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About Tikvah

Tikvah is a think tank and educational institution focused on the foundational ideas of Jewish civilization, the great challenges facing the Jewish people and the State of Israel, and the political, moral, and economic traditions of Western civilization and American democracy. Tikvah runs a wide range of programs in the United States, Israel, and around the world, including educational initiatives and fellowships, publications and websites, conferences, and policy research.

Our main interest is challenging exceptional students—from middle school to highschool, from gap year to college, from graduate students to emerging professionals—to become Jewish leaders and Jewish citizens. We seek to expose them to the most important ideas—in Jewish thought, Zionist history, political philosophy, economics, and strategy—and to inculcate a sense of responsibility for Jewish, Western, and American civilization. We also work closely with the alumni of our various programs, and we encourage our students to think about their time with us as the gateway to a larger Tikvah community.

Learn more about the Tikvah community of ideas at
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Dear Readers and Supporters of the *Solomon Journal*,

A volume like the one you are now holding in your hands, a print magazine written and produced by talented high school students, does not happen without accruing many debts. It's my happy duty here to acknowledge the most important of those debts before sharing a brief provocation. First, the editorial team, ably led by Jacob Neplokh and Ella Cohen, did the hard work of identifying the best student pieces, shepherding them along the editorial process until they had a strong final product. And they had to pick from over twenty pieces from nearly that many student writers, working on symposia contributions, features, and reviews. Supporting our student writers and editors in every facet of the production were two steady guides and mentors, Kennedy Lee, our Consulting Editor, and Juliana Castillo, Assistant Director for the Solomon Fellowship. It's fair to say that without our fine student writers and editors, none of this would happen. And without our fearless leaders, where would our students be in all of this?

The question posed by this issue's symposium is both old and new: are our interests as Americans ever in conflict with our interests as Jews? I'll let our students' contributions speak for themselves without attempting to summarize their rich responses. But I will point to some precedent in our long civilizational history, identifying an episode that may provide some perspective to our current question.

As I write these words, the weekly Torah portion is taken from the book of *Shemot*, Exodus, the great narrative of our nation-making. And at the very beginning of that book, we're offered the origin story of one of our nation's greatest heroes:

It happened in those days that Moses grew up and went out to his brethren and observed their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man, of his brethren. He turned this way and that and saw that there was no man, so he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand (*Shemot* 2:11-12)

The birth and early life of Moshe provide rich material for an examination of the ambivalences and tensions of living with a multiple identity, a condition that we citizens of late liberal democracy know all too well.¹ *Moshe Rabbeinu*—born to slaves, bred and educated in the House of Pharaoh—must know that his identity is a complex one. Moshe's world-class education makes him especially aware of the personal and ethical burden he bears, giving him both the intellectual and technical skills, as well as the refined

sense of moral righteousness, that only a truly liberal education, can provide.² It is this very deep and broad educational exposure which must have cultivated Moshe's awareness of the complexities of his own self, setting the stage for a decisive choice which will change things for him—and the rest of the world—forever.

Seeing his Jewish brethren suffering at the very hands of those employed by the Royal Household, his own home for the crucial formative years of his young life, Moshe, perhaps for the very first time, is forced to confront a profoundly unsettling question: *Mi Anokhi*, who am I, really?³ At my most elemental, existential core, am I a favored son of Egypt or a despised son of Hebrew slaves? Both identities were present under the surface in some blended, inchoate form, but, to date, neither had emerged with a distinctiveness or clarity: *ויפן כה וכה וירא כי אין איש* The deep empathy Moshe feels for his nation in witnessing this act of violence creates a connection with the Jewish people and a coherence of self that had perhaps eluded him to that point. At the very moment Moshe makes the dramatic decision to take a stand against the Egyptian oppressor afflicting his poor Jewish brother, two things occur: in the historical-temporal plane, Moshe slays the taskmaster, setting him at political odds with the Throne that reared him; in the psycho-spiritual realm, Moshe slew the Egyptian Prince (*ויך את המצרי*) that still lurked uneasily in his heart, submerging this part of his dual-identity in the deep layers (*ויטמנהו בחול*) of his sub-conscious mind. Moses, the Prince of Egypt, became Moshe, the radical Other, preparing the way for his prophetic calling. And even though just a few verses later Moshe will still be identified by his surface appearance as an Egyptian (*איש מצרי הציילנו*), something has changed, something has been clarified. He cannot simply go back to living in both worlds, the Egyptian and the Hebrew; something must give.

In every age, the faithful Jew must engage the surrounding culture not merely as consumer but, rather, as thoughtful and trenchant critic. When possible, the religiously-driven cultural critic may even turn into a cultural contributor, a partner in creating real artifacts, material and otherwise,

²On the problem of “double life” and contemporary religious identity, see Rav Hutner’s now famous letter in *Pachad Yitzchak*, *Igros u’Kesavim*, p. 84.

³Ibn Ezra (*Shemot* 2:3) catalogs the kind of curriculum the young *Moshe Rabbeinu* must have been exposed to, emphasizing both the intellectual and moral advantages Moshe acquired by virtue of his royal education. For a comprehensive treatment of Moshe’s pre-calling early career, see Bryna Yocheved Levy, “Moshe: Portrait of the Leader as a Young Man,” in *Torah of the Mothers: Contemporary Jewish Women Read Classical Jewish Texts*, eds. Ora Wiskind Elper and Susan Handelman (Urim, 2000), pp. 398-429.

³Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (above n. 2, p. 15) notes that the very first question Moshe asks Hashem when called to assume the role of redeemer is “*Mi Anokhi?*” At the level of *peshat*, Rabbi Sacks reminds the reader that Moshe’s question is more about personal worthiness—“who am I to stand before Pharaoh”—than personal identity. Still, the language is suggestive. On the centrality of the theme of Identity in *Sefer Shemot*, see also Caroline Peyser, “The Book of Exodus: A Search for Identity,” in *Torah of the Mothers* (above n. 2), pp. 379-97.

informed by a compelling God-centered consciousness and religious worldview. In this way, he must witness against the powers and principalities that run counter to his divinely implanted Image, offering a saner and more soulful alternative. And while our own religious community has encouraged us—mostly for the better, I believe—to think we can live the life of Both/And, there are critical moments of truth and decision that require the radical choice of Either/Or. When confronted with this choice, the true son or daughter of Israel must side with the one necessary thing. Moses, like his and our ancestor and patriarch, *Avraham HaIvri*—the first cultural and religious iconoclast: *Kol haOlam kulo al Tzad Echad veHu al Tzad Sheni*, the Whole World is on One Side and he (Avraham) is on the Other Side—reminds us that, at its core, religion is a counter-cultural phenomena, not a space for convenience or accommodation. Sometimes, we must simply choose.

Enjoy our students' reflections on this perennial question and keep an eye out for the next issue!

Warmly,

Rabbi Mark Gottlieb
Senior Director, US Education
The Tikvah Fund



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The Jews of Early America

BY ELLA COHEN

FEATURE

At first glance, it seems difficult, if not impossible, to extract the Jewish presence from the American story. The Jewish people have been a distinct and oftentimes influential force in this land since long before it became a nation, and Jewish ideals are a vital piece of the moral foundation upon which America rests. Though to fully illustrate the relationship between America and the Jewish people, we must go back two centuries before this country's founding.

The very first Jewish contact with America occurred in 1585, when engineer and metallurgist Joachim Gans accompanied the famous Sir Walter Raleigh on one of his state-funded expeditions into what would later become Virginia, providing his invaluable assistance with the purification of metals, while aiding the exploring party generally. However, the foundation for a full-fledged Jewish community in the New World would not be laid until 1654, when Jewish refugees from Brazil began to establish a community in what was then New Amsterdam. These efforts were supplemented by the efforts of Congregation Shearith Israel, a flourishing Jewish community originally composed of Spanish and Portuguese Jews based in Manhattan that established a Sephardic synagogue and community. This community, the oldest active Jewish congregation in America, is still in full practice today and is currently under the leadership of the brilliant Rabbi Meir Soleveichik. It was within this congregation that Jews were able to establish themselves more firmly as permanent residents of America, as well as institute the central facets of Jewish observances, such as kosher food, religious education, prayer services, and the celebration of holidays.

Seeking economic opportunity, pursuing the formation of stronger communities, and fleeing the ever-present religious persecution of Europe, waves of Jews continued to flood into America, establishing important Jewish strongholds in Charleston, Savannah, Newport, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.

By 1776, more than 2,000 Jews resided in the colonies, many as fully integrated participants in the social networks and economic systems. It was this ever-

increasing entrenchment in American society that led to a strong Jewish involvement in the Revolutionary War when it eventually erupted. Jews largely supported the revolutionary efforts and served the Patriot cause in a variety of ways, from joining the Sons of Liberty to fighting in the Continental Army to throwing their economic support behind the American rebels.

This support paid off, as seen in the American victory in 1781, while the Jews saw the greatest fruit of their labors later, with the formal establishment of the Constitution. It was this remarkable document that resulted in irrefutable and irreversible equal legal status for Jews in the fledgling nation. This opened the door for even more enthusiastic Jewish participation in American life, with Jews proudly serving as economic leaders, legislators, writers, educators, justices, and civil servants within their new home.

The remarkable tradition of official support for religious toleration is most clearly enunciated in George Washington's famous letter to the Jewish congregation of Newport, Rhode Island, in which he plainly states that America will give "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." It was in America that the Jewish people, for the first time, received an unreserved assurance of complete freedom of religious practice, one unfettered by tyrannical government infringement and unhinged religious persecution. These very protections of the practices that make up the central tenets of Jewish identity have enabled generations of American Jews to not just survive, but grow and thrive on a level previously unseen in the diaspora.

As a proud American Jew, I continue to draw hope from the immortal words of the Book of Micah, later adopted by George Washington in his letter to the congregation of Newport: "that everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid." My existence in this country is a direct result of those words and the underlying promise embedded in them—one of acceptance, protection, and support. The metaphor perfectly captured in this letter, of an olive branch from the new American nation to the people of a far older faith is one that I continue to place my faith in. Indeed, I believe it is a necessity that there always be a strong Jewish presence in this most remarkable of countries—so that the ideals it was founded on may persist.

Ms. Ella Cohen is a senior at SAR High School in Riverdale. She resides in White Plains, New York.

Haym Salomon: The Forgotten Jewish Savior of the American Revolution

BY ZACH LUKEMAN

FEATURE

On October 19, 1781, General Cornwallis of the British Army ordered his troops to raise the white flag, marking the end of the battle of Yorktown, the final battle of the American Revolution. Historians have anointed this legendary moment, a symbol of the prevailing strength of the Continental Army. However, many historians neglect to mention the man who ensured this battle would happen: 40-year-old immigrant Jewish broker Haym Salomon.

Before the battle of Yorktown, American troops were starving and upset that they still had not been paid for their service. There were murmurings among the soldiers of mutiny or deserting the war. Washington saw an opportunity to destroy the British troops, but had no money for the campaign. He responded to the lack of funds by telling Superintendent of Finance for the Continental Congress, Robert Morris, these four words: “send for Haym Salomon.” Within weeks, Salomon was able to raise the money, both from his own funds and requests of others, saving the American Revolution.

Since crowned the true financier of the Revolution by many Jews, Haym Salomon was a Jewish immigrant who contributed his entire fortune to defeating the British. Salomon was born in 1740 in Lissa, Poland. He left for New York City in 1772, where he became a successful merchant and an avid supporter of the American Revolution, eventually joining the Sons of Liberty. In 1776, Salomon was arrested by the British on charges of espionage, but was soon released to Hessian troops because his fluency in many languages—English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, and Polish—was deemed valuable. While in their custody, the Hessian troops employed Salomon as a translator and equipment supplier. Leveraging his newfound position, Salomon continued to work as a spy helping French and American prisoners escape from Hessian custody. He also managed to convince 500 Hessian troops to become loyal to the Americans. In short, he was an intelligent man who lived without fear.



In 1778, Salomon was arrested once again for espionage, but this time under the penalty of death. Somehow, Salomon was able to escape and flee to Philadelphia, leaving behind his entire life. Salomon arrived in Philadelphia without his business, family, or any money. In order to move his family to Philadelphia, Salomon requested money from the Continental Congress, given his extensive service for them. Despite Salomon's heroics, done at extreme personal risk, the Congress ignored him. At this point, most people would likely give up on the cause out of spite or hatred, but not Haym Salomon. Instead, he built up a whole new brokerage business from the ground up, which he would use to continue contributing to the Revolution.

Salomon became very successful in his business. He was eventually hired as a broker in 1781 by Superintendent of Finance Robert Morris. Before assuming this position with Morris, Salomon was already serving the French troops in Pennsylvania. As a part of his new job, Salomon worked without payment as the financial liaison between the French and the Continental Congress. The most important part of this job was converting foreign bills of exchange into liquid money at the highest possible value.

Additionally, Salomon did a lot of freelance work for the Revolution, giving generously out of his own fortune. He gave private loans to prominent political figures so they could continue to focus all their efforts on the Revolution. Some of these figures included future presidents Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe. Salomon stoutly refused to charge interest on any of these loans, giving them purely because of his dedication to the Patriot cause.

In total, Salomon gave over 650,000 dollars, close to 20 million in today's currency, in loans to the Continental Congress and Army during the war. He paid for troop regiments, weapons, salary provisions, and more. Without Salomon, the Continental Army truly might have lost the war.

Sadly, the young country did not treat Salomon as well as he treated the arising America. Having given almost his entire fortune away in loans, Salomon died penniless. For generations after his death, Salomon's family tried to get the money that the government owed him, but they were never successful due to bureaucratic incompetence. In 1893, there was a motion in Congress to award Salomon with a commemorative gold medal, but it never went through. Salomon was buried in an unmarked grave, as his family did

not even have enough money to buy a headstone. The lack of recognition Salomon received from the American government is egregious. He was vital to the funding and success of the American Revolution. He dedicated his entire life to the cause, even when it put him in harm's way. Salomon never gave up on what he believed in, no matter the danger, no matter the price, and not even when his own country turned its back on him and left him to struggle alone. America will forever remain indebted to Salomon, the Jewish immigrant from Poland who saved the Revolution.

Mr. Zach Lukeman is a junior at The Abraham Joshua Heschel School in New York City. He resides in Manhattan, New York.

A New Viewpoint on Diversity

BY ARI UNGER

FEATURE

My twin brother and I are very close. He and I have been playing in basketball leagues and training in recreation (“rec”) centers in the Bronx together since we were 10 years old. Rec centers are often located in lower-income neighborhoods to help give kids structure and keep them off the street. Most of these rec centers have coaches who went to college and came back to work in the community. With their degrees, they could have gotten a comfortable job, moved to the suburbs, and even gone to graduate school. However, these coaches selflessly chose to help their communities. They gave up opportunities that would be in their personal interest, such as pursuing well-paying jobs, to come back to their home for a job that doesn’t pay as well. They wanted to help the youth in the neighborhoods they grew up in. These coaches are truly compassionate and admirable individuals.

My coaches help me with my athletic skills, while also helping cultivate my character and mindset. They have helped me figure out plans for college and how to play basketball at the next level. I will never forget the first time I walked into a rec center. I could see the gym through the double doors and the treadmill and weights through a room to my right. As I walked up to the gym, a boy a little older than me walked up to me, my brother, and my father. He shook each of our hands and introduced himself. This showed me the culture of respect that the coaches were trying to promote. In the gym, I could see kids of all ages playing, and hear their yells and laughter. A couple of years later I was playing in one of my team’s games. We had a player on our team who was 6’8” and the best player on our team—he had already received some D-1 offers. We were up by 20 points, and he was on the bench. The other team was embarrassed. No one likes losing, not to mention getting blown out. He begged our coach to let him back into the game because he wanted to dunk on the other team so badly. He kept asking and asking, but he was not allowed back in the game. That was simply good sportsmanship. You should never put salt on an open wound, and that dunk would have been the salt. I played basketball my whole life, and I had never been taught that lesson before.



It seems that seriously pursuing a craft or sport used to be more prevalent in the Jewish community. When Jews first came to America, the majority of us were fleeing desolation. We worked hard. We were immigrants, trying to make the American dream a reality, and sports and the arts provided a way to do so. The first person to score a point in the NBA was Jewish, and one of the first superstar players in the NBA was Jewish. Now, nearly a century later, it seems that the Jewish work ethic is waning. Kids grow up comfortably, and do not seem to understand the meaning of work. In Modern Orthodox communities, children have talents, but do not pursue them seriously. A prime example of this is in Jewish day schools. Within these schools, one can be hard pressed to find students seriously pursuing a craft. How many athletes get scholarship offers to play sports in college from these schools? How many child actors, writers, artists, or serious theologians are there in these schools? Very few, if any. At the rec centers, there are kids working harder than some people do their whole lives. Even if you are not the best player there, if you work hard, you will get better. In today's society, so many people focus on talent. Instead, they should be focusing on hard work.

I recently had a conversation with one of my coaches about the Kanye West and Kyrie Irving incidents. We talked about Jews, anti-Semitism, and the Holocaust. The coach even invited me to bring some of my friends from Yeshiva to work out with me. He encouraged me to create a platform and share my ideas. We talked for a very long time, and when we finished the conversation, it occurred to me how dedicated and relatable these coaches were. I have grown up completely different from them. Yet when my community came under attack, they could relate to me. So many people focus on appearances. They focus on the yarmulke and the tzitzit. But my coaches did not. They focused on my character and my talent.

Often, it seems that the people who talk about diversity never visit these communities. People seem to think that diversity is based on how one looks. True diversity is not about how someone looks, but how they act. Character is what people should be judged on, not appearances. I have been in many unique environments in my life. I was in public school with my yarmulke and tzitzit, and one of two Orthodox Jewish families in a city. My first best friends

were not Jewish, but African American. If my life has taught me one thing, it is that people care more about character and values than anything else.

Mr. Ari Unger is a tenth grader at Manhattan Talmudic Academy. He resides in Riverdale, New York.



An Introduction to the Inaugural Solomon Journal Symposium

KENNEDY LEE, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

The cornerstone of this endeavor, both the *Solomon Journal* and the Solomon Fellowship, is the Solomon Symposium. Modeled after the historic *Commentary* Symposium, the Symposium is centered around the most pressing, and often provocative, questions facing young Jews who are passionate in their engagement with both the Jewish tradition and Western civilization. For the winter 2023 edition, the students responded to the prompt: *As American Jews, do our American interests and Jewish interests ever come into conflict?* The responses you are about to encounter represent a range of opinion, from near absolute congruence between those identities and shared roots to growing differences on fundamentals like political debate and judging our fellow citizens. That this seemingly simple question could field a range of responses from Talmudic thought and modern politics to pop culture and near forgotten history beautifully illustrates the curiosity, creativity, and spirit of the Solomon Fellows, without whose dedication and diligence this Journal would have never materialized.

The Tanakh Roots of Core American Values

BY JACOB SHAYEFAR

SYMPOSIUM

Honestly addressing the question of whether Jewish and American interests are at odds requires first defining the underlying values under consideration. To many, what constitutes American values is obvious: private property, civil liberties, the rule of law, and political equality, to name a few. But these values are hardly exclusively American. In fact, these notions are often the extension of ideas first found directly in the Tanakh.

Take, for example, private property. Property rights are a fundamental American value enshrined in our Constitution, as in the due process clauses and the contract clause. But this was not an American invention; rather, scripture heavily implies the existence of property rights. While all land is, ultimately, said to be God's, God delegates this property to people and groups, notably when God gave the land of Canaan to the Israelites. Moreover, the ownership of land and other forms of property is protected through numerous commandments, like the prohibition of theft, coveting, and moving property barriers.

Nor are property rights the only principle where the American and the Jewish ethos heavily converge, nor the only place where the American tradition models the Hebraic. The rule of law is another foundational American ethic that is a core Jewish value derived from Tanakh. In fact, its enactment is one of seven Noahide Laws that apply to Jews and Gentiles alike. The restriction of arbitrary power is so vital to Jewish tradition that the Rambam even justifies the mass execution of an entire city based on their inability to prosecute their prince. The Tanakh also contains specific commandments upholding the all-encompassing scope of the law, such as the prohibition on showing favoritism in judgment on the basis of economic status. In other words, Judaism holds that the law applies to everyone, regardless of position: a glaring endorsement of the rule of law.

Additionally, the rule of law as a more abstract idea is a necessary outgrowth of



the belief in God. Once one concedes that there is a law-giver higher than the monarch, like a monotheistic God who gives commandments, the monarch becomes subservient. And once the monarch is subservient, he can no longer act arbitrarily. In other words, he becomes subject to the laws of God, a point most exemplified by the requirement for an Israelite king to write and read from his personal Torah scroll. Thus, the belief in a transcendent deity, even purely abstractly, implies a belief in the rule of law in this world.

Political equality, a value today frequently conceptualized through a secular lens, can be derived from the proclamation that God created all men and women in His image. Once such a belief is adopted, one must necessarily believe in the inherent dignity of man, regardless of race, social status, economic class, or any other identifier. And once all men have value in the same way, they may be entitled to the same rights. It is hence no surprise that 34% of the citations in the writings of our Founders were found to come from the Bible and that the most frequently cited book was Deuteronomy, which is essentially a constitution between God and the Jewish people. In other words, political equality is a derivative of Jewish beliefs, namely, the foremost belief that all men and women are created *B'tzelem Elokim*, in God's image.

Civil liberties, while indisputably American values, are ultimately also Jewish ideas. For example, the ability to criticize authority is quite important in the Jewish tradition. Jewish law not only permits but even sometimes mandates the use of self-defense, an implication of the right to bear arms. Rabbinic law also has strict rules regarding due process, which courts must follow to inflict punishments. Thus, civil liberties, both specifically and as a whole, are Jewish values.

Freedom, more broadly, is a prominent theme in Exodus, which depicts the Jews escaping from tyranny. During the liberation, Moses pleads with Pharaoh to "let [his] people go," a clear injunction applicable to all governments with authoritarian tendencies, and frequently cited as such. This idea of the citizenry being free from tyranny is as American as apple pie. It is the reason for our Bill of Rights and our general aversion to excessive government. But that is where the congruence ends.

America prizes the liberty underlying Moses's plea, but Judaism goes even farther. While America ends with liberty, that is where Judaism starts. Moses

did not just ask for freedom, he prescribed what the Israelites ought to do with it. He asked Pharaoh not just to “let [his] people go,” to do it “so that they may worship [the Lord].” And once they are free from secular decrees, Moses makes clear that the reason for their secular emancipation was to follow those of God. In other words, American ends are Jewish means.

And that is where our American and Jewish values no longer coincide. While both sets of values stipulate alike first principles that cause them to desire similar things from their government, Jewish values are far more encompassing. While American values stop at governance and are generally indifferent to what one does in their private life, this tendency in itself constituting a leading American value, Jewish values are far more pervasive. Jewish values mandate strict codes of living, from the foods you can eat to the clothes you can wear. Jewish values wish for Gentiles far and wide to practice the Noahide Laws and for every Jew to follow the 613 Torah mitzvot. So, when Jewish values demand that all people act a certain way, and when American values defy such demands, there is bound to be tension. But despite these tensions, it is important to remember that the underlying sets of values share a common origin.

Mr. Jacob Shayefar is a junior at Beverly Hills High School. He resides in Beverly Hills, California.

Regaining our Power Through Knowledge: The Solution to Rising Anti-Semitism on Campus

BY LIR YISSAR

SYMPOSIUM

It is clear that anti-Semitic attacks are on the rise in North America. In the United States, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a U.S.-based international Jewish organization that specializes in civil rights law, reported that 2021 saw the most anti-Semitic attacks since 1979 with a total of 2,717 incidents of assault, vandalism, and harassment against the American Jewish population. This averages out to more than seven incidents per day and a 34% increase year over year. Similarly, in Canada, B'nai Brith's audit showed that there were 2,799 anti-Semitic attacks, an overall increase of 7% from 2020 to 2021. Although as Jews we may like to convince ourselves that these anti-Semitic attacks don't target Jewish youth, universities have become breeding grounds for anti-Semitism. As a passionate Jew, outspoken Zionist, and proud Canadian citizen, the fear of stepping onto a Canadian campus while my peers are passionately denouncing and targeting a significant component of my being makes it clear that my Canadian interests and Jewish interests have come into conflict.

The average person applying for university or college normally considers the following: which school is the best for my field of interest? I, like many other young Jews today, must take another question into account: what are the rates of anti-Semitism on this campus? The number one school in Canada—the University of Toronto, also ranked 18th best in the world—recently passed a pro-BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) motion that called on its union to “wholly divest funds and further on forbid investment to firms complicit in the occupation of Palestinian Territory.” This motion is a clear attempt to isolate and delegitimize Israel by divesting funds and prohibiting investments that support the state. In doing so, it goes against the very core of my Jewish identity, and that of many others. It also requires me to make the choice between what I cherish more: my education or my being. This problem is familiar to the American Jewish population. A report by the ADL shows



that during the 2021-2022 school year, there were 359 anti-Israel incidents on American university campuses, many of which can be properly characterized as anti-Semitic. The University of Vermont turned away sexual assault survivors from the sexual harassment prevention club because of their Zionist ideologies. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill offered a class on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict taught by an instructor who had previously vocalized hostile views against Israel. At Rutgers University, a student club called to defund Rutgers Hillel. These students publicly condemned the university's "investments in apartheid Israel, and prominent campus Zionist organizations such as Hillel," which, according to the IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism, is an anti-Semitic statement.

For many, choosing to study in these post-secondary schools also means deciding to "lay low" on campus, hiding the Star of David jewelry that was once worn proudly every day, or simply keeping quiet when the hatred periodically rears its ugly head. In the moment, these small decisions may seem harmless, but, after years on campus, hiding our identity when faced with anti-Semitism is bound to create resentment towards our surroundings. We will be left questioning the morality of our peers, teachers, dean, and, most sadly, the country in which we are studying, whose laws and educated elite allow this hatred. The resentment against our country of origin and residence is the most dangerous possible outcome; it can trigger feelings of isolation, anger, and disgust that lead to a lack of pride and loyalty to one's country. The only way to ease this unhealthy tension is through education.

The famous notion that "knowledge is power" is the solution to the problem Jewish students face today. Most Jewish students rely on our emotional connection to our Judaism, and, while this is a crucial element, it cannot be the only solace. We must have the intellectual foundation to understand that our Judaism and Zionism are convictions to be deeply proud of. It is essential that we seek out books, podcasts, and other forms of self-education. My own recommendation is to learn with peers through different kinds of Jewish and Zionist programming. Hasbara and StandWithUs are organizations that offer students educational programs that focus on empowerment on campus and beyond. Through these opportunities, we can learn and articulate wholeheartedly the reasoning behind our pride in Judaism, and with this knowledge, we can hope to ease the tension between our country and our identity. Jews must understand that we have the power and institutional

backing to fight back and voice our opinion in hostile environments, hopefully eliminating the bitterness that rests within many demoralized Jewish students.

The rise of anti-Semitic crimes is frightening and the prevalence of these crimes on university campuses is no less troublesome. The heartbreaking reality is that Jewish people applying to university in today's environment face a constant internal struggle. Am I okay with hiding my identity to get the education I want? What do I cherish more, my degree or my soul? With the frequency of these questions, it is clear that Western interests have come into conflict with individual and collective Jewish interests. Rather than accepting defeat in this time of attack, the only thing left to do is turn to the books. We must learn more about what it means to be Jewish; study our people's history and how we arrived at this moment. We must work towards the point where if we face an attack on campus, we know with all our heart and all our mind that we are in the right. By gaining this knowledge, young Jews will gain confidence, and while it may not end the tension that arises on campuses, it will certainly ease the pain.

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The Tradition of Halakhic Debate Provides a Model to Ease Political Polarization

BY YAIR INFELD

SYMPOSIUM

“**Y**ou’re a communist!”
“Well you’re a fascist!”

Anyone familiar with American political discourse today may, unfortunately, have become used to this tragic new norm. In the past 30 years, the U.S. has increasingly devolved into an environment in which such tribalism and extremism rule discourse, based on the notion that there is one correct ideology and anyone who strays from that path is dead wrong. This is exacerbated by the so-called “two party duopoly.” In America’s political system, people are essentially forced to choose between two parties, limiting the opportunity to express views if they do not fit neatly into either camp.

These factors create a demoralizing political system in which partisanship has seemingly stamped out any hope for implementing new ideas that can solve problems but do not fall within the parties’ limited views on issues. Not only does this weaken democracy by creating a more apathetic center of the electorate, it also divides Americans who fall deep into either camp. According to the Pew Research Center, it has reached a point where an increasing number of Americans view members of the other party as dishonest, immoral, and close-minded. This currently has, and will continue to have, a disastrous effect on everyday life as the “I am right and you are wrong” mindset makes us more divided and angrier for no real purpose other than satisfying our urge to show just how correct we are. Conversely, Jewish tradition presents another way. In a political system that has become so bifurcated along ideological lines, the Jewish tradition presents a radical solution: there is more than one right way to address a political question.

This idea of multiple legitimate solutions is most evident in the Talmud. Due to its nature of dialogue, often not ending in just one answer, the Talmud leans



into the idea that multiple paths can be correct and respected. The Sages lived in a world where there was gray area, and their ideas and life's work reflected that. Although the work quotes many rabbis, undoubtedly the greatest philosophical and halakhic disputes were between Hillel and Shammai. In one of their more famous debates, their respective schools argue about whether you should tell a bride she is ugly on her wedding day. While the halakhah ends up agreeing with Hillel, we first get a very telling line about the nature of such disputes: "a divine voice emerged and proclaimed both these and those are the words of the living God" (b. Eruvin 13b). This shows us that in any situation there can be more than one right approach. No matter what the outcome is, all sides are important and should be listened to even if one side comes out on top in the end.

The idea of incongruent, yet equally valued, opinions is furthered in the tale of the Oven of Akhnai. The debate is centered around a dispute about the relationship between halakhah and a new form of oven. After multiple attempts to persuade a group of other rabbis that his halakhic opinions were correct through divine intervention, Rabbi Eliezer gives up, and we learn from the prophet Elijah that God said "my children have triumphed over me" (b. *Bava Metzia* 59b). This comment reveals that now, instead of divine intervention, it takes real discourse to decide interpretations of Torah. Once we reach the point where human thought is deciding halakhah, since humans are imperfect creatures and are not able to solve everything perfectly, ambiguity by nature must exist. If a religious tradition based on divine rule can accept some nuance derived from human interaction with the law, then the same holds true for a political system. This long tradition of valuing debate under heaven in the Talmudic model rather than simply yelling should inspire the basis for respect and civility in modern political attitudes and interactions.

The tradition also promotes nuance by urging Jews to seek out as many answers as possible. In *Avoda Zara* we find this when the Torah is compared to a tree. Instead of staying in one place, its meanings change, just like a tree that has been uprooted. Therefore, to gain as much insight as possible, we have to seek out as many authorities as possible. If each teacher said the same thing, then there would be no purpose for this. As the Jewish world decentralized along geographic lines, it became imperative to adapt laws. This split translated into many Jewish traditions, which became codified after the writing of the *Shulchan Aruch*. Due to originally drawing from only Sephardi

influences, it later required the addition of Ashkenazi sources to create a compendium. This provides an example of how as the Jews spread out, halakhah compensated by, whenever possible, filling the Jewish world with adapted laws in accordance with tradition, typically resulting in more than one solution or interpretation.

It is clear that Jewish tradition allows for, and even welcomes, more than one answer and opinion to a given question, but how does this translate into ameliorating the U.S. political discourse? Just like in Jewish tradition, it first requires an acknowledgment that the other side is not necessarily wrong. Even though the split in Jewish denominations today is large, and unity among our different sects is lacking, there is still an understanding that these views are not necessarily wrong and should not be disrespected. We can apply these same principles to the political polarization problem. First, we must not invalidate or disregard an opinion we do not share. Then, we have to confront our own camp and consider broadening our reach to hear as many opinions as possible and create the most comprehensive and crisp ideas. Finally, in the model of the Talmud, we have to engage in debate in a civil manner. By taking into account these deeply-rooted Jewish ideas and models in conjunction with the American political system, we can hope to restore a society set up for success, in which nuance in ideas and policies creates a next great century for all.

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What Constitutes the American Jewish Interest?

BY HANNAH LIEBERMAN

SYMPOSIUM

With the discovery of the New World, a land of opportunity emerged for Jews globally, with Jews arriving in America as early as the 1600s in hopes of escaping persecution. Jews have contributed much to the founding of America as a nation, beginning with the call for American independence. From Francis Salvador, who became the first Jew to hold a major position in the colonial government pushing a call for independence in the South, to Haym Salomon, a financier who funded the major battles of the Revolutionary War, many Jews were integral to the Revolution. Such contributions continue today, as 37 Jewish Americans served in the 117th Congress, as both Democrats and Republicans. Jews arrived in America with high hopes for the religious freedom the nation offered, and largely acclimated as Americans who seek to further America's national interests.

Though generations of Jews have found success and prosperity in America, there is a split among American Jews over which policies, and party, best secure Jewish flourishing domestically and abroad. Data from the Pew Research Center show that a majority of American Jews associate with the Democratic Party: identifying as liberals, supporting concerns of social justice, and calling for a larger role for the federal government. However, Orthodox Jews in America are more likely to identify as conservatives and align with the Republican Party. This is for a number of reasons. In recent years, Republicans have shown greater support for the state of Israel, observed under the Trump administration. His policies were particularly striking in contrast with those of his predecessor, President Obama, who championed a nuclear deal with Iran and, in 2016, rejected vetoing an anti-Israel resolution at the United Nations. This was followed by President Trump signing the Abraham Accords, which sought to cultivate peaceful relations between Israel and numerous Middle Eastern nations, and recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Despite Trump's support for Israel, liberal Jews, who still constitute the majority of Jews in America, expressed disapproval of the state of the nation under the

Trump administration and were also critical of Trump's policies towards Israel.

American Jews hold a persistent support for liberalism. Perhaps history has formed a foundation for liberalism among American Jews. While America by and large now presents Jews with religious freedom, it has not always done so. Edward S. Shapiro explains in his book *A Time for Healing: American Jewry Since WWII* that American Jews in the 1930s associated "anti-Semitism with the Right," causing Jews to embrace the political Left. Additionally, Jews believed that a society based upon social causes would be more open to Jews, thus favoring liberalism as an ideology. Similarly, early industrial America was characterized by poor working and living conditions, to which Jews responded with social action like creating labor unions. For example, Samuel Gompers, a Jewish immigrant and cigar maker in the late 1800s, was a key figure in the founding of the American Federation of Labor. The labor movement offered Jews a leg up to integrate into American society, which contributed to the prevailing liberalism among American Jews that still persists today.

While many American Jews hold liberal tendencies because of historical memory and their perceived best interests as Jewish Americans, many others gravitate to conservatism in view of their best interests as Jews inhabiting America. This is illustrated by understanding the American national interests championed by conservatives, which focus on the national economy, security, and taking a tough approach on adversaries, specifically China and Russia. Jewish interests in America relate to American acceptance of Jews and Israel. The Right does not always support perceived domestic Jewish interests, while the Left often turns away from the best interests of Israel. Therefore, the current political reality of America presents Jews with a dilemma: does the American Jew approach the ballot box and see a choice between their best interests as Jews and those of Israel, or Jewish acceptance in America, which liberalism historically secured?

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America, Israel, and China

BY RAFI UNGER

SYMPOSIUM

A serious rift in the American-Israel relationship could occur due to Israel's relationship with China. America stands for individual rights and democracy. China stands for the opposite. China is ruled by a dictator who has no regard for the individual rights of China's citizens, which has led to a poor relationship between China and America. Due to the fraught relations between these two nations, it may soon be impossible for one country to be in a significant relationship with both at the same time. However, Israel has a relationship with both countries. And so, Israel is at the center of a house of cards that could come crashing down at any minute.

China is Israel's biggest trade partner in Asia. In the 1980s, Israel sold China technology to upgrade their tanks. China used this technology to mount an Israeli 105-mm cannon atop a renovated tank. Over the past thirty years, trade between China and Israel has greatly benefited each nation to the tune of billions of dollars. However, due to pressure from both the Biden and Trump administrations, Israel's security cabinet announced the creation of an advisory panel on foreign investments, which has slowed down trade and other economically advantageous projects, such as the Tel Aviv Light Rail, that have connections to China. Israel, however, hopes to keep the economic benefits from its relationship with China going for as long as possible before it is forced to make a choice: does Israel value its American or Chinese relationship more?

Israel's relationship with China poses a security risk to America and Israel. Chinese companies have worked on the Haifa Port, where various American naval vessels come to dock. This has led to security concerns for the Americans, as they worry China could be gathering intelligence information about the U.S. through the Haifa Port. Even Israel is becoming worried about the Chinese presence because China is involved in strategic infrastructure projects in Israel. Due to the intelligence risk that China poses within Israel, America could be forced to limit its relationship with Israel, even if it otherwise does not want to.



Israel is America's staunch ally in the Middle East, and the two are connected by much more than just shared security threats. America helps fund Israeli defense programs, such as the Iron Dome, and affirms Israel's right to exist as a democracy and Jewish state. Inarguably, Israel should consider its security- (and values-) based relationship with the U.S. as more important than its economic relationship with China. However, so far, Israel has not had to, nor seemed to want to, choose the Americans over the Chinese, because, to this day, there is significant trade in strategic sectors occurring between Israel and China. Israel does not want to miss out on billions of dollars of potential trade with China.

Israel's continued relationship with China could have far-reaching consequences. It could make it hard for America to feel as if it can truly trust Israel if they are so economically involved with a rival and adversarial country. Furthermore, solely from a values perspective, Israel's relationship with China, an oppressive country, would give more fodder to those who say Israel has no right to exist and has taken land rightfully belonging to Palestinians. If Israel is garnering a lot of negative publicity for its relationship with China, it could make it hard for America to justify its relationship with Israel, especially when one considers that America and China do not have a good relationship currently.

Assaf Orion, who is a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, has noted a trend in the data that depicts the Israeli and Chinese relationship. It appears that their economic involvement with each other is slowing down. This could be a manifestation of pressure from America for Israel to end its connection with China. Or perhaps, Israel can foresee the issues a relationship with China can cause in its American relationship, and is slowly trying to solve the problem before it comes to a head.

As more American strategists argue for selective decoupling from China, particularly in the high-tech realms where Israeli and Chinese ties remain, Israel will eventually be forced to decide: does it want the economic benefit of China, or the security and political support offered by America? Israel must keep in mind that its reputation can be damaged by being associated with a country like China which suppresses human rights. America has traditionally been Israel's ally and is vital to Israel's current existence. American Jews must be cautious about lecturing Israelis over their geopolitical choices and

security concerns. However, in this case, the American Jew must weigh just how important Israel's relationship with America is, and whether or not Israel could survive losing its American connection because of an economic partnership with China—America's competitor and greatest adversary on the world stage.

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Gen Z's Identity with Israel: An Internal Interminable Conflict

BY MATAN GOLDSTEIN

SYMPOSIUM

The creation of a Jewish state has radically complicated 20th- and 21st-century Judaism for Jews remaining in exile. With the founding of Israel, the Jewish people gained the right to return to the land promised in the Torah, ending 2,000 years of exile. However, while 1948 constituted a positive event in the history of the Jewish people, it poses a serious problem to the identity of diaspora Jews today.

Forced into exile for 2,000 years, the Jewish people adapted by creating a religious society that would have to survive globally and reach dispersed communities all across the world. In exile, Judaism remained firm in its belief—whichever way it shifted between being an ethnic religion, a religion, and a nationality—in furthering the oral Torah in communities all across the Mediterranean and beyond. However, in the 18th century and the Age of Enlightenment, Judaism took a significant turn as Jews in Western Europe desired to leave their life in the ghettos and enter the secular world. But Jews still faced a significant obstacle, this time posed by non-Jews: questions over their loyalty. Were Jews loyal to the nation to which they resided or only to *Klal Israel* and their isolated Jewish communities? As a result, the *Haskalah* Movement, started by Moses Mendelsohn, was born. Adherents of the *Haskalah* movement believed that if Jews would study more secular subjects and adopt more secular practices, leaving the culture of the ghettos, they would be accepted into secular society and their loyalty would come less into question. From this movement, the Reform, Conservative, and Modern Orthodox movements, to name a few, emerged as attempts to further find a middle ground to balance both the secular and the religious. Jews, for the first time since antiquity, would enter the secular world. The past aspiration for *Shivat Tzion*, the return to Zion, became less of a dream and more of an undesired custom, as Jews would now seek to develop and thrive in their country of residence. However, at the turn of the 20th century, it became clear to some, though not all, Enlightened European Jews that the *Haskalah* movement would not provide the security for Jews it once promised—and so



they once again looked to Zion. Under the leadership of Theodor Herzl, Ahad Ha'Am, and other notable names, the Zionist Dream, a desire to build a Jewish state in Palestine, was born.

The creation of a Jewish state in 1948 would mark once more a significant change as the *Galut*, the exile, finally began coming to a close. Waves of immigration into the country created a new Jewish national identity in the new Jewish state. It was the revival of the Jewish ethnic religion. However, as a Jewish revival occurred in the Holy Land, the role of the Jews in exile, especially in the country with the greatest number of Jews after Israel, the United States, was yet to be defined in relation to the Jewish State. Were the existence of Israel and the Zionist dream synonymous with the Torah values and theology passed down through generations? With the advent of such questions, the identity of American Jews once more came into conflict as it became necessary for them to make a choice about if and how they would get involved in the establishment and survival of the early state.

And so, a rift, although at the time small, began opening between the two distinct communities of Jews. At first, in the early decades of the century, many American Jews were committed to playing their part in the development of the young nation, even if not physically living in Israel, through donations and investments. The shock of the Holocaust, less than a decade prior, was a driving force in connecting this generation of Jews from all across the world. However, these events were not destined to remain indefinitely integral to the Jewish community as, eventually, that generation would die out.

Today, the Holocaust is no longer seen as an essential cause for the necessity of the state of Israel; meanwhile, anti-Semitism rises. In addition, after the controversial First and Second Intifadas, and their divided public response, compounded by the birth of a new generation, Gen Z, the rift opened long ago now comes to light all the more. The new generation of American Jewry in particular is flooded with discord. While many young American Jews, most of them raised in Zionist households, continue to show their support for the Jewish state, others separate themselves from the country's affairs. Israel no longer seems to appease the American Jew as either the symbol for biblical *Tzion* or a beacon of light. Because of the comfort of America, there is no longer a common belief in the necessity of a Jewish State, and so Judaism,

Jewish practice, and yes, Israel, are set aside as Gen Z is transfixed by simpler matters. While many remain steady in their support of Israel, there are those who are discontent with the Jewish State, seeing it as unfashionable and reworking their identity to match their personal and secular American values.

Therefore, our generation, the rising generation of Jews who will continue to write Jewish history, is full of disunity and turbulence in its identity. The role of American Jews with regard to Israel redefines itself each day in relation to the views and opinions of American Jews. The secular world and our Jewish identity, of which Israel is a cornerstone, come into continuous conflict within each of us every day. It is a constant internal battle between our American and Jewish identities. Thus, the current state of American Jewry is as divided and partisan as ever as each Jew's identity diverges, which complicates attitudes towards Israel all the more. There are those who view Israel positively and seek to represent the whole of Israel in a positive light, those who are connected to the state only on a religious level, and those who fully desire to separate themselves from Israel's affairs.

While all opinions should be respected, we must never forget that Judaism and Israel should be a uniting, not dividing, aspect of our identity regardless of secular politics and other deeply-held opinions. While it may be essential to remain fixed in the secular world, it is important to remember that the religious and spiritual worlds have united the Jewish people for thousands of years. America and Israel are powerful and united allies, making us all blessed

to be in a country that allows us to be proudly Jewish and supportive of a Jewish state. Our political partisanship cannot supersede our Jewish roots. We are all Jews.

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My Real Internal Conflict is Not One of Clashing Interests

BY OCEAN TIMMINS

SYMPOSIUM

When do my Jewish interests and American interests conflict? After much careful internal deliberation, I have concluded that they do not, and I believe that this is for a few reasons. I live in New York City, which is home to more Jews than any other city in the world. This has shaped my understanding of the Jewish people and their place in America. The United States allows its citizens to be whoever they want to be and to worship how they choose, thus supporting all of its Jews, religious or not. I still have fears about the Jewish future, but a clash between my Jewish and American interests is not a cause of those fears.

In my borough of Brooklyn, one in four people is Jewish and, by some estimates, there are more Jews here than in Jerusalem! There is no time of the year that better demonstrates this massive population and its imprint on local culture than during Hanukkah, and certainly not because Hanukkah is the most important Jewish holiday. Almost everywhere else in the Western world, this time of year is completely occupied with the all-encompassing Christmas; Brooklyn, however, withstands the Christmas frenzy and adds some Hanukkah crazy. Even when Christmas is approaching, the park a block from my house is holding a candle lighting party with *sufganiyot* and latkes, menorahs are in windows, Mitzvah Tanks are driving around, and Lubavitch kids are handing out Hanukkah candles.

Throughout the rest of the year, there are also constant reminders of the Jewish presence in New York City. Public schools get Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the first two days of Passover off; there are Jewish delis all over the city and mezuzahs are often found in doorways of homes and businesses alike. From Upper West Side “bagel Jews” to Crown Heights ultra-Orthodox, and from Park Slope liberals to Staten Island conservatives, there is a home for everyone, and every Jew, in New York. New Yorkers are so immersed in Jewish culture that Yiddishisms have become part of local slang, like schmear on



your bagel, schvitz on the subway, and schlep across town. We have become a cornerstone of this city and its values.

In my life as a traditional Jew who is immersed in Jewish culture and practice and invested in the Jewish future, I have not encountered any conflicts between my Jewish interests and American interests. One of the greatest parts of the American ethos is that it values personal identity and accepts everyone. Post-Second Temple Judaism is so adaptive and can fit in nearly anywhere. There is a reason that Jews are all over the world; every time we are forced out of one place, we move to the next, adjusting to our new surroundings but never giving up who we are. Although we made it work wherever we found ourselves in the diaspora, it is New York City that became the launching pad for generations of flourishing Jewish communities and schools and the perpetuation of Jewish culture.

In my mind, there is an underlying Jewish fear of being too accepted into any society. It is a fear of becoming attached to a place knowing that so many times in the past, our once secure positions became threatened; the fear of thinking of myself as American just as my relatives before me thought of themselves as Russian and Austrian. My great-grandfather was from Vienna. He fought in World War I, was a decorated soldier, and could not imagine his entire country turning on him. I am so appreciative of the freedom and acceptance of the United States, but we Jews have had to pack up and leave over and over again since the Exodus from Egypt. Why should we believe that this time is any different? In the book *The Golden Age* by Joan London, the main character, after leaving Budapest and finding a safe haven in Perth, Australia, states that “he had a suspicion that never again would he feel at home as he once had. Never again on this earth. And another suspicion: that to love a place, to imagine yourself belonging to it, was a lie, a fiction. It was a vanity. Especially for a Jew.”

Conversely, this is a country devoted to freedom and equality, with freedom of religion enshrined as a first right in the Constitution. This time may truly be different because we are in a modern age in a country that values individualism and pluralism, a country that my great-grandparents could not even have dreamed of existing. You could be cynical in a country like France, where religion is seen as something to be kept to oneself, but this

is America, striving to be the land of the free and the home of the brave. Pursuit of perfection cannot be the enemy of greatness. I cannot live my life in anticipation of the bad, so I must live in the present. This is my internal conflict. The struggle is not between my American and Jewish interests, but rather it is between the ideals of this country—which have held for nearly 250 years—and Jewish history’s tendency to repeat itself.

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“Judge Your Kin Fairly”: The Jewish Response to Cancel Culture

BY ADIN LINDEN

SYMPOSIUM

In the modern age, the advent of social media has brought with it a new form of collective punishment, which, unfortunately, many Americans are all too familiar with. People who make mistakes, primarily online but sometimes elsewhere, are “canceled.” This has become a key part of American culture and society. Sometimes these instances are innocuous or even comical, like a man who bought too much hand sanitizer in early 2020 and was bashed on Twitter for hoarding. Other times, these cancellations are life-altering and career-ending. “Imagine waking up with the whole world talking about you because your mistake, your secret, has now been made public,” says Monica Lewinsky in her documentary *15 Minutes of Shame*. The shame that stems from cancel culture is especially dangerous because of the disconnect that is permitted by the internet. With human emotions and physical interactions removed, being online leaves people free to judge and shame others without remorse. Now, should Jews take part in this culture of shame, so prevalent in 21st-century American life, or is this taking accountability too far according to Jewish tradition?

“You shall not render an unfair decision: do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich; judge your kin fairly,” says Leviticus 19:16. The Torah does not tell us that Jews cannot judge others, only that we must judge them fairly. When people are “canceled,” are they being judged fairly? I would argue sometimes yes. There are times when shame is the correct response. Although Jewish tradition tells us to judge others fairly, there are situations when Judaism does allow for the public shaming of a person.

The Rabbis clearly see the disease of *tzaraat* as a form of public shame. Sins bear the terrible disease, and when people developed the illness, they would be forced out of their tribe, a form of public shaming. However, I think this is very different from the shaming of cancel culture. While *tzaraat* is a punishment coming from an impartial heaven, shame from cancel culture comes from people on the internet voicing their opinion, often with none



of the facts or context. Meanwhile, Judaism places its trust in God to make judgments.

Sometimes, cancel culture is also a positive form of shame when it comes as a necessary punishment for reprehensible actions. Last year, when popular artist and rapper Kanye West made extremely anti-Semitic remarks and went on tour with a white supremacist and anti-Semite, he was “canceled.” This included him losing many of his brand deals—and lots of money. He was effectively shamed and punished for things that he did and words that he said. In the Orthodox community, there is a culture of shaming men who refuse to give their wives *gets*, which are needed to ensure that women are able to have autonomy in the divorce process. Both of these examples prove that sometimes “cancel culture,” or a culture of shaming those who deserve it, is positive for a society or community. These people are judged fairly, following the values of Leviticus and *Pirkei Avot*.

Most of the time, however, cancel culture goes much further, and directly opposes the Jewish value of judging people with fairness. People are usually not given a second chance after they are “canceled,” and most are not given the opportunity to apologize or learn from their mistakes. The social media shame storm removes any chance for growth after one misstep. For example, a Hispanic truck driver for San Diego Gas & Electric Company was fired after posts on Twitter that made him look like he was doing a white supremacist hand signal. Before he could even explain that he was obviously not, the pictures were sent to his company, which swiftly fired him without discussion. Without consideration, this culture of shame storms took down this innocent man because it looked like he was doing an offensive hand signal. In every such situation, people get angry and the echo chamber around them online

does the same, which creates a mob mentality and distracts from the truth. There is no room for an apology, growth, or even just the facts.

While I believe that Judaism values accountability and punishment for each individual’s actions, American culture has taken that too far with the emergence of “cancel culture.” Judaism, while valuing punishment, also highlights fair judgment, which is a value usually not expressed by those who wish to “cancel” others. Judaism also puts the judgment of God, impartial judgment, above the judgment of those with a mob mentality. As

Jews, we must realize that although sometimes it might be easier to jump to conclusions, we have to judge everyone with righteousness, according to our tradition.

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Approaching Israel as American Jews, or Jewish Americans

BY RINA MULLER

SYMPOSIUM

For generations, the Jewish people have prayed for a return to our homeland. The enduring dream of the Jewish people throughout history has always been to return to our ancestral homeland and establish it as a Jewish nation. Oftentimes, Jewish loyalty to our country of residence was questioned. In modern times, we have seen the fulfillment of the Jewish dream, yet this has also caused the enduring question of whether to prioritize our Jewish identity or that of our country of birth to become more complex. What is the hierarchy of interests for us in this age? Should we care about Israel's interests over American ones? Does this make us bad Americans? If we do not prioritize Israel, are we bad Jews? This pressure can feel especially intense for American Jews, who constitute the largest pole of Jewish life outside of Israel. We must not only find a balance between our Jewish values and our American ones; we must also find a balance between our allegiance to and respect for America and our loyalty to the Jewish State.

It has been my observation that many American Jews deal with this potential conflict of interest by compartmentalizing their Jewish and secular identities, which creates a mental wall between themselves and Israel. Yes, they are glad the state exists and hope for its continued survival, but to learn about the issues the country faces and openly advocate for Israel seems to many, to be a step too far. To these individuals, these complex issues, from ideas of how Israel should handle self-defense to the issue of Palestinian refugees, must be approached from a more American perspective. Many American Jews will only ever hear the American opinion on the matter, and few will ever come into contact with the Israeli perspective on the issue. Furthermore, American Jews exist on a much broader spectrum of Judaism than is most often on display in Israeli politics and law, and often do not relate to the brand of Judaism on display in the Holy Land, thus further diminishing their connection to the land.



We live in a public world that in its intense polarization demands of everyone an immediate stance on every issue. Yet how do we, as American Jews, better approach our relation to Israel? How do American Jews establish nuanced opinions on matters concerning the state of affairs in Israel as both Jews and Americans? With the exclusion of some dual citizens, Jews in America are not Israeli, yet they are Jewish, so they undeniably possess a connection to Israel. This must be held alongside their connection to America. This tension is real and must be addressed. I believe it starts with increasing education on Israeli history, culture, and current events. For how can anybody formulate their own questions and attitudes regarding Israel while knowing so little about the state? As shameful as it sounds, many Jewish institutions only present Israel through the view of historical religious thought, causing the modern-day, ideological Jew's view of Israel to be guided by past attitudes, when Israel was a hope, not a reality. We think in terms of what Israel should be or was meant to be. Yet in terms of present-day Israel, most only vaguely know of the major wars and events of the country's short history—to say nothing of the culture and way of life of the country. As an American Jew, it is easy to think of Israel as more of an idea that is disconnected from the reality portrayed in the American news. But Israel is a reality. It is as real and nuanced a country as is America, or France, or Australia. This must be understood, for much of the tension surrounding attitudes about Israel by our Jewish and American identities, is the tension between the theological idea of a state and the political and social reality of it.

Therefore, in order to better understand Israel and ease any conflicting feelings about it, Israel education must improve within Jewish institutions. All Jews are in one way or another connected to Israel, but to know in what way each of us, as an individual, relates to and feels about the state, we first need to know what Israel stands for and how it functions. The question of American Jews or Jewish Americans will continue to be posed, so as Jews and as Americans, we need to reform and strengthen our connection to the State of Israel.

But of course, even if we improve education and awareness of Israel, there is still that pressing question that all American Jews ask—do we form opinions on Israel from an American perspective or a Jewish one? And this is an important question to ask. While we are lucky to live in a country that lets us live openly as Jews while still integrating with broader society, that does not



mean that the Jewish perspective and the American one always align. And no matter which side you choose to take, it is important to understand the worldview of the other. But on the matter of Israel, are we Jewish Americans or American Jews?

One could easily say that of course we should approach Israel from the mindset of a Jew, an American Jew albeit, but fundamentally a Jew. After all, Jews make up a mere 2.4% of the American population and only .19% of the world population. If we don't take the Jewish perspective on the Jewish State, who will?

On the other hand, one cannot discount the importance of America globally, so taking an American perspective, especially on Israeli foreign policy, is important. Or in terms of domestic policy, one might be comfortable advocating for separation of church and state in America on the one hand, while on the other advocating for Israel's importance as a Jewish, and therefore religious, state.

Every American Jew, or Jewish American, must grapple with these questions. We all must make a choice: to see Israel as the dream of generations of our ancestors, as everything the state stands for, or to see Israel as a separate, merely political entity, no different than any other country. Or, ideally, we should have a mix of both mindsets and balance the ideal and the reality of Israel. Israel viewed as purely the culmination of the dreams held by the Jewish people for millennia will lead to disappointment with the practical reality. Yet, there is an undeniable connection between every Jew and the Land of Israel, and trying to take a fully distanced approach to Israel will be unsatisfying and meaningless. We all must choose how to confront the various issues concerning Israel: as a Jew, as an American, or better yet, through a unique blend of both perspectives.

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The Allure of Assimilation and the Threat to Jewish Faith

BY FREDERICK LEN

SYMPOSIUM

Throughout history, immigrant minorities have frequently been regarded with suspicion as to their true allegiance. The dual interests of an immigrant between their native country and culture and their country of residence have the potential to cause trouble should those interests conflict. One should look no further than the Japanese American internment camps of the Second World War as an example of the measures that have been undertaken to prevent potential conflicting interests from interfering with the home country's agenda. For Jews in the diaspora, though they may have been initially welcomed by a given country's native population, the distinctive nature of their culture meant that tolerance would sooner or later morph into suspicion. Neighbors were all too quick to remind Jews of their "otherness" and question their loyalty to their nation of residence.

American Jews are no different from the immigrant minorities before them: they too have complex, and sometimes conflicting, interests between the culture and values of the United States and those of the Jewish community around the world, particularly within Israel. Though Israel is not a perfect analogy for a native country, as many American Jews are not from Israel and have no relatives there, it is generally considered the home of the Jewish people and has been treated as such by those questioning Jewish loyalties. Because Jews are the inheritors of a rich set of traditions and values and are a minority in the United States, we must ask where the potential contradictions of Jewish American interests lie and examine where and when our priorities as Americans differ from those as Jews.

One way of examining these dual interests is through a geopolitical lens. To undertake such an analysis, we must first assume that American-Israeli relations relate closely to the interests of Americans as a whole and Jewish Americans in particular. Considering the Pew Research Center found that nearly 84% of American Jews consider Israel's well-being to be an important issue to them, such an assumption appears far from baseless. Through

analysis, it quickly becomes apparent that American and Jewish geopolitical interests align very closely. Israel is a useful technological and ideological partner of the United States in the Middle East and is frequently referred to as the United States' closest ally. This is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

Another way of viewing Jewish American interests is from a cultural perspective. Through this lens, the conclusion seems far less optimistic. There is an observable decrease in Jewish religious activity, especially among Reform Jews, who form 33% of the American Jewish population. Several factors have contributed to this decline in affiliation, but the most important has historically been the increasingly attractive prospects of the secular world over Jewish faith and traditions. As American society has remained one of the most tolerant societies in the world towards the Jewish people, newer generations of Jews are finding it increasingly easy to abandon their Jewish identities altogether and assimilate into secular society. Viewing this as a negative development is itself a fundamental assumption: that American Jews consider the endurance of Jewish faith and culture central to Jewish interests. It appears we do, as nearly 75% of Jewish Americans say that "being Jewish" (either through religious or cultural connections) is important to them.

So, when do our American interests and Jewish interests conflict? In terms of geopolitics, America and Israel have thankfully maintained a healthy and close relationship. However, the real conflict comes from the potential supplanting of Jewish faith and culture with America's. The steady process of assimilation threatens to decay the Jewish traditions and beliefs that make up the core of the American Jewish community, and as I see it, it will likely continue to do so until there are, as Milton Himmelfarb put it, "fewer but better Jews." It will be up to the American Jewish community to decide whether it can find conciliation between the allure of assimilation into American culture and the foundations of Jewish identity that have kept the Jewish tribe intact for millennia.

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Religious Liberty: A Cornerstone of Jewish and American Interests

BY JACOB NEPLOKH

SYMPOSIUM

Often succinctly described as an “ethno-religious” group, Jews have always had a keen interest in laws and rights concerning religious practice, whether under the Roman Empire, in Napoleon’s France, or, most pertinently, in the modern United States.

Jewish interests have conflicted with local authorities on the North American continent since the arrival of the first 23 Jews to New Amsterdam in 1654. Even after their successful and pragmatic petition to the Dutch West India Company (GWC) to override Director Peter Stuyvesant’s mandated expulsion, the 23 continuously faced restrictions on Jewish faith and practice. Some, such as the prohibition on public prayer, applied to anyone not part of the established Dutch Reform Church, while others—like trade prohibitions—specifically targeted Jews. Over time and with constant effort (and more appeals to the GWC), the Jews of New Amsterdam progressively gained rights. New Amsterdam illustrated that equality and liberty would be an uphill battle in any society without religious tolerance, even in North America, and even in a colony home to many fleeing religious persecution in Europe.

The United States, in contrast to New Amsterdam, fortunately has the First Amendment, which declares, among other things, that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Indubitably, both clauses relating to religion—deemed “Establishment” and “Free Exercise” respectively—laid the foundations for a society far more tolerant (perhaps *the* most tolerant) than its predecessors in Europe or elsewhere of any religious practice, Jews included. Though seemingly simple, these clauses have frequently sparked intense legal debate.

Unlike the debates in New Amsterdam which singled out the Jews, court rulings—whether argued by members of Christian, Muslim, or Native American communities—now affect *all* U.S. citizens. Inherently, Jews fall



under such a qualification of religion, even if the most secular of Jews should reject it. Undeniably, Jewish culture and history is informed by faith. Regardless, I am not a sociologist nor theologian, so I do not plan to belabor this point. I only point out that, as American Jews (though one could arguably reverse the adjective and noun), each court case and piece of legislation concerning religion represents a crucial point where those two words can align or conflict.

The dangers of violations of the Free Exercise Clause for religious Americans are perhaps obvious: they would, quite literally, erode the ability to freely practice religion. For Jews, the Free Exercise Clause clearly stands to guard our interests, especially because, as a distinct minority (and a small one at that), it is understandably likely that legislation—even if unintentional—could unfairly restrict Jewish life given that Jews constitute just over 2% of the U.S. population. One could expect that legislation passed by democratic bodies favoring majority opinion would almost surely not keep Jewish interests at the forefront.

The Establishment Clause was implemented as a bulwark against a clear danger of an established church akin to that seen in New Amsterdam. As such, it can be instinctive, as evidenced by numerous *amicus* briefs in relevant SCOTUS cases from non-Orthodox Jewish organizations, for Jews to oppose any and all purported establishment of a religion. That is, it can be easy for American Jews to become indignant at tax dollars going to a religious school in the form of vouchers for rural Maine families (*Carson v. Makin*) or a public school football coach holding prayers during football games (*Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*) due to a belief that such acts violate the Establishment Clause and pose a threat to the Jewish American future.

However, I would like to propose to my fellow American Jews, especially those more secular like myself, that this is the wrong and more harmful approach. By remaining a minority with a distinct (and proud) history and religion, Jewish survival and flourishing will always necessitate an opposition to any universal impositions that, in one way or another, restrict Jewish belief and practice. To borrow from the late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, we Jews are defined by a *particularism*. American interests do not conflict with Jewish ones solely through preference towards another religion; instead, they can conflict through hostility to religion altogether.

Again, even for a “secular” Jew, this largely holds true because of the aforementioned particularism of all Jews, religious or not. Even if a Jew engages in various behaviors—abstention from pork and shellfish, Shabbat dinners, maybe even bar/bat mitzvahs—solely for “traditional” and/or “secular” reasons, society at large will likely at the very least still classify such acts as “religious.” Jewish courses taught in a Jewish day school, even if pluralistic or seemingly less religious, would almost surely face a similar designation. As such, American Jews, both as Americans and as Jews, should oppose restrictions like those the people and institutions seeking a less public role for religion attempted to codify in the aforementioned court cases. We should oppose any governmental intrusion into religious practice.

Even if a Jew recognizes the dangers of discrimination towards religious life, that word, “discrimination,” still represents a fear (and, in all fairness, a historically well-founded one) of what could occur from an increased role for religion, particularly a dominant religion, in a given country. Here again, I caution against such an attitude. I will therefore note that the First Amendment, in its first two clauses, recognizes and *healthily accepts* the possibility of such “discrimination,” because this lack of government interference is the underpinning of our liberal society. Leo Strauss explains this best in “Why We Remain Jews”:

“The prohibition against every ‘discrimination’ would mean the abolition of the private sphere, the denial of the difference between the state and society, in a word, the destruction of liberal society; and therefore, it is not a sensible objective or policy.”

Thus, not only is ensuring religious liberty a critical Jewish interest, but a strongly *American* one as well. Religious liberty serves as the foundation of our liberal society—a society which has provided the opportunity for many generations to prosper, Jews irrefutably included.

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The Dangerous Descent of American Free Speech

BY ELLA COHEN

FEATURE

In the modern age of the messianic STEM complex, the sciences tend to be viewed as an unflappable bastion of truth and progress, free of any of the pesky emotional prejudices and societal constraints that can cloud other spheres of study and life.

This conclusion has continually been proven false in recent years, but never with more starkly depressing irony than in the case of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and their “campus witch hunts,” as described by University of Chicago Professor Dorian Abbot. Abbot, recruited by MIT last fall to give the prestigious Carlson Lecture on new advances in planetary climate science, found himself under fire from activists and alumni alike in an effort to thwart his lecture, or in today’s terms, “cancel” him. This attack was prompted solely by an opinion piece in *Newsweek* that Abbot co-wrote which critiqued diversity, equity, and inclusion standards within universities. Abbot criticized the strategy of rewarding minority individuals based on their groups’ “threatened” status rather than actual individual merit, claiming that it counterproductively “treats persons as merely means to an end, giving primacy to a statistic over the individuality of a human being.” Under mounting pressure, the department chair at MIT capitulated to the demands of the mob and opted to cancel the lecture.

If not for some late out-of-left-field assistance, this story would have ended here: with Professor Abbot stripped of his invitation, the MIT community deprived of this opportunity for scientific learning from a distinguished professor, and the American institution of free speech left with yet another embarrassing black eye. Luckily, the conference—and any semblance of a regard for the sciences within the American academy—was saved when Robert P. George, tenured professor of political science at Princeton and director of the James Madison Program, stepped up to offer Princeton as a host for that very same lecture Abbot had intended to deliver at MIT.



Abbot delivered his original lecture at Princeton through a virtual public webinar, which was a rousing success, with thousands tuning in to the notably unpolitical presentation. George fittingly gave both the introductory and closing remarks, in which he stated that the larger goal of the sciences is to seek truth, and stressed the vital importance of free thought, debate, and collaboration in service to the continued advancement of technology and innovation.

George's conduct in battling this academic injustice is only to be commended, but these circumstances speak to a far graver national environment. This country was founded on the idea that free and open dialogue is essential to a free, just, and successful political enterprise. In order to continue America's legacy of giving a voice to the downtrodden and power to the people, we must be able to pitch, probe, and pick apart any idea that comes before us. A democratic republic that continues to move favorably towards the idea that only minority parties can comment on certain issues, which change seemingly daily, is not a republic built in the vision of universal freedom and equality our Founders laid out. This abandonment of our oldest principles has led to a state of affairs in which anyone can be removed from social media for their political beliefs, researchers put sexuality tolerance guidelines over scientific findings, and teachers who attempt to uphold their religious beliefs fear for their very employment. This devolution has created a culture in which proven facts are systematically oppressed in favor of upholding the doctrine of good feelings for all.

In the current screen age, the values of lazy thought assimilation and mindless rage govern conversation. In modern American society, far more people get their news through Twitter than from reading the newspaper, or any other verifiable source. Sincere discourse on complex issues guided by facts has taken a backseat to the mob mentality of "loudest voice wins," which steers even the highest and most respected offices. This is illustrated most clearly in the conduct of former President Trump, who had a horrifying average of over 30 tweets per day during the last six months of his presidency, and seemingly viewed that platform as his most significant outlet to communicate with the nation he was elected to govern. But it is not just the former president who has utilized this strategy. On the whole, Americans now watch Instagram reels rather than tune into important debates and mindlessly retweet the rants of angry protestors rather than read articles. And perhaps most worrisome, our

fellow citizens burn down buildings rather than have rational and coherent discussions on issues of social justice.

This nation-wide laissez-faire—or conversely, dangerously irrational—approach to issues meriting serious debate is distressing, especially as many establishments crack down on free thought and speech, from college harassment policies and religious education to social media guidelines. So, can anything be done to turn the tide on this misinformation and ideological abuse?

While the efforts of courageous and clear-minded individuals like Professors George and Abbot should be supported and commended, it is becoming apparent that individual pushback against infringement on free speech is not enough. The only lasting success against this regime of suppression will be found in the efforts of our most courageous and steadfast institutions. Publications such as *Commentary Magazine* that foster conversation on high-level topics critical to the future of the West must be engaged with and disseminated. Programs that aid in the careful shaping and education of future generations of leaders and writers, educators and lawmakers, must be promoted. Most importantly, institutions critical to Jewish education and engagement in America, like Yeshiva University, which has been brave enough to fight for its religious rights and status as an establishment governed by tradition, must be supported wholeheartedly. If we who cherish and believe in free speech are to gain any traction in the current culture, we must aid and promote the growth and assistance of the very institutions that are fighting tirelessly to turn the national conversation from one of blatant hostility and noisy ignorance to freethinking, open, and educated debate.

There must be unified and decisive *institutional* action taken in this fight against individual liberties—or it will be more than our ability to publicly criticize at risk. The entire future of the freethinking American experiment our Founders set in motion and fought to preserve is at stake.

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The Jewish World of Alexander Hamilton

BY ELLIE GLICKMAN

REVIEW

lining the bookshelves of American history, Jewish history, and all-around history buffs lately is Andrew Porwancher's *The Jewish World of Alexander Hamilton*, a biography that dissects the Founding Father's unique allyship to the Jewish community. From possibly having Jewish heritage to ensuring Jewish security in America, Hamilton's proximity to the Jewish community is gravely under-represented. *The Jewish World of Alexander Hamilton* is innovative not only in its subject matter but also in its narrative method. While focusing on the relationship between Hamilton and the Jewish people, Porwancher tells four histories: Hamilton's life, his interactions with the Jewish community, the social climate within the Jewish community, and the perception of Jewish people at the time.

Divided into 8 chapters, Porwancher's biography explores Hamilton's life, from his childhood to his legacy in government. From his early life attending a Jewish school in St. Croix to assuming a role as emissary to the Jewish community, Hamilton's ties to the Jewish people run deep. In his political career, Hamilton was consistent in advocating for religious freedom and freedom of expression, and regularly represented Jewish clients in his law practice. Porwancher also sheds light on Jewish history in America, from Sephardi settlers to the establishment of educational institutions and the Jewish presence in universities—including Hamilton's alma mater, Columbia.

The Jewish World of Alexander Hamilton delves into the art of community building. Porwancher explores the challenges and resolutions that need to be overcome when establishing a new society. The political founders of America were creating a new government from scratch, devoid of monarchs and theological structures to lead them, and designing what their country would look like and how it would be governed. For the Jewish community, America's founding principle of religious liberty created a new sense of security that

had never before been afforded to them in such a lasting manner. Instead of focusing on survival, for the first time, Jewish communities in the diaspora could learn how to thrive.

While all of the details of Hamilton's life are thrilling, Porwancher shines in the "Introduction" and "Epilogue." The biography opens with the Elie Wiesel quote: "In Jewish history, there are no coincidences." This sets the tone for the biography as an unraveling tale of Jewish connections, instead of random Jewish cameos. Porwancher then suggests that Hamilton's story represents the Jewish presence in America. He shares that the neglect of Hamilton's Jewish allyship in the works about his life is demonstrative of greater Jewish erasure throughout secular history. These more personal segments of the book inspire the reader to strengthen their critical lens when thinking about the untold stories of history. For Jewish American readers, the "Introduction" and "Epilogue" also provide an opportunity to reflect on the conflicts and responsibilities that come with being members of a secular society and the Jewish people.

Porwancher frames Hamilton's narrative as a means to understand the great story of Jewish resilience. He retells the classic tale of the American Revolution from a new angle, making the biography engaging for both scholars of history and newcomers alike. All historically conscious readers should read *The Jewish World of Alexander Hamilton*, but especially Jewish readers navigating life in the diaspora. To understand the present, one must understand the past, and Andrew Porwancher tells Jewish and American history as the interwoven tale that it is.

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If You Want Something Done

BY LIR YISSAR

REVIEW

If You Want Something Done by Nikki R. Haley is a powerful and inspiring read that dissects the lives of ten remarkable women and teaches different lessons from each one. Inspired by Margaret Thatcher's famous quote, "If you want something said, ask a man. If you want something done, ask a woman," Haley writes about the lives of different influential women, the hardships they experienced, and how they used pain to push them further. From each of these women, Haley derives significant life lessons. Some of these women are famous politicians, including Margaret Thatcher, England's first female Prime Minister; Jeane Kirkpatrick, America's first female U.N. Ambassador; and Golda Meir, Israel's fourth and first female Prime Minister.

Haley also writes about women who lived ordinary lives, until personal experiences forced them to fight for themselves or those they cared about. For example, Cindy Warmbier became a human rights activist after her son was taken hostage in North Korea. Virginia Walden Ford became an education advocate after realizing her son's public school education was not setting him up for the success he deserved. Claudette Colvin became a pioneer of the civil rights movement after being arrested at 15 years old for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white woman. Each of these stories exemplify different ways in which women have shown strength and determination. Warmbier's actions teach that even under the most painful circumstances, one can find strength from within to keep fighting. Ford's movement inspires the reader to believe in the strength of their voice. Colvin's story teaches that even in fighting a lone battle, one must stay true to their values. Additionally, Haley connects each of these women's life stories to her own, showing us how she applies each lesson in her life.

Born to Indian immigrants in rural South Carolina, Haley was often overlooked. In her youth, she was "too brown," "too female," "too young," "too conservative," in other words, too much for this world to handle. While these naysayers wanted to hold her back, they only gave her reasons to push forward and prove them wrong. In 2011, she became the first ever minority

female governor of South Carolina and served as governor until 2017. Then, from January 2017 through December 2018, she served as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. In 2019, Haley opened a new policy group called Stand for America, which promotes policies aimed at strengthening the American economy, culture, and national security.

Nikki Haley's life story, determination, confidence, and passion have constantly inspired me, so it came as no surprise that I immediately wanted to get my hands on this book. As I read, I found myself passionately agreeing with Haley's words of wisdom. Yes, women have nothing to apologize for when speaking out about their beliefs. Yes, we must be determined to reach our goals. Yes, we must always strive to be the best in what we do.

This book is perfect for anyone looking to be inspired to greatness, or anyone simply curious about the life stories of women who made a difference in this world. Male or female, this book is for those searching for a way to ignite the spark within them.

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