progressive" students call for eradicating Zionism from campuses and disallowing groups or individuals who align with Zionism a voice in the discourse. Cultural clubs relating positively to Israel faced threats to their club status and were denied the right (and financing) to hold events. Furthermore, they often excluded Jewish Zionists from participating in progressive coalitions with other bodies on campus.

In October 2020, Jewish students at the [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign](#) stated that Jews on campus were consistently exposed to anti-Israel rhetoric, making the campus inhospitable for Jewish and pro-Israel students. An April 2021 "[BDS Resolution](#)" passed unanimously at California's Pomona College called for the school's student union to cut funding for any student government bodies that "support the Israeli occupation of Palestine."

Canadian campuses are no better. An example of this hypocritical movement for "safe environments" on-campus concerns a May 2020 letter from Students for Palestinian Human Rights at McGill and the World Islamic & Middle Eastern Studies Student Association. The letter calls for outlawing "behavior on campus that advocates for the expansion of the settler-colonial state of Israel as it galvanizes and promotes hate, expulsion, and apartheid."

The letter also falsely claimed that McGill University has "welcomed Zionist ideologies and student groups that have a long history of surveilling, bullying, and doxxing Palestinian, Muslim, and racialized students", with no supporting evidence to that effect.

Despite this absence of substantiating evidence, over 1,500 McGill students signed the letter. When such staggering numbers of students sign a letter labeling Israel a settler-colonial and hate-promoting apartheid state, well, is it any wonder that Jewish students feel unsafe, threatened, and confused.

Jewish students are often among the most "progressive" – in the literal sense – students on university campuses: Many frequently speak up in defense of marginalized groups and are consistently involved with social justice movements and organizations. Despite that, many Jewish

students habitually hesitate to adopt the label of "progressive" – or are downright excluded from doing so – due to the safe space movement's purposeful exclusion of pro-Israel people from alleged "liberal" spaces.

These examples are some of the many ways progressive bodies threaten, harass, and intimidate Zionist voices on campus. While they give other marginalized groups platforms to share their experiences, they shun Jewish voices, pushing them to the periphery of campus life.

Jews on Campus Unable to Define Their Oppression

Nor does it end there. These same bodies often challenge Jewish identities and question their "level" of oppression, such as Jewish claims of antisemitism. Those who try to expose antisemitic behaviour on campuses find themselves vilified. For instance, that same open letter states that "Palestinian students were falsely vilified as anti-Semites" by Jewish students.

Who gives the letter's authors the authority to decide who has and has not engaged in antisemitic behaviour, especially after multiple attempts were made by Jewish students to expose the extremely hostile environment in which they reside?

Not so with other minorities on campus. Universities afford them the right to define their oppression for themselves. Those outside the group are encouraged to respect their definitions, and rightfully so, as shared minority experiences help others understand discrimination and prejudice.

However, the one exception is the Jews. On-campus, students are permitted to openly espouse thinly-veiled antisemitism under the guise of "criticism" of the world's only Jewish state, only to feign innocence later.

Students across North America must change their attitudes. They must come to recognize and acknowledge the double standards they practice by excluding the Jewish and Zionist minority from "safe spaces." How can a campus environment be "safe" or "progressive" when student bodies consistently marginalize one group and deny their right to define its oppression or to speak out against the lack of safety it faces?

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CANADA SHOULD OFFICIALLY BAN HUAWEI FROM ITS 5G INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

JAKOB GLOGAUER

In September, the Trudeau government freed Meng Wanzhou, Chief Financial officer of the Chinese Huawei I.T. communications corporation and daughter of its founder, Ren Zhengfei, after the U.S. rescinded its extradition request on trade secrets theft charges.

In turn, two Canadian detainees in China - Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor – were released by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) within hours of Wanzhou's deal with U.S. prosecutors. (A court in northeastern China had sentenced Kovrig to eleven years in prison for spying on China.)

An ordeal that had lasted three years abruptly ended.

However, at the time of Meng Wanzhou's arrival at Vancouver International Airport, on Dec. 1, 2018, the issue of Huawei had not yet figured highly on the governing Liberal Party of Canada's political agenda.

Today, despite the U.S.'s blocking any use of Huawei Technologies Co. products, a decision to ban the telecommunications giant from its 5G infrastructure network remains at the heart of Canada's problematic relationship with the CCP.

On its end, Huawei denies any link of its advanced communications technology to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP.) However, the U.S., United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Taiwan know



Huawei Technologies Canada

otherwise and have banned Huawei from its infrastructure systems. Why? Because of its history of stealing the intellectual property (I.P.) of its adversaries. By prohibiting the company from having dealings in Canada, Canada can attain some sense of security that its I.P. will be safe from Chinese thievery.

Despite these obvious dangers, the governing Liberal government has, so far, refused to act against China on this and other matters. For instance, it abstained on a vote to declare the plight of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang a "genocide," it continues to invest in the Asian Infrastructure

Investment Bank, and, unlike the U.S., it does not enforce tariffs to punish China's unfair trade practices.

Instead, the Trudeau government recently purchased Chinese software for use in its embassies, consulates, and high commissions worldwide, potentially enabling China to download the personal data of those accessing its facilities. A security source said that he is concerned that there are now "significant pieces of Chinese technology sitting in every embassy."

China awarded this \$6.8 million

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contract to Beijing-based Nuctech Company, owned by the CCP and founded by its former General Secretary Hu Jintao.

These contracts continued even after China unleashed the coronavirus on an unsuspecting world. Strong evidence suggests that the virus originated in a gain of function research in a Wuhan lab. Whether the virus originated there or a “wet market,” China chose not to alert the world to its high transferability to humans; instead, it allowed its citizens to travel the world during its Chinese New Year vacation, transmitting the disease as they went.

However, this and China’s other malevolent behaviours—its erosion of democratic norms in Hong Kong, and its assertion of sovereignty over the South China Sea and Taiwan—should have removed the blinkers from Trudeau’s eyes: Whereas earlier Trudeau planned on developing a comprehensive Indo-Pacific strategy, aligning more with the U.S. in its dealings with China, talks of such a “reset” in relations with China are today downplayed, especially regarding Huawei.

(Despite its membership in the Five Eyes security network, Australia, the U.K., and the U.S. excluded Canada from its recent AUKUS agreement, a security pact to help Australia build nuclear submarines to better challenge Chinese aggression in the South Seas. France, initially contracted to deliver conventional submarines to Australia, vehemently protested its exclusion from this pact, whereas Canada has yet to respond.)

Canada remains the only country within the “Five Eyes” alliance (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States) that has not officially enacted a complete Huawei ban. This inactivity endangers Canada’s security and prevents it from unleashing its homegrown telecom industries and advancing partnerships with like-minded allies. (For example, Telus has partnered with Ericsson and Nokia, two Scandinavian countries that planned to build Canada’s 5G network.)

Undoubtedly, China’s previous detention of the two Michaels had posed significant obstacles for the Canadian government, as does the ongoing fate of Robert Schellenberg, a Canadian convicted of drug smuggling. In mid-August, a China court upheld the death penalty enacted after a sudden retrial one month after Wanzhou’s detainment. A court previously had sentenced him to 15 years imprisonment. Schellenberg

maintains his innocence, and diplomatic efforts by Canada to change the sentence are ongoing.

Despite these obstacles, all opposition parties approved banning Huawei in 2020 in a non-binding opposition motion by a vote of 179 to 146.

Specifically, the motion called for the Government of Canada to “develop a robust plan, as Australia has

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done, to combat China’s growing foreign operations here in Canada and its increasing intimidation of Canadians living in Canada, and table it within 30 days of the adoption of this motion.”

Canada’s intelligence agencies have yet to deliver such a report. What is taking so long? Canada has undoubtedly consulted with other like-minded countries on this issue, and what they have to say has assuredly made its way into consideration.

As added confirmation, the 2020 University of Toronto Citizen Lab report, on yet another case involving undue Chinese influence, notes that “some allegations that the company has benefited from a state- or corporate-driven espionage appear to be true.”

With a plurality of Canadians from all sides of the political aisle supporting a Huawei ban, the Canadian government must act on their behalf. It is time for the Liberal government publicly to recognize the threat of Chinese spying through Huawei and ban the corporation outright from all activity on Canadian soil.

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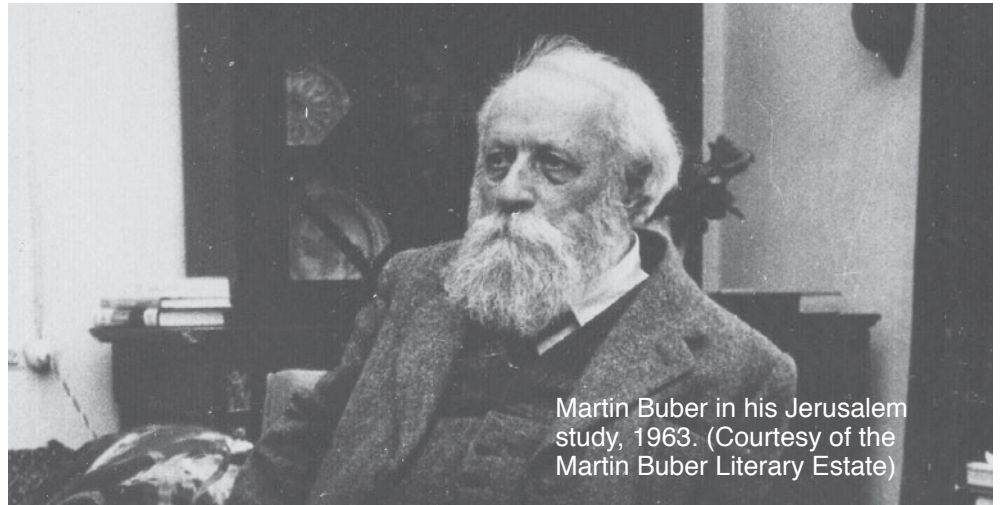
MARTIN BUBER'S ATTEMPT TO PHILOSOPHICALLY RESTRUCTURE MODERN JEWISH BELIEF

HAILEY OLDFIELD

Influenced by the nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft des Judentums* Enlightenment movement, Martin Buber sought to modernize Judaism. A scholarly author, literary translator, and political activist, Buber published in German and Hebrew on social philosophy, biblical studies, religious phenomenology, philosophical anthropology, Jewish politics, and art. More specifically, his work combined philosophical psychology and Hasidism and elevated him among significant twentieth-century Jewish thinkers. His religious philosophy eventually became a cornerstone for the evolution of Jewish faith and politics.

Martin Buber was born in Vienna in 1878. His early life played an important role in leading him to his philosophical standing as an adult. According to Adam Kirsch writing in *The New Yorker*, his mother abandoned him to marry a Russian officer when he was three years old, “without saying goodbye to her son.”

Kirsch postulates that his mother's abandonment left Buber with lifelong psychological issues that contributed to a need for a stable and reliable source of intimacy and safety. It might also have resulted in his attributing importance to relationships in general, specifically between man and God. This reliance on relationships is reflected in his interpretation of God as not only a “stern lawgiver or a merciful redeemer,” as Kirsch describes, but a familiar and reliable



Martin Buber in his Jerusalem study, 1963. (Courtesy of the Martin Buber Literary Estate)

presence, always available for emotional sustenance.

However, his mother's abandonment was not irresponsible: She left him in Lemberg (today called Lviv) with his paternal grandparents. Solomon Buber, a prominent Jewish scholar, and his wife Adele homeschooled Martin in a staunchly religious household. The budding prodigy, brought up to observe all traditional Jewish holidays, was classically educated by Adele, quickly learning to speak and read Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, German, Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and English.

At fourteen, his grandparents sent Martin to live with his father and his new wife, where the new household was more secular. There, Martin began to rethink how he practiced Judaism. Buber soon joined the ranks of contemporary thinkers, both religious and secular. They rallied against the alienation they sensed

growing within the general public in response to modern life's technological advancements and revolutions.

Shortly after moving in with his father, his spiritual and intellectual journey began: Buber reached out to Hasidism, an ideology and way of life he had absorbed in his early years. He sought to find a way to heal what he considered a malaise in Judaism and a source of dissonance in modernity. He approached Hasidic teachings in the hope that Hasidic folklore and original, prophetic messages would revitalize and provide a stronger sense of culture to the modern idea of Judaism.

The Hasidic practice draws heavily on the Jewish mystical tradition, which sought an extra-textual, direct experience of God through prayer. In his personal practice, Buber emphasized community and meaning in everyday activities and interpersonal life. He was criticized later for misrepresenting

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many elements of Hasidism. Buber often de-emphasized, or omitted, Hasidism's emphasis on Jewish Law, folk superstition, tzadik (holy man) worship, and internal quarrels, amongst other things. Instead, Buber focused on observing specific aspects of the Jewish faith that he found directly relevant to religious revitalization.

Perhaps responding to his mother's abandonment, Buber was motivated to find roots in stable connections, possibly seeing his dilemma reflected in society around him. He discovered that young Jews often strayed from God, and in their doubting of a divine presence, had refocused their attention on their relationships with other people and with nature. (While in university, he married a Christian writer who eventually converted to Judaism.) He argued that a revitalized image of God — personal, present, and not absent — was needed.

After WWI until 1924, while working for a Jewish monthly called *Der Jude*, Buber befriended German theologian Franz Rosenzweig, which proved the start of a fruitful albeit short personal and professional relationship. Together, they began translating the Hebrew Bible into German. Rosenzweig also founded the House of Jewish Learning in Frankfurt in 1920, and Buber co-operated the educational institution with him. As an educational model, the House of Jewish Learning sought dialogue with its participants, rather than merely encouraging students to accumulate knowledge.

When Rosenzweig died prematurely in 1929, Martin Buber carried on. It took him another 32 years to finish the Bible project. Throughout, he remained faithful to their original intent: He kept the translation as close to the original meaning of the Bible as possible, incorporating new German words into the translation when necessary. This translation became the model for other translations into other languages well after publication, in capturing the Hebrew nuances present in the original text, and placing them within a German context.

This dictionary encapsulated Buber's more expansive philosophical vision. Buber believed that the general sickness and alienation he perceived in humanity could be related to its loss of connection to God. He proposed eliminating second-hand teachings and interpretations as much as possible and returning to Biblical/prophetic messages. His and Franz Rosenzweig's translation moved this vision forward by enabling German Jews to connect with the Torah's original message.

Yet despite railing against the younger generation of Ger-

man-speaking Jews' rejection of the Jewish image of God, he, nonetheless, reflected his generation's rejection of traditional Jewish culture. As reflected in the Talmudic tradition, Buber found inspiration in not placing rationalism at the forefront of the faith. Instead, he embraced an emotional approach towards Judaism.

Buber published *Ich Und Du* in 1923. In his philosophy "I and Thou," Buber taught that interpersonal human relationships signified, in themselves, the meaning of life. He posited that all interpersonal relationships cumulate in the individual's "knowing" of God. He wrote, "... when two people relate to each other authentically and humanly, God is the electricity that surges between them."

In his philosophy "I and Thou," Buber taught that interpersonal human relationships signified, in themselves, the meaning of life. He posited that all interpersonal relationships cumulate in the individual's "knowing" of God.

He further maintained that three vital relationships exist, Jews having compromised every one of them collectively as a society. These relationships were between man and man, man and nature, and man and God. He believed that the self's existence is only ascertained from the comparative presences of other selves. He wrote in *I and Thou* that "... egos appear by setting themselves apart from other egos," that "Through the Thou the person becomes I," and that "All real life is meeting."

He proposed to find new ways of grounding these opposing forces in dialogical relationships and referenced Hasidism as the guide for Zionists to follow to accomplish this goal, venturing into the political domain. Buber had left Frankfurt in 1938 for Jewish Palestine and became a professor at the new Hebrew University in Jerusalem, teaching anthropology and sociology.

To enter into dialogic relations with other people, animate beings, and God, Buber rejected the idea of Zionism as an exclusively national, as opposed to a religious, movement. He proposed, instead, that the goal of Zionism is social and spiritual enrichment, which can be accomplished through this dualistic treatment of the world by entering into peaceful and equal relations with one's counterpart.

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Martin Buber at Hebrew University (Jerusalem)

Buber soon found himself amongst the ranks of left-wing intellectuals at Hebrew University, engaging with colleagues such as Gershom Sholem, the great student of Jewish mysticism. Buber and Sholem were both Zionist German Jews and shared a profound interest in Hasidism and Jewish mysticism within the progression of contemporary Jewish belief. Sholem defended mysticism's place in Judaism by asserting that Jews should not only accept the non-rational elements of the faith but, instead, consider them as representing its original, vibrant, and living foundations.

Buber's "I-Thou" philosophy guided his political theory: He believed in the importance of dialogue between people. His political message, which hinged on his idea of dialogue and balance between Jews and Arabs instead of a unilateral and violent struggle for domination, was unpopular with the Palestine Yishuv (Jewish Agency) government.

His religious message drew few takers, as well. It proved exceedingly unpopular among Palestine's mainstream religious communities. He advocated a shift in Jewish practice away from halacha, obligatory Jewish Law toward a more ethically religious and spiritual vision, one more focused on prophetic teachings, as he understood them.

Buber maintained these ideological positions throughout the violent 1936-1939 Arab uprising against the British and the Jews. When German Jews and Jews from other European countries began emigrating to Palestine in 1939, spurred on by Nazi persecution, Britain limited their numbers. Its White Paper of 1939, designed to appease the Arabs, capped Jewish immigration at 75,000 for ten years. After that, the Arabs would determine how many Jews could emigrate to Palestine.

After the State's establishment in 1948, Buber continued to criticize its policies and leadership on many issues—primarily, its treatment of Arab refugees—becoming a thorn in the side of Israeli first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion.

Despite his controversial stances, Buber was a Zionist and defended the Jewish presence in Palestine – albeit, from his unique perspective: He cited the need for a collective space to bring this dialogical way of approaching relationships into being. Kirsch explains that “after Buber moved to Jerusalem, in 1938, he opposed a Jewish declaration of statehood, arguing that Palestine should become a binational state shared by Arabs and Jews.” In Buber's view, the Zionist movement needed to reach a consensus with the Arabs. Buber conceived of a bi-national state, and from his philosophical perspective of equal, relational life, advocated for it as the most authentic fulfillment of Zionism. He wanted to create an exemplary society not characterized by Jewish domination of the Arabs.

Kirsch wrote about a 1939 exchange between Gandhi, an antisemite, and Buber on violence. Buber saw Israeli values as Jewish and hence, in his terms, inherently nonviolent. He also believed in the kingship of God and echoed the Jewish belief that worship of a man or leader is political idolatry, perhaps the greatest sin of all sins.

The exchange went like this, according to Kirsch: “In 1939, [Buber] engaged in a polemic with Gandhi, who had published a statement saying that Zionism was an injustice to the Arabs of Palestine, and also recommending that the Jews of Nazi Germany stay there and resist, using nonviolent satyagraha, or ‘soul force.’”

“Buber disagreed with such a sentiment, citing the differences between occupation by the British Empire and Hitler's sudden violent offensive against the lives of all Jews within his reach. Later in Buber's open letter back to Gandhi, he insisted that Zionism was not an aggressive or violent movement, saying, “No one who counts himself in the ranks of Israel can desire to use force.” Kirsch wrote that “This was its own kind of wishful thinking, and Buber admitted that his attitude toward violence involved a contradiction: “We should be able even to fight for justice—but to fight lovingly.”

However, Buber's pacifism couldn't withstand the sad realities of the Middle East expressed in the seemingly irreconcilable differences between two peoples – Jews and Arabs. For a dialogical relationship to function peacefully, both sides must be equally willing to participate: Unfortunately, the Arab population of Palestine would continue to mount violent offenses against the Jews. These realities, which confronted him throughout his life, proved irreconcilable.

Benjamin Ivry's 2012 article titled “Martin Buber's Biblical

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Translation” expounded on the impact of Buber’s life work. Before the Holocaust, Buber’s target audience for his teachings was German and European Jews. However, in 1961 when Buber published his German translation of the Hebrew Bible, Buber’s Hebrew University colleague Gershom Sholem addressed Buber’s work. This translation, he said, had been meant as a gift for the Jews of Germany and commented on the tragedy that, in large part, Buber’s intended audience no longer existed. Sholem said, “Jews for whom [Buber] undertook this translation are no longer alive, and those among their children who escaped this catastrophe no longer read German.”

European Jewry’s decimation during the Holocaust shook Buber’s confidence regarding God’s relationship with His people. Places like Auschwitz, he believed, signified evidence of deep estrangement between Jews and God. Despite that, his religious and psychological teachings held firm, especially his belief in an indestructible need for all peoples to have a relationship with God. This belief drove Buber to devote his life to rallying the Jewish spirit and deepening its relationship with God.

The originality of Buber’s political philosophy had a last-

ing impact upon the evolving landscape of the Zionist relationship with its Arab population. Albeit his brand of Zionism was not characteristic of pre-World War II German Jewry, it represented a pivotal perspective in Zionist dialogue. Buber’s influence and perspective defined Israel’s peace movement, which sought accommodation with Palestinian Arabs. And, for some, despite markedly different circumstances, much of his thought remains relevant today.

For these and other reasons, and not least because of his Jewishly-rooted dialogic “I-Thou” philosophy, Martin Buber was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature ten times and seven times for the Nobel Peace Prize. His writings continue to influence left-wing peace ideology today.

Hailey Oldfield is a Montreal-born writer and photographer, whose hobbies include delving into World War II history. After graduating from Concordia University in 2020 with a degree in Western Society & Culture and Photography, she creates independent photojournalist series often documenting local social justice movements and animal rights issues prevalent in Canada.



EMMANUEL LÉVINAS : LA PROMESSE HUMANISTE D’UN RESCAPÉ DE GUERRE

SALOMÉ ASSOR

Par quels tourments en vient-on à être philosophe ?

Par le livre, répond Emmanuel Lévinas ; précisément la Bible, livre par excellence. Si la Bible englobe éthique, mythologie et langage, les deux modes de pensée religieux et philosophique n’en font plus qu’un. C’est donc le sentiment religieux qui conduit Lévinas à la philosophie, qu’il désigne « respect des livres » (*Éthique et Infini*, p.13).

Le philosophe juif français naît en 1906 à Kaunas, Lituanie. Dès l’enfance, le judaïsme lui est enseigné par la Torah, en tant que littérature éthique, religieuse et philosophique. Un maître d’hébreu se charge de cet enseignement biblique. Cette éducation juive fonde son empire philosophique.



Philosopher Emmanuel Levinas at home

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Première Guerre mondiale : Lévinas s'exile en Russie. Son premier livre, *De l'existence à l'existant*, est rédigé dans un stalag, camp de prisonniers de guerre. Lorsque les combats cessent sur le front occidental, Emmanuel Lévinas se rend à Strasbourg, tandis que sa famille retourne en Lituanie. Naturalisé français en 1930, il entame aussitôt son service militaire. Seconde Guerre mondiale : Lévinas est emprisonné en Allemagne, mais son statut de soldat le protège de l'extermination nazie. Tenue en échec, sa judéité devient un silence. Sa famille, restée en Lituanie, est entièrement exterminée. Ce premier chemin de vie, fût-il miné par l'antisémitisme, renforce *in fine* le sentiment religieux, la spiritualité juive de Lévinas. De là l'urgence, pour le rescapé, de repenser le rapport entre hommes.

Chambres à gaz, camps, terrorisme et autres barbaries humaines : voilà ce qui engage un rescapé de guerre à reconstruire le monde. Cette remise en état commence par l'éthique. En tant que philosophe d'après-guerre, Lévinas espère restituer la responsabilité perdue des hommes entre eux. Dans *L'Humanisme de l'autre homme* figurent les thèmes repères de cette entreprise : l'altérité, l'amour, la responsabilité, l'humanisme, la liberté. « Réinventer l'humanisme. Retrouver le sens perdu de l'être humain », peut-on lire sur la quatrième de couverture. Cet ouvrage répond à la crise humaniste qu'est la guerre. Il y dresse le portrait d'une morale « qui pourrait véritablement nous protéger de nous-mêmes » (*Humanisme*, Préface).

L'œuvre de Lévinas lui vaut aujourd'hui une place prévalente dans le monde intellectuel. Penseur marquant de la philosophie française moderne, il se démarque de ses contemporains en ce que son regard est non seulement celui d'un juif, mais encore *investi* de judéité. Écrits bibliques et rabbiniques, kabbale et tradition hébraïque dans son ensemble contribuent largement à ses thèses importantes, notamment quant à l'éthique, à la subjectivité ou encore à sa célèbre philosophie du visage. C'est dire que sa pensée s'érige sur une lecture de la tradition juïdique. Cette dernière est manifestement un socle d'espérance.

Chez Lévinas, le visage est défini comme « résistance infinie au meurtre de l'autre en tant qu'autre » (*Totalité et Infini*, p. 293). Le visage est une paralysie du mal. Ce qui, à l'origine, constitue l'injonction fondamentale du Décalogue : « Tu ne tueras point ». L'auteur parle de l'*Épiphanie* du visage, cette ouverture de l'humanité qui, « dans sa nudité de visage, me présente le dénuement du pauvre et de l'étranger » (*Totalité et Infini*, p. 188). C'est, encore là,

une référence directe à la tradition juïdique : l'obligation devant l'étranger. Le devoir d'hospitalité est au fondement de l'œuvre lévinassienne. Sa philosophie, soutenue par une éthique du visage, engage au don, à l'accueil et à la protection de l'autre – ces valeurs s'inscrivant d'abord dans les récits de la pensée juive. La faiblesse suprême d'un visage m'engage à être juste, à protéger, à respecter celui qui le porte. Une promesse de non-violence. La fragilité du visage est, pour Lévinas, un dépouillement tel qu'il commande la moralité. Bien qu'elle puisse sembler abstraite, cette thèse n'aborde rien d'autre que le visage lui-même, c'est-à-dire la peau qui le recouvre, la voix qui en sort, le regard qui peut à la fois voir et être vu. C'est donc bien plus qu'une image, fût-elle unique ; le visage est la personne.

Dans *Totalité et Infini*, Lévinas aborde le bouleversement affectif qu'est la Rencontre. À la manière de la fonction religieuse, la rencontre enraye la violence, l'emportement, le crime. Le face à face de deux hommes institue le sacrifice, visage oblige. C'est un dévouement absolu que d'être en face d'autrui. Autrement dit, là où coïncident deux visages, il est un ordre social. Ce temps de la Rencontre est bienveillant. Il est aux antipodes des temps de guerre. En ce sens, l'œuvre de Lévinas sublime la morsure en baiser – au point qu'il consacre plusieurs de ses travaux à une philosophie de la caresse. L'on y entend un cri primal d'armistice.

Ailleurs, le visage est également « l'impossibilité de se dérober à l'élection. » (*L'Humanisme*, 13) Puisque nul ne peut répondre, en mon nom, à l'appel dont je suis le destinataire, être soi signifie être élu : non interchangeable. Chacun est absolument unique dans le lieu commun de tous, « otage irremplaçable des autres » (*L'Humanisme*, 83), responsable de chaque geste posé au nom de sa personne. Le concept d'élection, caractéristique de la tradition juive, est alors central chez Lévinas.

C'est d'abord une fascination que suscitent ces propos. Pourquoi, à l'inverse de Lévinas, le discours de certains rescapés est-il dépourvu d'espoir? Les survivants de guerre ont toujours à l'esprit la possibilité de guerre. Est-ce alors un manque de lucidité qui provoque une telle confiance en l'avenir? Plusieurs entretiens avec Lévinas soulèvent cette question. Dans les camps qui lui auront coûté sa famille, le jeune juif ne tient plus qu'à un fil, celui de l'espoir. Cet espoir, d'où lui vient-il? De ce temps précis qu'enseigne le judaïsme, celui de la patience.

« L'avenir, c'est l'autre », lit-on dans *Le Temps et l'Autre*.

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C'est donc qu'il existe un avenir où l'autre homme n'est plus à craindre. Les conclusions de Lévinas en font un véritable philosophe de l'espérance.

Peut-on, encore aujourd'hui, adhérer à une philosophie en tout point corrélée à la religion ?

Il est vrai qu'à l'heure d'une modernité sceptique devant toute forme de spiritualité religieuse, plusieurs remettent en question l'adhésion de Lévinas au patrimoine de la philosophie. Or « le juif est inéluctablement rivé à son judaïsme », déclare Lévinas dans *Paix et droit* en 1935, au risque de déchoir sur le marché de l'opinion. À vrai dire, le monde éthique et humaniste qu'il décrit est nécessairement spirituel. En l'autre homme, je perçois que quelque chose le transcende. Voilà encore un tour de force du philosophe. En fait, notre lien privilégié au merveilleux – discours ultérieurement naïf aux yeux de la philosophie et foncièrement amputé de ses valeurs – n'est plus condamné à la même indifférence. De la Rencontre naît l'éthique. C'est le miracle religieux. Il s'y joue l'inexplicable.

Lévinas provoque une réconciliation fondamentale, celle de la modernité et de sa spiritualité perdue, fût-elle juïque ou non.

Ainsi, à présent que la philosophie s'est départie de ce qui, pourtant, était essentiel à l'humanité ; à présent que la modernité s'est interdit le sentiment religieux de sa finitude ; quel sens peut-on encore réserver à la vie... si ce n'est, tel un croyant suspendu au ciel, de prétendre au miracle de la Rencontre ? Comment détourner les hommes de la guerre, qu'ils reconnaissent en l'autre son humanité, sa hauteur, qu'ils voient en lui un messenger, un poète, un *Juste* ? Comment se justifie l'espoir ? Vers où croire ?

Les réponses à ces questions nous sont révélées par le juif lituanien, l'écorché vif, l'enfant des camps, Emmanuel Lévinas : riposte humaniste à la barbarie de son siècle.

Née à Montréal en 1998, Salomé Assor étudie en philosophie à l'UQAM et s'intéresse particulièrement à l'éthique et au langage. Passionnée d'écriture, elle publie son premier livre, Un, en 2019 aux éditions Poètes de Brousses.



WHY SECULAR JEWS SHOULD EMBRACE THE TORAH

JOSHUA SCHECTER

If you ask any secular Jew who Jacob was in the Torah, chances are they might be at a loss for an answer. Was he a Jewish Patriarch? Did he have something to do with Esau? Who was Esau, for that matter? People vaguely know that Jacob stole the blessings intended for his brother Esau, but do they know the entire story surrounding this drama? And why is it important?

The question we must now ask ourselves is: when will we learn the Torah's lessons? Or perhaps it is: what happens if we don't?

Two studies by the Pew Research Center found that 65% of American Jews "seldom or never" study religious texts. Moreover, only 62% of them know that "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is not one of the Ten Commandments. I confirmed this for myself. When I asked my Jewish friends who they thought Jacob was, they had no clue.

Most secular Jews believe that the Torah is an accumulation of dos and don'ts, summed up by the 613 mitzvot or commandments. However, they don't know that the mitzvot are derived from the captivating stories contained in the Torah, which brim with human emotion, passion, and behaviours detrimental often to those who engage in them and others. These stories are lessons in human psychology whose relevance remains vital even today. But if we don't read the stories, we would never understand the lessons they teach.

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Take the Cain and Abel story, for example. Cain sacrifices his first fruits to God, while Abel sacrifices the firstborn of his flock, which God prefers. Cain is jealous. God knows this but wants him to articulate his feelings so that he doesn't give in to his jealousy. The idea of someone doing a better job than someone else is a common human experience; whenever two people perform similar tasks, one inevitably performs it better than the other.

The text doesn't tell us why God preferred Abel's sacrifice over Cain's. God had His reasons. Ultimately, the why doesn't matter. What matters is how Cain reacted to rejection.

When Cain refuses to answer God, God issues a warning: He tells him to be careful since sin (harmful behaviour) lies at the doorstep of his psyche, but that he can rule over it. Cain is too emotionally distraught to heed God's advice. Instead, he gives in to sin and strikes his brother dead.

Did Cain know that by hitting him, Abel would die? Until then, no human had ever died. This question touches upon one aspect of the narrative's complexity. More significantly, the story arrives at the heart of sibling envy and confronts man's capacity for evil. Cain's infamous response to God's inquiry as to where Abel was – "Am I my brother's keeper?" still reverberates today.

The theme of rage and envy, especially amongst siblings, is a common theme in the Torah. Besides Cain and Abel, other brothers - Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his eleven brothers - grapple with complex relationship issues. Only the last set of brothers reconciles with one another, which concludes the Book of Genesis. The remaining four books depict the same human behaviours acted



out in Genesis but on a national scale. How many times did the children of Israel not turn on their brother Moses once they left Egypt? Even Moses' cousin Korach rebelled against him to gain the leadership of the Israelites, which resulted in his catastrophic punishment.

The Torah depicts the complexities inherent in human relationships in the most fundamental ways: To this day, Jews who read and study Torah debate the issues of personal responsibility, when to give in, and when to remain firmly detached. Every character in the Torah is flawed. Even Moses – the lawgiver who spoke face to face with God – never entered the Promised Land after transgressing God's command.

We can see from the above that we must study the Torah to understand it. Even today, it remains a literary and psychological gift to humanity. The stories depict characters who let their emotions spiral out of control while rationalizing their actions and the mayhem that inevitably ensues – to themselves and others.

The Torah illustrates this universal reality: that if we don't attain insights into our behaviours and confront our flaws, we and those around us will

suffer the consequences.

These lessons are incredibly relevant today, particularly to young secular Jews. In the name of social justice and Tikkun Olam, young secular Jews often support causes and movements that vilify Israel while believing it makes them better people. Black Lives Matter, as one example, has openly and falsely labelled Israel an apartheid state and called for its destruction. Despite that, many young Jews champion the movement without demanding fundamental changes in its 2016 charter, which levels ugly and false accusations against Israel. Did they even bother reading it, which levels ugly and false accusations against Israel?

And why are so many open to believing the worst of the world's only Jewish state? According to a recent Jewish Electorate Institute survey, 34 percent of American Jews agreed that "Israel's treatment of Palestinians is similar to racism in the United States," 25% agreed that "Israel is an apartheid state," and 22% agreed that "Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians."

Sure, we can blame ignorance. On a deeper level, however, the answer

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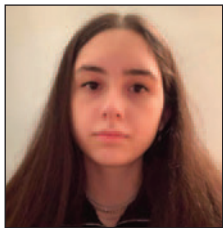
lies within, masking our not so noble motivations. Had these well-meaning young Jews studied the Torah, they would have understood that our intense emotions often lead us into error. For young people, it may involve the fierce need to fit into an ideological group. When channeled correctly, passionate commitment to a noble cause is highly noteworthy; but when not, these passions will bring on destructive behaviours that we justify for noble reasons. The Torah illustrates that we should use our intellect to rule over our emotions by thinking carefully about what we do, why we do it, and its possible consequences. Only by knowing ourselves first can we truly understand our role in the world.

Like young secular Jews today, the ancient Israelites also acted out of fierce emotion, wound up neglecting their duty to their brethren and God on multiple occasions, and suffered the consequences. The spies who discouraged the tribes from conquering the land led to the

Israelites wandering for forty years in the desert. The feud between the children of Leah and Rachel led to the fracturing of Ancient Israel. The Israelites who never threw out the idol-worshippers after settling Canaan showed their ambiguity in exercising national sovereignty. In the end, outsiders ironically expelled them from the land itself.

Nowadays, Jews in Israel live amongst Palestinians some of whom sacrifice their children through suicide bombings to destroy Israel. And within Israel, conflicts between secular and Hareidim exist, as one example. These conflicts extend within the US, creating a political as well as cultural divide between Jews. The question we must now ask ourselves is: when will we learn the Torah's lessons? Or perhaps it is: what happens if we don't?

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HOW ISRAEL CAME TO LEAD THE WORLD IN COVID-19 VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

JUDITH B. IBARRA

The numbers speak for themselves. Despite having had one of the world's worst coronavirus infection rates per capita – from a population of 9.3 million, 1.3 million Israelis were infected, and 8,100 died – within months, Israel jumped to become a world leader in early vaccination response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Its vaccine rollout began on December 19, 2020: two months later, over 84% of people aged 70 and over received two doses of the Pfizer vaccine: Within four months, Israel fully vaccinated over 55% of its population, outperforming every other country in the world, except for the US and the UK. During this time, Israel administered almost 11.0 doses per 100 population: Second and third place weren't even close, with Bahrain at 3.5 doses and the UK at 1.4 doses.

This feat was especially astonishing given the shortages of available Pfizer and Moderna vaccines at the time. Western countries, such as Canada, began their inoculation drive on December 14, and by February 2021, just over 3% of Canadians received one dose, compared to 14% in the US and 21% in the UK.

Yet Israel, despite competing with a world clamoring for whatever vaccines Pfizer and Moderna had available for distribution, managed to



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[Israel] used many of its natural limitations to its advantage. Because of its constant state of warfare, Israel from its establishment in 1948 had invested heavily in what became a highly effective centralized health care system, that delivers its products nationally.

acquire as many Pfizer vaccines as needed. How?

Notwithstanding its small population and other disadvantages, the Pfizer corporation saw potential in Israel's nationalized public healthcare system. It realized that it could quickly provide essential data relating to the Pfizer vaccine as a controlled test case. Essentially, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu turned Israel into a vast medical experiment to examine "whether [as stated in the Israel-Pfizer collaboration agreement] herd immunity is achieved after reaching a certain percentage of vaccination coverage".

Israel did not disappoint: It used many of its natural limitations to its advantage. Because of its constant state of warfare, Israel from its establishment in 1948 had invested heavily in what became a highly effective centralized health care system, that delivers its products nationally. Its reputation as a start-up leader in technology and medicine was also exemplary.

Its small size – geographically and demographically – and having one central, essential airport proved helpful, as well, enabling the government carefully to control entry into and exit out of the country.

There were also other advantages. The government, health plans, and hospitals have a long history of working together effectively. Its health infrastructure has a complete medical records platform for all Israeli residents, facilitating the coordination and delegation of tasks among the four publicly funded health organizations— Clalit, Leumit, Maccabi, and Meuhedet. This platform, consisting of a cadre of highly trained health professionals (doctors, nurses, and emergency care providers), enables it to access and update information quickly.

This preparedness was especially apparent when Israel de-

livered the vaccines to its citizens in record time. Excellent cooperation between its four health plans enabled Israel to quickly set up many vaccination sites and organize healthcare professionals to administer them in an orderly manner.

Its small size and territory initially worked against it, multiplying contacts, and upping the number of people having contracted this highly contagious disease. However, by enabling authorities to reach people faster, this disadvantage was offset, especially with spread-out health facilities unified within the confines of a clear vaccination plan.

Government support also proved essential. Special government funding enabled the purchase of enough vaccines to meet the country's needs, which were immediately prioritized: those most at risk received the vaccine first. At the same time, outreach programs encouraged all citizens to get vaccinated. Moreover, Israel's technological expertise enabled it to develop creative responses to technical challenges, such as keeping the vaccines at sub-zero refrigeration levels. Despite some initial rollout flaws, these well-organized efforts swept Israel into the forefront of the global effort to curb the effects of the pandemic within a relatively short time. Meanwhile, Israel's highly nationalized system and research centers closely monitored and analyzed the results of the vaccination efforts, which were conveyed to Pfizer and the world.

Today, new variants are cropping up around the world. The Delta variant, the most contagious strain of COVID-19, surged in Israel, as elsewhere. However, the procedures put in place months before are holding firm. In August, Israel had the highest seven-day rolling average of new daily coronavirus cases per million people, having overtaken Montenegro and Georgia for an average of 1,013 new daily cases per million people over a week. Today, barely three months later, the numbers have decreased significantly, to such a degree that Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett boasted to the *Sunday Times* that Israel had "crushed the Delta variant." Bennett, however, gloated too soon. As of the Dateline's publication, Israel has the distinction of leading the world in per capita infection rates, with .6% of the population testing positive for the Omicron variant.

But what about herd immunity? Before this latest outbreak, Israel had estimated that 75% of the population would need to be vaccinated or have survived the virus to achieve herd immunity, decreasing the spread of infections. However, due to waning immunity levels, achieving herd immunity appears some ways off. The Pfizer vaccine's efficacy

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diminished to about 47 percent five months after a second dose; when it came to the Delta virus, its efficacy dropped to 53 percent. (Will the Omicron variant result in bringing about herd immunity? It remains to be seen.)

Israel, to offset the vaccine's diminished efficacy, especially considering mutated variants, was the first country to propose boosters in the form of third doses. On July 14, the immuno-compromised received their booster shot; a month later, those aged twelve and older became eligible for a third dose.

Does the booster work? Initial studies have proved promising. In a collaborative effort, Harvard Medical School and Clalit Research Institute studied the effectiveness of a third vaccine. It determined that a third dose was highly effective in protecting against covid-related severe side effects: 93% in preventing COVID-19-related admission to hospital, 92% in preventing severe disease, and 81% in preventing COVID-19-related death.

Will the boosters prove sufficient to keep severe cases of Covid at bay and enable the country to return to some semblance of normalcy? Again, we don't know, but Israel's record in being ahead of the curve is reassuring. Israel's public health infrastructure, renowned for its scientific-technological-epidemiological capabilities, can respond quickly and efficiently in meeting its population's health care needs.

In this regard and many others, this tiny country, the region's only democracy and leading scientific and technological center, has earned the trust of renowned pharmaceutical companies. It has also proved a role model for other countries within the Middle East and beyond.

Judith B. Ibarra is a CIJR intern and health science student at Vanier College. In 2019, she was a participant in the semi-final high school physics competition of the Weizmann Institute of Science, and a participant in the leadership program LEDA, at the Cummings Centre. Some of her interests include Middle Eastern politics, psychology, the medical field, and marketing.

CIJR, DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST, AND THE BARUCH COHEN ISRAEL INTERNSHIPS

FREDERICK KRANTZ

CIJR's *Baruch Cohen Israel Internships (BCII)* program, now in its 15th year, is a large part of what makes our unique student-written and produced *Dateline: Middle East (DME)* journal possible.

Articles for a *DME* issue are written from a research training framework involving talented students recruited in part through *Baruch Cohen Internships*-funded stipends.

Cohen Fellows, "apprenticed" to CIJR editorial staff and academic Fellows, are assigned Israel- and Jewish-world-related topics to research, which they then write up under professional guidance.

The goal of the *BCII* program is three-fold. First, to deepen and broaden students' knowledge of basic Israel-related history and politics, and second, to sharpen their research and expressive skills. Their guided research draws on CIJR's vast *Israel and Jewish World Data Bank*. Initial draft articles are then revised, resulting in publication-ready pieces.

The third goal of the program is to develop informed, self-confident, and expressively capable Israel advocates. *CIJR* is indeed proud of the many informed, competent, and

highly motivated young people, able articulately to defend Israel and the Jewish people—on and off-campus—that we have graduated over the years.

We named the *BCII* program after one of *CIJR*'s guiding spirits, Baruch Cohen z"l, a brilliant Romanian Holocaust survivor who, with his resourceful and determined wife, Sonia, z"l, made fighting antisemitism a key part of his life's work.

Our Research Chairman for 30 years, my dear friend and colleague Baruch, known as *CIJR*'s *tsaddik*, passed in 2018 at almost 99. He always insisted that the *Institute*'s work with young people, who are our future, was central to its mission.

Hence, it is a pleasure and honour to submit this short piece to *DME* and to remember, while recognizing our talented students' ongoing work, the blessing that Baruch and Sonia's lives were, and are, for all of us.

(Prof. Frederick Krantz is the Founder and Director of the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research)