

Kesher



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JEWISH PSYCHOLOGISTS**

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KESHER: JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH PSYCHOLOGISTS



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the third issue of *Kesher: Journal of the Association of Jewish Psychologists*. This issue features a considerable amount of content from Israel and Canada. On the Israeli side, a Position Paper signed by many practitioners affiliated with the Tel Aviv Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis that acknowledges the deep divisions that have opened up in Israeli society since Oct 7, 2023, the dreadful toll the war has taken on Israelis and Palestinians, and calls for renewed efforts to bring home the hostages seized by Hamas on that dreadful day. This is followed by a soulful meditation on the nature and meaning of heroism, exemplified in the attitudes and actions of several Israelis who gave their lives to save others that same day, and an English translation of a recent Hebrew children's book designed to help children manage their post-traumatic fears and anxieties.

Next, we feature an exploration of the ways in which experiences of ancestral bonding offer solace, and foster resilience in the face of antisemitic persecution.

The two articles that follow pertain to events that unfolded at the University of Ottawa and Carleton University (also in Ottawa) in late February, 2025. They address the failure of university administrators to acknowledge and respond appropriately to the dissemination of (Hamas inspired) propaganda by Nada Elia under the auspices of their university's Women's and Gender Studies programs, and some of the psychological characteristics of activists who create, disseminate and believe in this kind of pernicious nonsense.

Those of you who followed Keshet from its inception may remember that in our first issue, Nathan Greenfield, a keen observer who lives in Ottawa, believed that the situation on Canadian campuses was not as dire as it was on American ones. Clearly, that is no longer the case. And so, this third issue, like the two that precede it, attests to our collective struggle against the recent rise of antisemitism, which continues unabated.

In the next issue of Keshet, we will describe the First AJP Mission to Israel and various universities and clinics the AJP visited where innovative techniques for treating trauma are being explored and refined, including the University of Haifa, the Weizman Institute, Danny Brom's Metiv Center, Hadassah Hospital and resiliency centers such as Spa of Hope, Healing Space, Sha'har Ha'Negev Resiliency Center at Sapir College and the Yahalom IDF Foundation. We'll also give Keshet readers synopses of our interviews with 33 professionals, among them Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, Professor of Law at Bar Ilan University and a member and former vice chair of The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, who will give a first hand, eye witness account of the international community's extreme reluctance to acknowledge horrific sexual crimes perpetrated by Hamas on October 7th.

Meanwhile, however, we are eager to hear from you! Please feel free to reach out and inform us of your responses to Keshet and to developments occurring in and around you, whether you live in or outside of North America. If you are too busy to submit essays or feature articles, please send letters to the editor and/or vivid photographic images that we can use to enliven our presentation and attract more readers, here and abroad. Please just reach out to editor@associationofjewishpsychologists.com.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tel Aviv institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis

Dear Editors of *Kesher*,

We are pleased to share with you this position paper about recent events in Israel. This statement was initiated and written by 5 members of Tel Aviv institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis, and signed by a majority of our members.

Although words seem insufficient to capture the turmoil and horror in our country since the Hamas attack on Oct 7th and Israel's response, we felt that we cannot remain silent about the dangers to the mental health of our citizens and about the harm we are already witnessing in our clinics. Further, we cannot ignore the killing and suffering inflicted on the people of Gaza.

As you may know, the mental health community in Israel mobilized immediately following the massacre of October 7th, providing psychotherapeutic help to survivors, soldiers and displaced communities. Our clinics are full of patients suffering from the aftereffects of the October 7, 2023 incident and the ongoing war. Many of us also participate consistently in demonstrations calling for deals to release our brothers and sisters still in captivity and in opposition to what seems to be moves to change legislation essential to our democracy. We are not naïve with regard to the aims and nature of the terrorist organization we are facing. Still we also feel that the murderous brutality of Hamas should not mean losing our own moral fabric. We cannot turn a blind eye toward the enormous suffering of Palestinian civilians in which we are implicated.

Our position paper [found on page 7 of this issue of *Kesher*] was signed by a majority of our members, although not by all of them. Obviously, there are different opinions among us which we respect. However, the overwhelming support we got from mental health

professionals outside our institute as well as our members, indicates that our voice was timely and necessary.

Thank you for your interest in our position paper.

Hoping for better days in Israel and the region,

Chana Ullman, Ph.D

On behalf of Iris Lerman, Arnona Zahavi, Ori Noah, Hanni Biran

TEL AVIV INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOANALYSIS POSITION PAPER



We, members of the Tel Aviv Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis (TAICP), feel obligated to voice a clear and unequivocal statement in light of the losses and suffering experienced by our people since Hamas's murderous attack on October 7th, and in light of the killing, destruction, and the severe humanitarian crisis that is taking place in Gaza as a result of the Israeli response to the Hamas attack, and that Israel is sustaining in the West Bank as well.

This obligation we feel to speak out, is based both on our professional and ethical understanding, and on ongoing intensive clinical work with a wide range of patients: children and adults, Jews and Arabs, civilians and soldiers, evacuees, released hostages, their family members and friends--all of whom are dealing with extremely difficult emotional and mental turmoil.

We are watching what is happening with great concern, and wish to point out the severe harm we are already witnessing:

First, the deep rift that has opened in our country. In times of crisis, society splits into opposing segments, each group losing its tolerance towards the others, while the tendency to see events in black and white increases. Cycles of hatred and revenge intensify and spiral into violent racism and xenophobia. These are directed both outward and also inward within one's own society.

The intense fighting in densely populated civilian areas causes soldiers to experience psychological traumas, both as victims of combat and, no less significantly, moral injuries stemming either from the inevitable harm they cause to civilians, or as the result of immoral acts committed out of fear, hatred, vengefulness, or group pressure, or even due to the witnessing of such acts.

We are aware of the blind eye many of us Israeli citizens have been turning towards the massive harm we are causing to the Palestinian civilian population both in Gaza and in the West Bank, and how a dehumanizing stance towards the Palestinians has become the norm. This averted gaze, however understandable in the wake of Hamas's ongoing brutality and war crimes, is dangerous both in the short term, as it increases the cycles of mutual hatred and terror, and in the long term, as we risk an intergenerational transmission of deep layers of trauma that will take many years to heal.

As professionals committed to the ethical principles of human dignity and to the support of life and liberty, we cannot turn away from the unbearable images coming out of Gaza, of children buried under rubble, families wiped out, severe food and water shortages, and more. The immense human suffering in Gaza, with an entire population being forced to escape, under fire, from one area to another, with no access to safe shelter or to basic necessities,

and without hope of an end to the situation in the foreseeable future, is a humanly and morally unacceptable situation.

We warn against the renewal of fighting and the abandonment of our hostages, which will only increase the distress and suffering of both the Israeli and the Palestinian people. We call on our leadership to invest all resources to bring back the hostages, rehabilitating our country and its citizens, and to strive for agreements that will lead to the rehabilitation of the entire region.

This statement comes from our role as mental health practitioners, and as intellectuals committed to psychoanalytic thinking. We treat our patients while communicating with words and believe that dialogue is preferable to violence at all levels--the personal, the interpersonal, and the broader level of relations between the peoples of the region. This, of course, is not only up to us, but we must persevere in striving to create a different reality.

All people of the region deserve human dignity and security.

Signatories (in alphabetical order):

Roni Amiel	Mimi Eilat	Tamar Jislin-Goldberg Anat	Haya Marton
Galia Arieli	Ilana Eilati Shalit	Kander	Ditza Meshulam
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Shomroni	Idit Yam
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Kerene Sidi-Levy Tamar	Arnona Zahavi
Sinai	Tova Zaltz
Shoshi Sivan	Aya Zeidel
Anata Snir	Effi Ziv
Boaz Somech	Roni Ziv
Bella Sosevsky	Liel Zvieli
Lara Strauss-Presenti	
Amina Taiber	
Irit Taller	
Simi Talmi	
Rachel Tene Haas Orit	
Tzafrir Cohen	

OCTOBER 7: THE COURAGE TO REMAIN HUMAN

BY LIAT WARHAFTIG ARAN
& MARTIN MAHLER



We are mental health providers who work with trauma survivors. Liat Warhaftig Aran is a psychoanalyst, group analyst, and staff member at the Tel Aviv Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis. Her grandfather, Dr. Zorach Warhaftig, was one of the founders of the State of Israel and a government minister. His journey from Europe to Japan, during which he led thousands of Jews to safety from the Nazi threat, inspired her commitment to addressing Jewish and Israeli collective trauma. She is part of the leadership team at First Line Med (FLM), a nonprofit organization that provides free, long-term mental health support—delivered by senior trauma professionals—to the first and second circles of victims of the October 7 attack (Anatta, n.d.).

Dr. Martin Mahler is a training psychoanalyst and the president of the Czech Pschoanalytic Society (IPA). Like his collaborator, Helena Klímová, a supervising psychotherapist, group analyst, and publicist, he is a member of the Families After the Holocaust group and has spent many years working on the treatment of psychological trauma and its intergenerational transmission. Along with Věra Roubalová Kostlánová, a psychotherapist specializing in trauma, Martin and Helena founded the Rafael Institute (Rafael Institute, n.d.), which focuses on group training in trauma treatment and prevention. They also provide therapeutic assistance to people from various war zones, particularly Ukrainian refugees in the current crisis.

Our book, *The Pogrom of October 7: The Courage to Remain Human*, published in October 2024 (Irene Press), bears witness to the stories of individuals, therapeutic groups, and Israeli civil society on October 7 and throughout the ensuing war, from the perspectives of Czech and Israeli writers. Against the



backdrop of the failure of law enforcement forces and the government on October 7th, the ethical commitment of citizens to protect and care for others in the face of collective trauma—echoing the Holocaust and pogroms from Jewish history—stands out. Our discussions of compassion and solidarity necessarily entail a critical examination of evil and aggression, which are also explored in the book. Above all, our book explores the face as a symbol of humanity and a site of ethical struggle—to remain caring and compassionate even amid loss, life-threatening danger, and encounters with cruelty.

The first two chapters of the book focus on the lives of Aner Shapira and Amit Mann, two young heroes who were murdered while trying to protect others. Aner was a young soldier who protected thirty partygoers, catching and safely disposing of eight hand grenades before the ninth one killed him. His face, radiating courage and composure, astonished and delayed the terrorists. Amit Mann, a young paramedic, treated the wounded in the clinic of Kibbutz Be'eri until she herself was murdered. When the medical supplies ran out, she stayed by their side, not abandoning them, stroking their hands and smiling at them, expressing her humanity without words.

On learning of their deaths, we were deeply moved, and wished to bear witness to their extraordinary courage and compassion on that "Black Saturday." To that end we interviewed their parents, partners, and friends to create an approximate picture of their lives leading up to their final day. We wondered: Was bravery an inherent part of their character even before their last moments? Was it possible to predict their final acts of heroism from their previous experience and behavior?

After researching the lives and deaths of Aner Shapira and Amit Mann we, with Helena Klimová decided to publish a book on this theme and offer a fresh perspective on what motivates acts of heroism. After all, from Freud onwards, there has been a tendency to warn against the glorification and idealization of heroes, as it is often rooted in infantile wishes. We all need to fantasize about superheroes, but psychological maturity entails the awareness of realistic difficulties and our own human limitations, including our mortality. Furthermore, hero-worship is sometimes closely linked to the admiration of war and grandiose states of mind.

Sue Grand (2010), a relational psychoanalyst suggests that heroes respond to an unconscious wish of a broken, traumatized society to negate or overcome its collective sense of sadness and helplessness through heroes. If left unchecked, this can cause a chain of trauma and war to repeat itself, leading to more death and helplessness. More recently, Robi Friedman (2015) suggests that in times of war, societies unite in a unique social matrix, called "Soldier's Matrix," in which all members of the society are engaged in a war state of mind. Such psychological unity is felt as necessary for the survival of the society, but in the long run, it is dangerous as it requires a complete unity in which opposing voices are considered dangerous. When it outlives its purpose, however, the soldiers' matrix poses a grave danger to democracy and may foster the recurrence of wars.

In slightly different ways, Grand and Friedman construe heroism as a submission to unconscious societal forces. In our book, we offer a different perspective—one that views heroism as fundamentally accessible to all of us, provided we are willing to choose it. We propose that in the events of October 7, many acts of heroism were motivated by love, care, solidarity, and a concern for human dignity. The concept of "ordinary heroism" stands on two pillars: compassion and care for others, as well as courage and the willingness to risk one's life. We argue that heroism is linked to the nuclear self (Kohut, 1985), which embodies an individual's inner relationship with their most fundamental values and existential direction. The heroes whose deeds we document in our book (and many

others we heard about on October 7) acted upon their nuclear self when risking their lives for others. Had they failed to respond to the unfolding atrocities they encountered, they would have felt unfaithful to themselves—an act of self-betrayal. Furthermore, Kohut believed that society needs tragic heroes—figures who sacrifice in times of crisis to embody the highest human values. Human goodness is embedded in us, not only aggression and bellicosity.

Testimonies from hostages who were released in December 2023 show clearly that solidarity and care for others were often expressed, sometimes in the most difficult moments. For example, Eitan Yahalomi, a 12-year-old boy, was kidnapped without his parents and held alone by abusive captors for 16 days. During that time, he was forced to watch videos of Israelis being murdered and was told that his own family had been killed. Following this ordeal, he was transferred to another hiding place where he met a group of hostages, including Shani Goren, a teacher from the Kibbutz who saved food from her mouth and fed him. Eitan himself offered to play with the small girls (ages two and four) of the Asher family who cried during the long nights in captivity.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that not all survivors experienced or expressed such a solidarity. Moran Stilla, a woman who arrived at the party to sell jewelry, was kidnapped and released in the first rounds of hostage transactions. When she returned, she recalled the details of her kidnapping. She was injured in her arm when she was shot and stayed near her car, hiding. She could not run away. A man she did not know helped her, but told her that should the terrorists return to the area he would have to leave her and run away. Similarly, a car of youngsters fleeing from the Nova festival site argued whether to stop for others, realizing that any second of waiting exposed them to further risks. We do not judge or condemn their desire for self-preservation, but attempt to capture the complexity of heroism.

Aner Shapira's Final Stand

As the massacre unfolded across southern Israel, Aner Shapira's parents were unaware that their son was at the Nova festival. At around 11:30 AM, they received a phone call from his friends telling them Aner was there. They immediately panicked. They knew their son well. They knew he wouldn't just run away—even though, as a well-trained soldier in an elite IDF unit, he probably could have escaped. Instead, they were certain that Aner would stay and try to protect others. Earlier that morning, an IDF commander had already called Aner's father, looking for him. The commander wanted to leave a message—telling Aner to report immediately to his base in Sufa. But Aner wasn't answering his phone.

Like all Israeli reservists at the festival, he didn't have a weapon with him.

When the attack began, Aner attempted to flee in a car with other reservists toward Highway 232, aiming to reach the military base, but terrorists blocked the road, and shot at all passing cars.

Realizing they were trapped, Aner and 29 people took cover in a roadside concrete bomb shelter—a *migunit*, as it's called in Hebrew. These small shelters are open structures with no doors—similar to bus stops but reinforced for rocket protection. Terrified festival-goers squeezed inside, lying on the ground, shielding their heads. But Aner didn't lie down. He remained standing by the entrance. Inside the shelter, Aner broke a glass bottle on the floor,

turning it into a makeshift weapon. He tried to calm the group, assuring them: "I'm a soldier. My unit must be close by. Everything will be okay." One young woman whispered back, "I'm so glad you're here, Aner." Then the terrorists arrived.

The next few minutes were recorded from two perspectives, namely a security camera mounted on a terrorist's vehicle, as well as phone footage captured by people inside the shelter. These combined videos documented Aner's last moments. The terrorists began throwing grenades into the shelter. Aner caught them—one by one—and threw them back out before they could explode. Each grenade detonated harmlessly on the road outside. At that moment, Aner was fighting like a lone warrior, armed with nothing but his hands.

When we first heard about this scene, we imagined Aner like a baseball catcher—skillfully catching and returning each grenade as if it were a game. Of course, that was a childish illusion. In reality, Aner was scrambling on the ground, grabbing live explosives rolling toward him, and hurling them out as fast as he could. According to military experts, the only reason this was possible was that the terrorists were handling the grenades unprofessionally, not activating them with the right timing.

The attackers were caught off guard—they didn't expect resistance. Despite being heavily armed, they hesitated to storm the shelter. Instead, they fired blindly inside—but Aner kept throwing the grenades back. The terrorists grew frustrated and confused. Aner threw back eight grenades, but the ninth one exploded in his hands. He was killed instantly.

With Aner dead, the terrorists stormed the shelter, executing most of the people inside. Some were taken as hostages to Gaza—including Aner's best friend, Hersh Goldberg. Hersh would later appear in Hamas propaganda videos, his severed arm bandaged as a message to Israel. In August 2024, Hamas brutally executed him, along with five other Israeli hostages. Meanwhile, a small group of seven people in the shelter managed to pretend they were dead. Lying motionless in the smoke-filled space, under dead bodies, they waited until the terrorists left. Then, when it was safe, they escaped and survived. All of them later testified: "We owe our lives to Aner."

Aner Shapira's bravery didn't begin that day. It was part of who he was. His mother, Shira, described the following incident from his childhood. One day, as a small boy, Aner saw a police officer questioning a man of Ethiopian or Sudanese descent aggressively. Aner approached the officer without hesitation and demanded: "Why are you accusing this man? Are you sure he did something wrong?"

Aner's school reprimanded him for "disrespecting authority." But this was who Aner was—always standing up against cruelty and defending justice, even when it was unwelcome.

Aner wasn't just a soldier. He was a musician, a songwriter, and an artist as well. He played the piano, composed music, and wrote poetry. His songs often carried themes of anti-racism, anti-fascism, and resistance to violence. He spent countless hours in political and philosophical debates, frequenting Jerusalem's Ben Sira Bar—a bohemian agora for intellectuals. Three years before his death, he wrote a song about Palestinians suffering in Gaza—describing children hiding in shelters, fearing rockets overhead. His last song, written just months before October 7, was about the dangers of internal hatred between brothers.

In short, Aner dreamed of a world where armies wouldn't be necessary. But he trained as an elite soldier and acted as he did because he believed that as long as Israel was under attack, he had a duty to protect the weak and vulnerable. Before his death, Aner asked his friends to publish his songs and poetry if he didn't survive. They honored his wish, releasing an album titled *Anerchism* on what would have been his birthday in March 2024. The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra later performed his most famous song in tribute.

Amit Mann: An angel singing in the dark

Traditionally, heroism has been associated with men on the battlefield. In Hebrew, the word for heroism, *gvura*, closely resembles *gever*, meaning "man." However, we suggest that *gvura* is linked to *lehitgaber*, meaning "to overcome"—specifically, to overcome fear. On October 7, many women exhibited heroism, fighting with their bare hands to protect not only their loved ones but even complete strangers. Amit Mann was one of them.

Amit was born in Netivot, a small town in southern Israel, just ten kilometers from Gaza. She was the youngest of five daughters and her father's cherished "princess." From an early age, Amit loved to sing and perform, and everyone expected her future to be on stage. However, when she was only ten years old, her life took an unexpected turn. Her father was diagnosed with cancer and needed home care. Amit was forced to mature abruptly, assisting her mother in caring for him. She was impressed by the doctors who came to their home, calling them "angels in white." She devoured medical books with a passionate, unspoken or unconscious wish—to save her beloved father. That dream was tragically cut short. He passed away when she was just fourteen.

Determined to help others, Amit began volunteering at Magen David Adom (MDA), Israel's equivalent of the Red Cross. She quickly excelled, torn between a career in performance or a future as a paramedic. Ultimately, she chose medicine and caregiving but never abandoned her love of singing. In fact, she sang daily—especially after witnessing death in her work, using music as a source of solace.

After her death, her family learned just how well she had functioned under extreme pressure. At eighteen, she responded to a terror attack as part of an ambulance crew. Police initially prevented her from reaching a wounded woman, warning that the terrorist was still at large. Undeterred, Amit insisted on going forward with a medic, only to discover that the injured woman was his own aunt. The medic was in shock—so Amit took charge of the scene.

At just twenty-two, Amit was selected to lead a paramedic training course, making her the youngest to ever hold that position. Her independent thinking and meticulous attention to detail often challenged her supervisors, who nevertheless appreciated her very much. During her time at MADA, she fell in love with Ofir, a man 25 years older than her, despite her mother's objections. He supported her rapid professional growth, perhaps helping her reclaim some of the lost love she had once experienced with her father.

On the morning of October 7, Amit was among the first people to be called to treat the wounded as she was part of the emergency team at Kibbutz Be'eri, a southern town heavily infiltrated by Hamas. She reached out to Dr. Daniel Levi Ludmir, a physician living in the kibbutz, and together with nurse Nirit Honvald Kornfeld, they tended to the injured. The clinic they operated in was under relentless gunfire—intensifying when Hamas identified it as being defended by members of the kibbutz's emergency preparedness team. Hamas terrorists had explicit orders

to eliminate them.

The clinic had no shelter, and by the time it became clear they were trapped, it was too late to relocate. In the early hours, Amit worked tirelessly, treating the wounded and coordinating with MDA to dispatch ambulances. At first, her voice on the emergency calls was strong and determined. But as the hours dragged on, she began to grasp the grim reality—no help was coming. The kibbutz was under siege, and the army was nowhere on the horizon.

Throughout those terrifying hours, Amit remained in contact with her family by phone. She reassured them that she was safe, even as the situation grew dire. The ammunition of the preparedness team protecting the clinic was nearly depleted. Medical supplies had run out. Improvising, Amit tore strips of fabric to create arterial tourniquets. She prepared makeshift pillows for the injured, gently stroking their heads and hands, speaking to them to keep them conscious.

Amit remained loyal to her commitment to care and solidarity. Despite having the opportunity to escape a few times, or hide, she chose to stay with her patients until the very end. In her final conversation with her sister, Lior, her despair was finally audible. When we heard their last call we noticed that she had not seen herself as a victim. Instead, her voice carried only deep, heartbreaking sorrow.

Around two in the afternoon, the terrorists stormed the clinic. Some medical personnel attempted to hide, but Amit chose to remain near the wounded. Perhaps she believed they would spare a medical professional, or perhaps she hoped to protect those more vulnerable—we will never know. The attackers entered with heavy gunfire and threw hand grenades. The sound was overwhelming, but even more chilling was their laughter, as reported by the only survivors of the assault: Nirit and Yair Avital, members of the clinic's preparedness group. Amit was first shot in the leg and managed to apply an arterial tourniquet—grasping at life. But the terrorists shot her again, this time fatally, in the head.

From Saturday until Monday the family remained in the dark as the army still fought in the Kibbutz. On Monday the bitter news finally arrived. Yair Avital, who had remained alive against all odds, perhaps because of Amit's care, called the family from the hospital. He told them about Amit's courageous and devoted care. Her sister, Haviva, said: "Amit preserved compassion and humanity and spread light and warmth in a place of huge cruelty and great darkness."

In light of stories like these, it is no surprise that since October 2023, the topics of evil and hatred have once again received significant attention. However, as we marvel at the depths of human depravity, we must not forget or neglect the importance and persistence of kindness and compassion—even toward the enemy. Even in extreme conditions, there are moments when sensitivity to the vulnerability and fragility of our adversaries emerges. One example comes from an Israeli woman who was fortunate enough to return from captivity in Gaza a year ago. She described how, one night, she and other hostages were taken from their hiding place to be relocated. For the first time, she saw the destruction of Gaza around her and immediately thought about the despair and misery of the Palestinian people. She felt pity for them. She wondered: "What is the source of their suffering, aside from the

losses inflicted by Israel? Is Hamas evil because it is so wretched, or is it wretched because it is so evil?"

When we are consumed by a desire for revenge and by the need to cope with the horror inflicted upon us by terrorists, it is tempting to focus only on their evil and to avoid reflecting on our own flaws. The Hamas operatives who carried out the October 7th massacre (and continued their atrocities thereafter) acted with such extreme brutality that it is difficult to regard them as fellow human beings. Even non-human creatures do not exhibit such calculated cruelty, so that comparing them to animals would be unfair. For lack of a better comparison, we often tend to think of them as the embodiment of demons or "the devil."

The moral lesson that evil can only be eradicated if we acknowledge that it also resides within us may seem irrelevant or too general in this case. Yes, *yetzer ha'ra* ('יצר הרע'), "the seed of sin," exists in everyone, and Israelis have a long history of conflict with Palestinians. However, this does not justify the calculated, sophisticated, and malicious atrocities Hamas committed—acts so horrific that they may never be fully processed. While we are not blameless either, we must recognize the fundamental differences between our own failings and the evil of those who seek to wipe Jews off the face of the earth. Ignoring these differences leads only to oversimplified sentimentality and hidden self-hatred. If we fail to distinguish between ourselves and those who gleefully massacre our people, destroy our families, and seek to erase our homes, we abandon our moral foundation, lose our sense of judgment, and fall into the trap of pseudo-humanity and self-destructive blindness.

According to Fachler (2024), every culture is nurtured by its own "mother's milk." As an example of Israeli culture, the author refers to the protest movement "Four Mothers," founded after a 1997 helicopter disaster, by mothers of Israeli soldiers serving in Lebanon. Their goal was to pressure policymakers to withdraw the IDF from the security zone in southern Lebanon. In contrast, consider the recorded phone call from October 7, in which a jubilant Hamas terrorist calls his parents to proudly inform them that he had just killed two Jews, even sending them a video as proof. This document reveals the "black milk" of Hamas culture, in which such killers are raised.

These then are the main themes of our book. But we are merely two of the contributors. Other authors contributed the following:

Edith Shani Adom, an Israeli psychologist and group analyst, shares the experiences of a mother to an IDF soldier in Gaza, and the diary her son kept during his service there. Through a personal lens, she unfolds the soldiers' struggle to maintain their humanity and ethics, even when they are required to fight the enemy. She develops a theoretical discussion on Hamas' "culture of death" and conceptualizes social processes in Israeli society since October 7, such as 'massification' and 'destructive polarization,' and their connection to the present and historical collective trauma of the Holocaust

Dr. Avi Berman contributes an essay, titled "Dancing on the Titanic: My Experience Leading Group Sessions in Israel Since the Start of the War and Reflections on Resilience." Berman, a clinical psychologist, training analyst, and group analyst, argues that resilience, both individual and societal, must also include the ability not only to share traumatic experiences, but also to listen to others' traumatic experiences. While some therapeutic approaches suggest that group therapy is not suitable for acute trauma, Berman presents a different perspective—that an individual's resilience grows as their capacity for mutuality and solidarity develops.

In another part of the book, Helena Klímová conducts an interview with Dr. Robi Friedman, an Israeli clinical psychologist and group analyst. In this interview, Robi discusses his concept of the “soldier's matrix.” Friedman’s message is not only a professional reflection but also a personal conversation: he speaks as a father-in-law who lost his son-in-law, Ido Rosenthal, a soldier in an elite unit of the Israeli army, on October 7th. For Friedman, it is crucial how individuals and societies, under acute threat and in deep grief, can—and must—preserve their humanity and their ability to engage in dialogue with the enemy. In Klímová’s further account she engages in dialogue with Marit Joffe Milstein to illuminate the power of tender intergenerational connections for transforming nightmares into dreams. Joffe Milstein, a psychotherapist and group analyst also shares examples of her work with bereaved families using creative art and group analysis to bridge broken worlds of before and after the “Black Saturday” of October 7th, 2023.

Michal Klíma, a journalist, exposes the pretense of the European Union’s and American movements’ against Israel’s policies in Gaza, showing that these are, in fact, new iterations of antisemitism. The denial of antisemitism and the blaming of Israel for Hamas’ crimes, attack not only Israel and the Jewish people but also the very concept of committing crimes against humanity. Klíma’s words and his position as the Chairman of the Holocaust Victims Foundation are a part of his continued struggle against the denial of antisemitism and his efforts for witnessing.

Ella Stolper, a psychotherapist and group analyst, highlights the theme of siblings’ love and solidarity during the massacre. Stolper demonstrates the destructive influence of denial on survivors’ recovery that cancels their suffering. She foregrounds the importance of “Sibling Witnessing” in analytic group work during moments of collective trauma situations. Her second idea: “The law of the brother” highlights our moral obligation to care for our symbolic siblings, and the courage that this requires.

While we hope it sheds light on the nature of heroism, our book comes too soon to provide a retrospective analysis of how October 7, 2023 and the dreadful events that followed in its wake have shaped the psychological life of individuals and society. The wave of violence and collective trauma that ensued in Israel and in Gaza has not ended. Thus, this book serves as a kind of message in a bottle, tossed into turbulent seas—a testimony to humanity and goodness that persist despite the raging evil that confounds and menaces us still.

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY TO SOUNDS THAT STARTLE (*SHIRAT HA-TRIGGER*)

BY RACHEL Z. GOODMAN



My career, as well as my personal experiences have been marked by both trauma and its counterpart, resilience. I am the child and grandchild of Holocaust Survivors, my grandparents having been interned in a transit/work camp for two and a half years while my mother was hidden as a toddler by Righteous Gentiles, Alida and Charles Pontus, z'l in Brussels, Belgium. Our family legacy is one of survival, deep belief, loss, trauma, and extraordinary gratitude and the understanding that one person really can make a difference in the world. This knowledge has been the driving force throughout my life to act rather than to be a bystander, to speak up for those who cannot or will not speak for themselves, and to dedicate my career in service of individuals who suffer from emotional and cognitive deficits, often with pain that runs deep through generational trauma. I have been blessed to witness the posttraumatic growth that comes from many therapeutic approaches, in conjunction with prevention, wellness and mindfulness. Together these can lead to a life filled with true meaning.

I was first made aware of Lilach Kipnis, z'l, through an article that was written in *Kveller* magazine, shortly after October 7th, 2023, the biggest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Lilach was a child trauma specialist who in 2021 wrote a children's book in Hebrew, *Shirat HaTrigger*, aimed at helping children living on the border of Gaza facing the trauma of war. The book was released in Israel for free by the Kipnis family both in digital and print form to help Israeli children face the ongoing trauma of October 7th and the war that followed. At the time, it was suspected that Lilach and her husband, Eviatar, were hostages, but tragically it was discovered that they had both been murdered in Kibbutz Be'eri on that fateful day, along with other family members, while others had been taken hostage.

The book touched me in a visceral way, thinking about the children for whom regular childhood sounds such as a bouncing basketball become trauma triggers that lead to feelings of intense fear and a loss of safety. Lilach's simple

words and the pictures to match teach about trauma and resilience in a non-threatening manner for both children and the adults in their lives. I could hear my mother's words in my head—Don't be a bystander. I knew I had to act. I felt a sense of urgency to share Lilach's message and her legacy with the world and worked with the Kipnis family to have the book translated into English. This project has been one of love, awe, heartbreak and inspiration for me. It has given me the gift of a strong connection with Lilach's family, and I was blessed to visit with one of her sons and niece when I was recently in Israel. I held Lilach's new grandson in my arms, who is named in memory of his grandparents whose memories should live on forever.

May *Sounds that Startle*, the English translation of Lilach's book, provide support to children and families facing trauma and provide comfort to the Kipnis family for all that they have lost and lived through. I want to express my deep gratitude to the extraordinary team of translators, both family and professional, who volunteered hundreds of hours of their time, and to Ben Gurion University Canada for publishing *Sounds that Startle* and making this project the stepping stone of their current focus on providing funds for mental health treatment in Southern Israel and beyond.

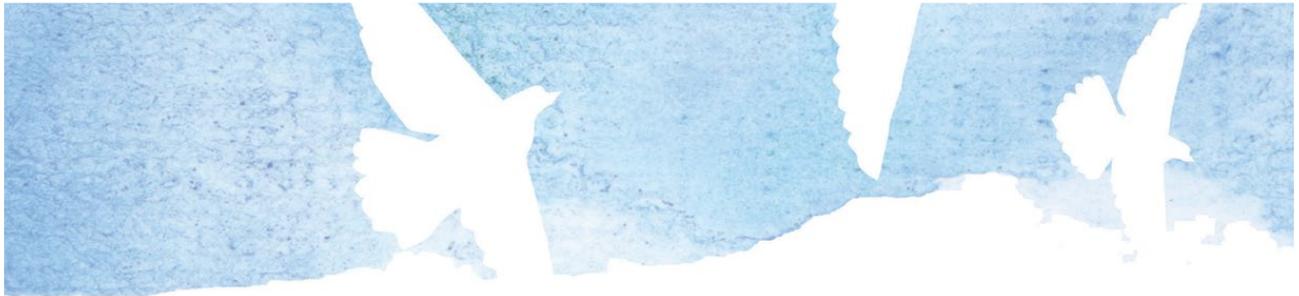


Sounds that Startle

Written by Lilach Kipnis

Illustrated by Lia Bickel





About "Sounds that Startle" by Lilach Kipnis:

"Sounds that Startle" [originally published in Hebrew as: "שירת הטריגר" "Shirat Ha-trigger"] was born out of my meetings with the children of Eshkol Regional Council in the Hosen¹ (Resilience) Center. It was actually written together with the children, out of their shared experiences of living in an ongoing state of emergency.

In such a reality, we are exposed to triggers: stimuli that remind us of the real danger and make us react as if the danger itself were present. The trigger produces a reflexive physical reaction to danger. Sometimes it passes immediately when we realize that there is no real danger, but sometimes it can throw off our physical, mental, emotional, and functional balance for an extended period of time.

It is important to give validity to these reactions, and not say "It's nothing" or "There is nothing to worry about" -- even if these things are said with the best intentions of offering reassurance. Panic, and the body's reactions to it, must be treated as real symptoms, which are recognized as a normal response to a trigger. At the same time, the difference between panic and actual danger should be clarified.

After that, it is possible to go on to the relaxation phase, and find, together with the child, ways that help to regain balance. For some children, this may include movement and the release of the energy charging through the body as a result of the trigger. For others, it will be a relaxing activity, such as breathing techniques, hugging, and playing.

¹ A center for treatment of stress and trauma in areas affected by the war.

Foreword by Rachel Z. Goodman, Ph.D.

This project has been a labor of love amidst enormous pain and loss. It is dedicated to the memory of Lilach Kipnis ז"ל, and to her family members. It is also a prayer for the release of all the hostages who, at the time of the completion of this project, are still being held captive in Gaza. The week after the massacre in Israel on October 7, 2023, I read an article published in Kveller magazine written by Lior Zaltzman, titled "This Israeli hostage's book is helping kids deal with trauma." I am an Orthodox Jewish clinical psychologist living in Montreal who specializes in the treatment of trauma, and I was deeply moved by the article. Lilach Kipnis, who was assumed at the time to be held hostage, had been a therapist who worked with Israeli children living near the Gaza border. Lilach's book Shirat HaTrigger was published in Hebrew in 2021 to help Israeli children suffering from the trauma of war.

To raise awareness of Lilach and her family's dire situation during this current war, her family released Lilach's book online and distributed 150,000 free copies in Hebrew for all Israeli children to read at no cost. I immediately felt the urgent need to spread awareness of this book to the world. People who do not read Hebrew would surely benefit from the messages of Lilach's story. It became even more important to share Lilach's legacy with the world when it was discovered that she and her husband, as well as several other members of their family, had in fact been murdered on October 7, 2023, when Kibbutz Be'eri was attacked by Hamas. Trauma and resilience often go hand in hand and Israelis are among the most resilient people in the world. But this level of collective trauma has not been experienced by the Jewish people since the Holocaust. Shared stories play a crucial role in healing, and I believe that Lilach's story has the power to help us all heal.

This project could not have gotten off the ground without the support of Rabbi Daniel Salter (Hebrew Academy of Montreal), Daniel Rothner (Areyvut), and Stuart Katz (Mental Health First Aid). I am deeply indebted to Lior Zaltzman for her story which inspired this project and whose first attempt at translation laid the groundwork for this version. Maya Lumbroso, Lilach's cousin, and Naomi Havron, Lilach's niece, have been invaluable in connecting us to the Kipnis family and supporting this project. Allison Ofanansky, who made Aliyah from the United States and works in Israel as a translator, editor, and children's book author, and Zehava Cohn, a children's book author from Montreal both selflessly volunteered innumerable hours in translating Lilach's work into the book you see before you. Special thanks to Ilan Gewurz for his belief and engagement in this project.

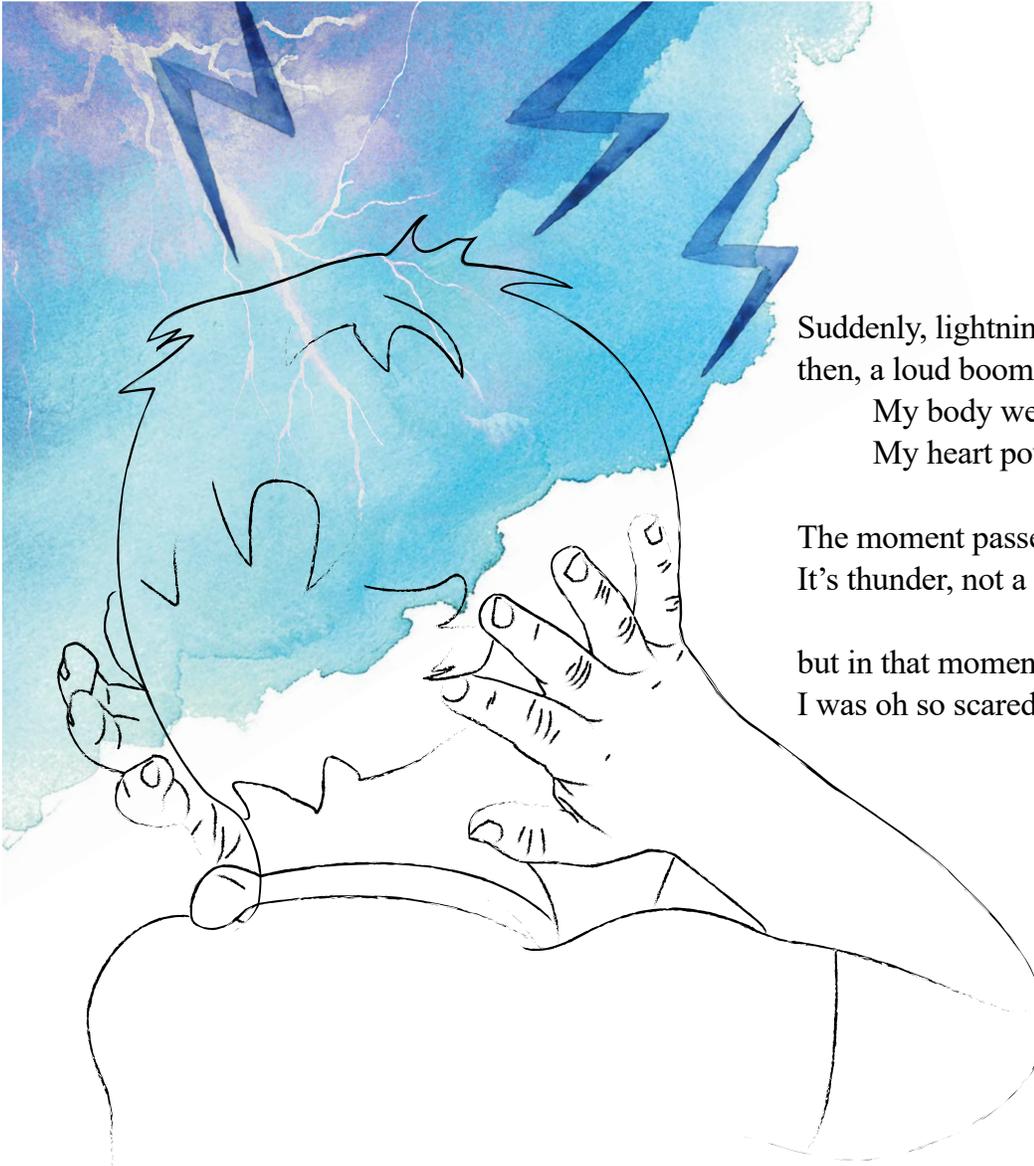
Finally, my deep appreciation goes to Shimmy Wenner and Michelle Zaslavsky at BGU Canada for taking this project on and ensuring the support needed for its completion.

May Lilach's memory, and the memory of all those murdered on October 7, 2023, in Israel, be for a blessing.

***Rachel Z. Goodman, Ph.D.
Clinical Psychologist (Montreal, Canada)***

Today, it happened again.
It was a gray and cloudy day.
We had just sat down to eat.

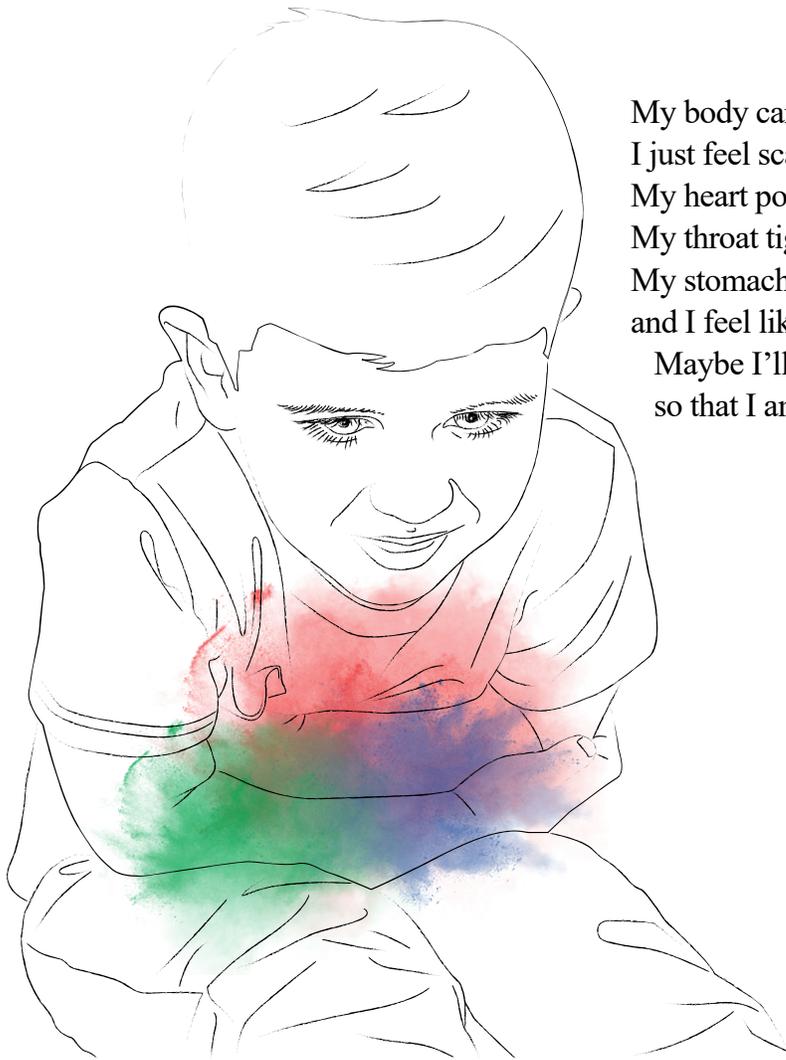




Suddenly, lightning flashed,
then, a loud boom.
My body went stiff.
My heart pounded.

The moment passed and I realized:
It's thunder, not a missile...

but in that moment
I was oh so scared.



My body can't tell the difference.
I just feel scared.
My heart pounds.
My throat tightens.
My stomach clenches
and I feel like running away.
Maybe I'll run to the "safe room"²
so that I am not alone.

² Israeli homes and neighborhoods have "safe rooms" or bomb shelters. Some are inside the house; some are for several families. They have thick walls and metal windows.

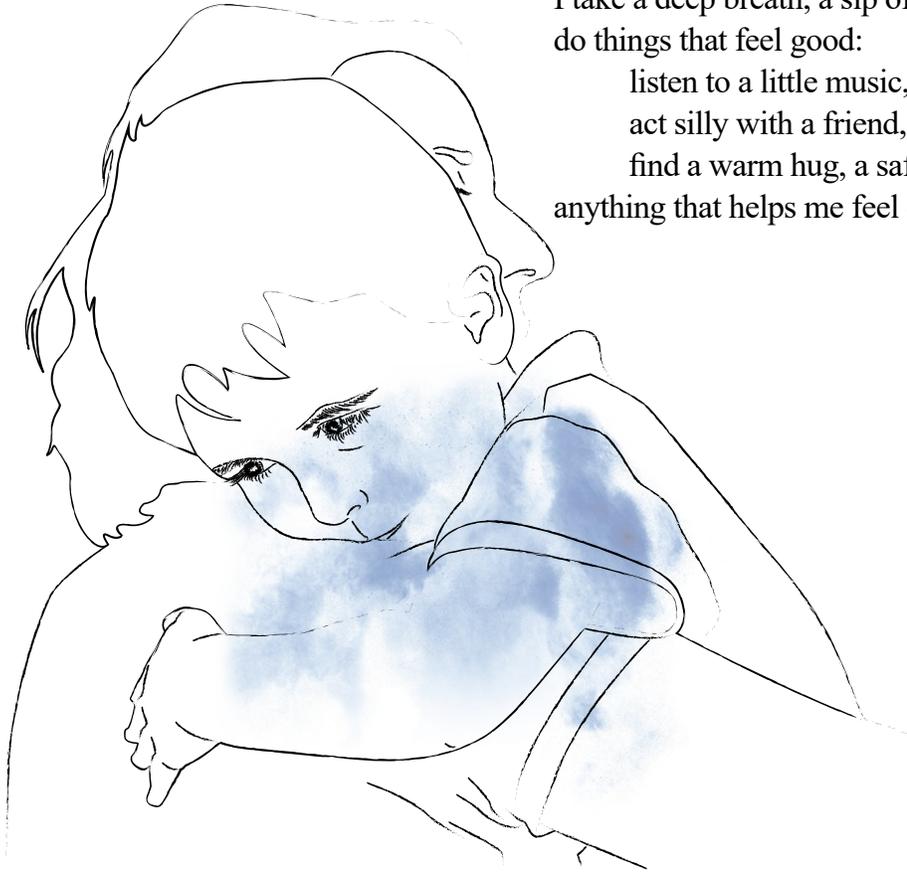
Then I remember that I'm ready for this.
These loud noises and booms are startling,
but not dangerous.

The noise is unpleasant.
It reminds me of bad things,
but I am safe:
scared, but not in danger.

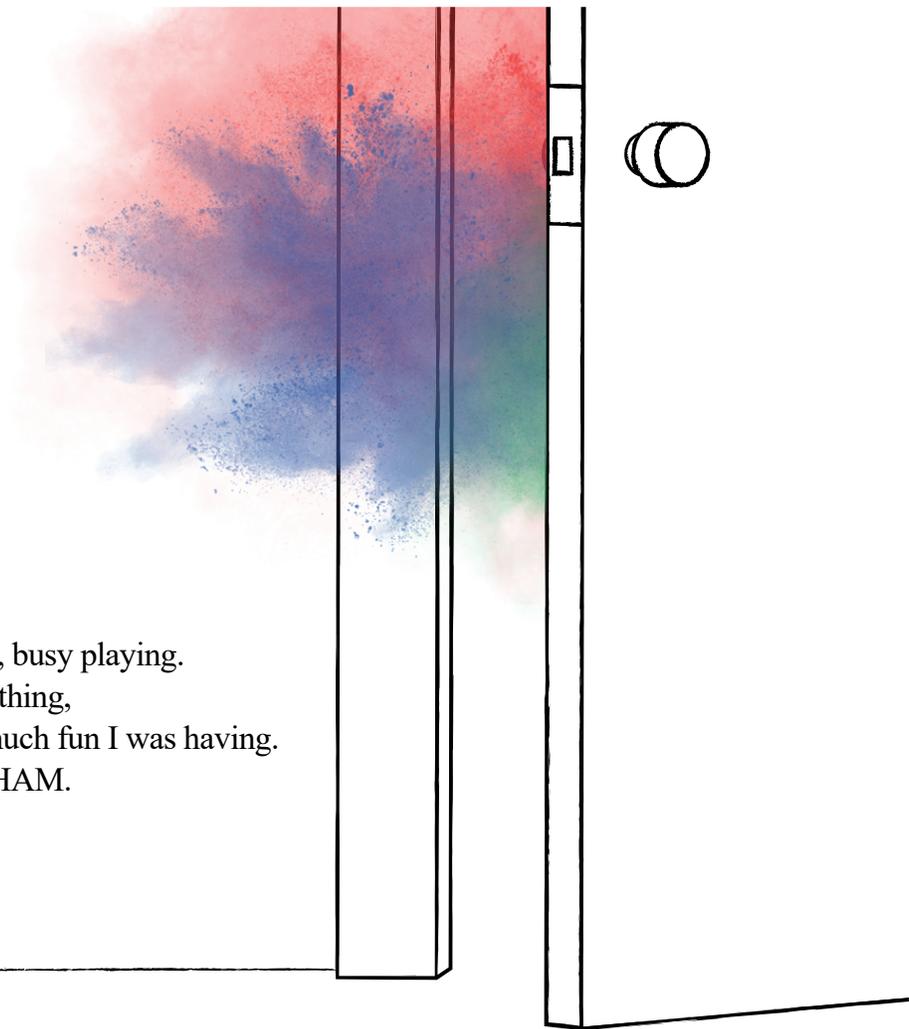




I put my hand on my heart and cross my thumbs like a butterfly.
Don't be afraid, I tell myself.
You're safe now.
Everything is fine.
You can relax,
and slowly, slowly, let go.



I take a deep breath, a sip of water,
do things that feel good:
listen to a little music, maybe dance,
act silly with a friend,
find a warm hug, a safe space,
anything that helps me feel calm.



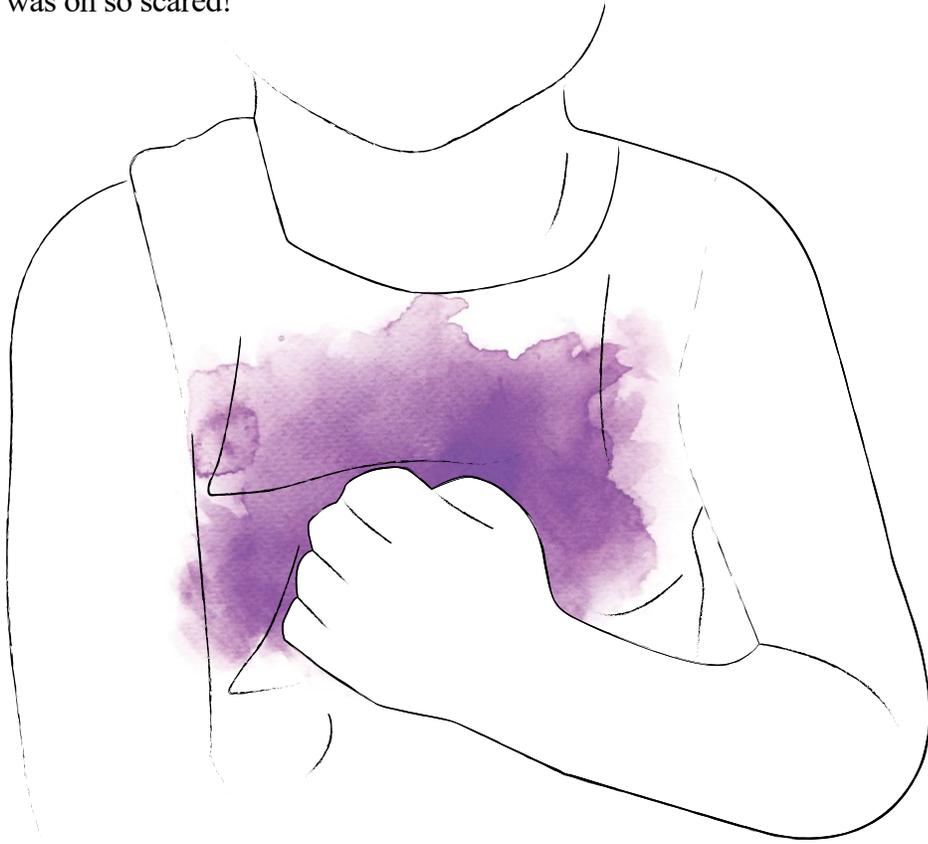
One day I was at home, busy playing.
Not thinking about anything,
 other than how much fun I was having.
Suddenly, a slam, a WHAM.
 My body tightened.
 My heart pounded.

Then, the moment passed, and I realized it was only the front door closing,
my brother coming home!

It wasn't a rocket...

but in that moment

I was oh so scared!

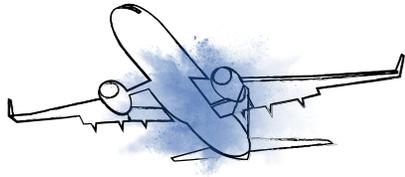




That's how it happens, sometimes,
suddenly, just like that.
There are all kinds of noises
that remind me of danger:

All sorts of booms...
Bangs...
Crashes...
WHAMS....
make my heart jump.

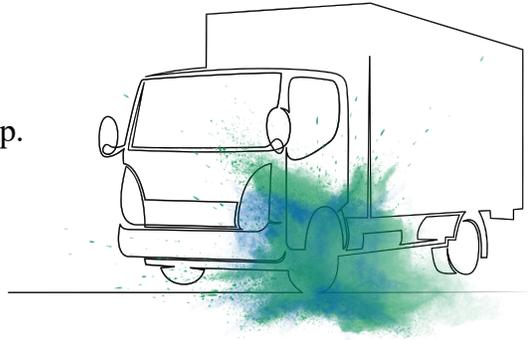




The loud thunder...
the boom of a jet plane,

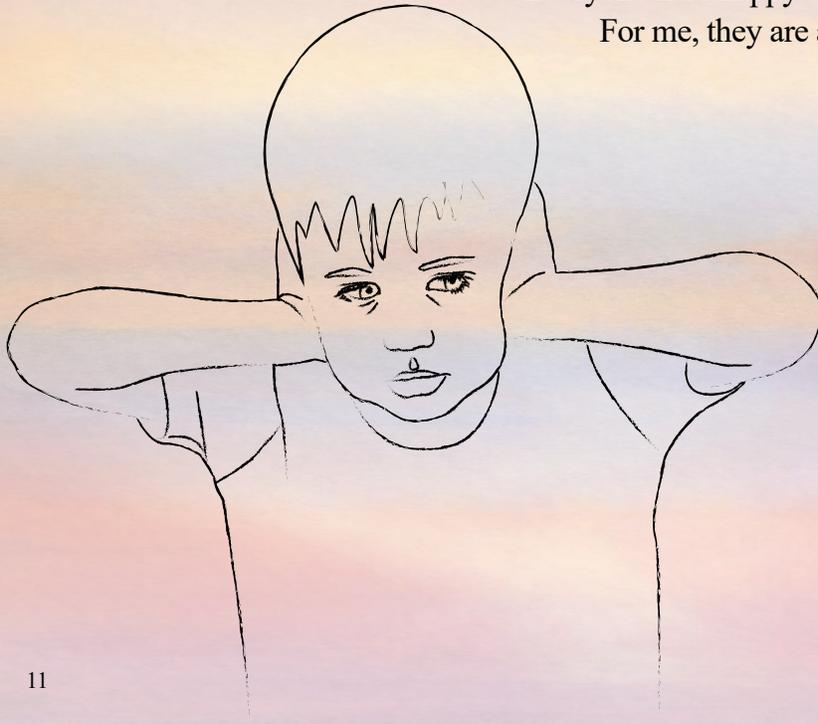
the sound of a truck
going over a speed bump.

I can't even sit still in class!



There are “iron dome”³ booms
(I am so tired of being startled!)
and loudspeakers that are so annoying.
They remind me of the red alerts⁴
and it’s like I can’t breathe.

And what about fireworks on Independence Day?
Everyone is so happy.
For me, they are a nightmare.





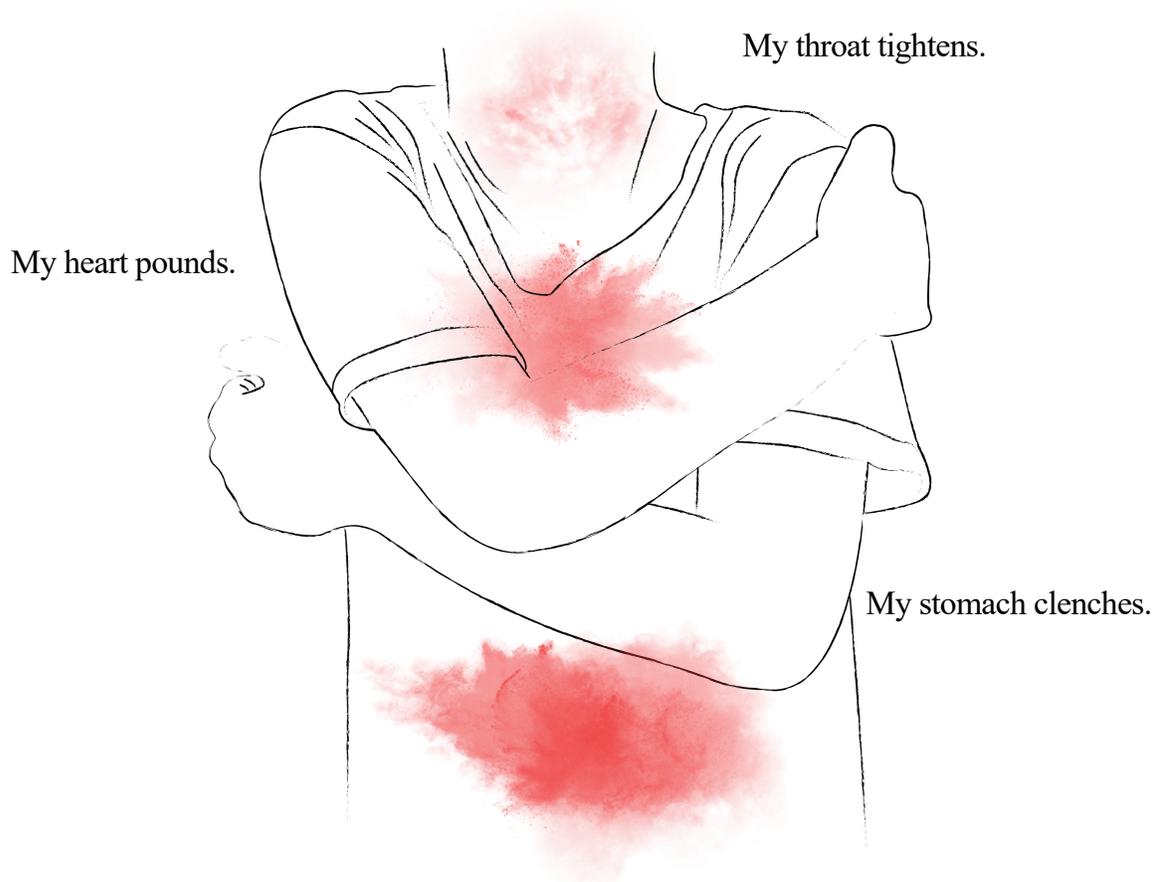
3 "Iron dome" is the Israeli anti-missile system which intercepts missiles targeting Israel. The boom of an anti-ballistic missile scares the boy as if it were a missile from Gaza.

4 In the south of Israel, missiles coming from Gaza do not trigger a regular siren but a "red color" alert, a voice in loudspeakers repeating the words "red color." This is because citizens have only 15 seconds to get to a safe room, unlike when they hear a regular siren and have longer to prepare.



Even my own bad thoughts
and imaginary sounds
fill me with scary feelings.

My body can't tell the difference.
It just feels scared.

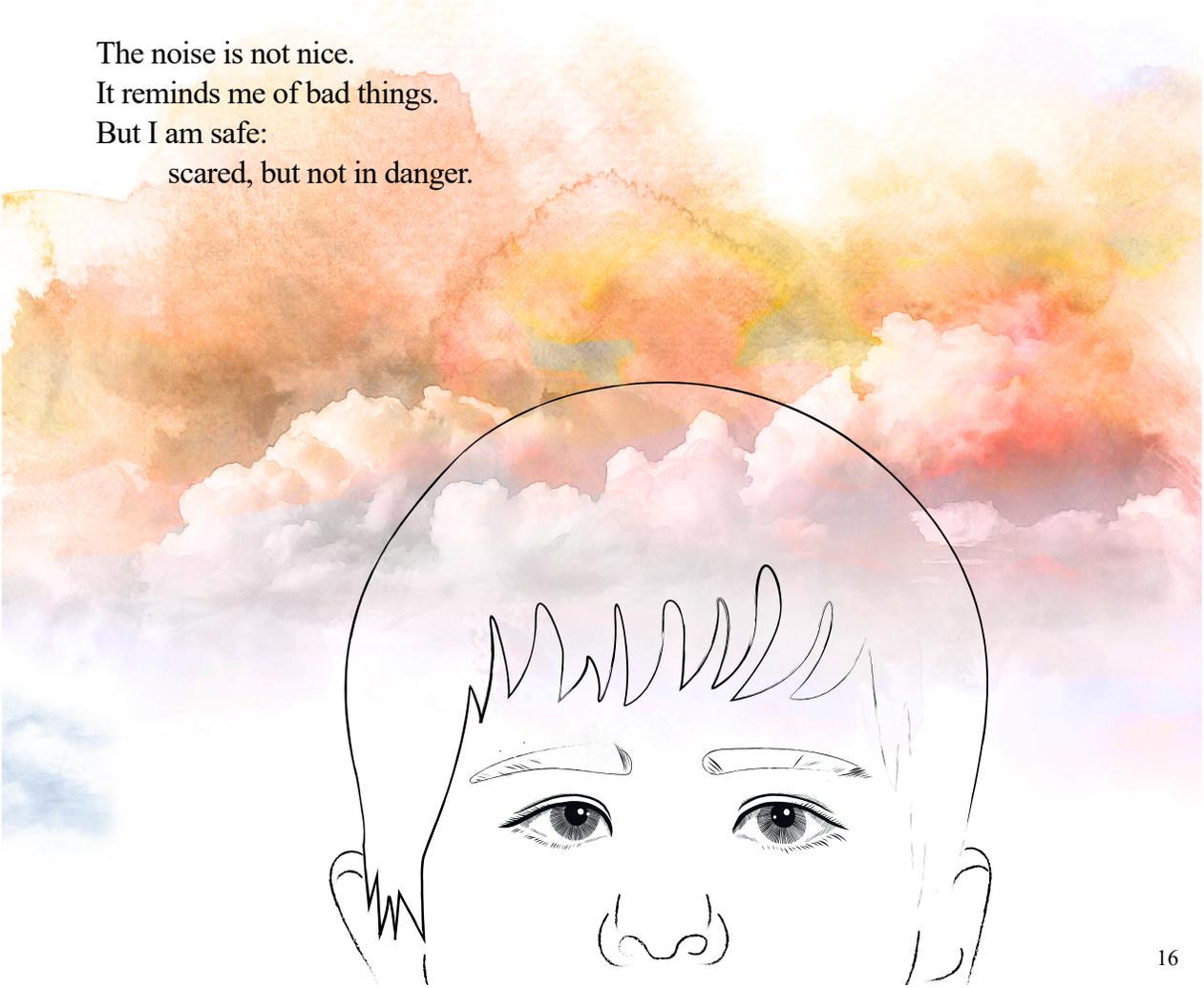


I feel like running away.
Maybe I'll run to the "safe room,"
anywhere, so that I am not alone.

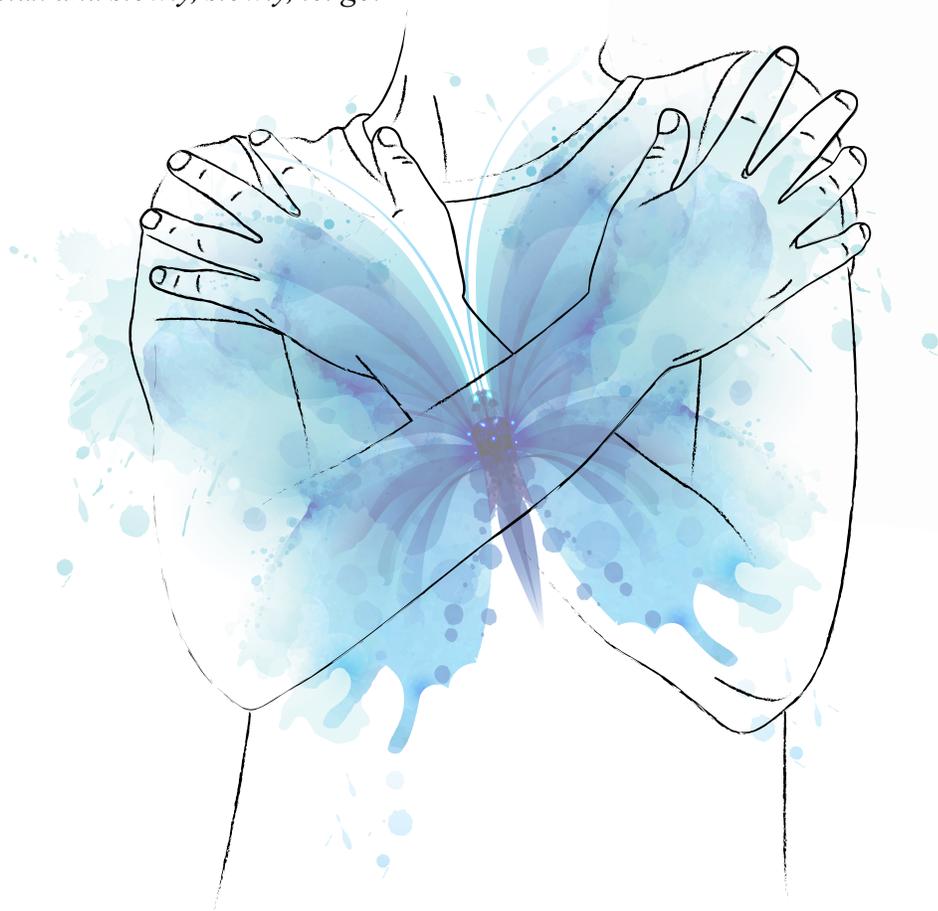


I remember, though, that I'm ready for this:
These loud noises and booms are startling, but not dangerous.

The noise is not nice.
It reminds me of bad things.
But I am safe:
scared, but not in danger.



I put my hand on my heart and cross my arms like a butterfly.
Don't be afraid, I tell myself.
You're safe now.
Everything is fine.
You can relax and slowly, slowly, let go.



I take a deep breath, a sip of water,
do things that feel good:
listen to a little music, maybe dance,
act silly with a friend,
find a warm hug, a safe space,
anything that helps me feel calm.





Someday, soon, I hope,
we will all sit together and remember how
everything used to be scary,
and now everything is normal.



It was a hard time, but it passed.
Better days are here at last.

About the author:

Lilach Kipnis cherished people of all kinds and embraced her family with love. Her parents were founders of Kibbutz Be'eri in Otef Aza (the kibbutzim and communities surrounding the Gaza Strip), where Lilach was born and raised, and where she raised her own two children. Her love extended to offering support, a listening ear, warm hugs, and guidance to both children and adults in need. She found joy in cooking, hosting guests, laughter, and playful moments.

Lilach had a passion for traveling (but not walking). She wholeheartedly gave herself to children and adults who needed help, each person receiving her full attention. Many people discovered their life's path through her kindness, both in her personal life and her work. As she loved, so she was loved: by her colleagues at the Hosen (Resilience) Center for whom she was a source of inspiration as a therapist and instructor; by the boys and girls she adopted into her heart and her home, by her family and friends, and by everyone who was captivated by her charm.

On October 7, 2023, Lilach was taken from us, but her legacy, and this book, will continue to light our way. She wrote this book, which was initially intended for the children of Otef Aza, but now, it has become relevant to every child in Israel, and to the parents who read it to them. Her family members and the staff of the Hosen (Resilience) Center hope that from now on sounds will not be so startling.



*Translated by Allison Ofanansky and Zehava Cohn
with input from Maya Lumbroso, Naomi Havron, and Lior Zaltzman
English translation pagination by Michelle Zaslavsky*

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**With deep gratitude to Ben-Gurion University Canada in Toronto
for bringing this project to life.**

**Lilach Kipnis graduated with a Master's degree in Art Therapy from
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU).
She dedicated her career to helping children affected by trauma,
particularly those living near the Gaza Envelope.**



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HOW ANCESTRAL BONDING OFFERS HEALING FOR THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM

BY CHAYA ABRAMS



Introduction

Research reveals that trauma impacts multiple generations (Nir, 2018). However, the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors typically relate to historical trauma differently than first and second generations (Cohn & Morrison, 2018). Third and fourth generation descendants are shifting away from a former *conspiracy of silence* (Danieli, 1998) to revere ancestral legacy (Moskowitz, 2015). In fact, Holocaust identity and trauma associations may be stronger among grandchildren (Greenblatt-Kimron et al., 2024), however, few studies examine *how* living progenies connect to ancestral trauma (Cohn & Morrison, 2018).

To understand the intergenerational bonds between contemporary Jews and forebearers, I studied trans-lineal attachments in other marginalized communities and historical artifacts. I discovered that intergenerational identification (Erikson, 1964) is formed through shared rituals like basket-weaving, (Santamaría, 2017), poetry exchange (Henderson, 2021), use of time-image episodes (Kwan, 2020) and multi-generational co-existence in diaspora (Elliott-Israelson, 2024).

In each instance, there is a deep yearning for ancestral kinship I call *ancestral bonding*; third and fourth generational acquaintance with the *Whole Self*, or the past, present, and perceived future of each ancestor's legacy (Abrams, 2022). Ancestral bonding encompasses both peaceful and harrowing eras in Jewish history, so that the young are

introduced to narratives of familial resilience (Santamaría, 2017) and perspectives on *otherness* (Elliott-Israelson, 2024) that offer solace when facing societal challenges, such as contemporary antisemitism.

Modern antisemitism is a widespread affliction that impacts young Jews. In 2024, belief in anti-Jewish tropes increased by 24% (ADL, 2024) and Jewish identity disclosure decreased by 50% after the Israel-Hamas war began (Goodman, 2023). Jewish teens and adults often encounter hostile work environments (Allen et al., 2020), online hate speech (Milanović, 2022), and *cloaked* antisemitism, or antisemitic encounters framed as social justice gestures (Simon, 2021). Since Hamas's October 7th attack on Israel, Jews report a shattered sense of security (Lederhendler, 2024), prompting reconsideration of *eternal antisemitism* (Arendt, 2007), or the belief that Jew-hatred is “woven into the very fabric of human civilization” (Magid, 2024, p. 372). Though this perspective is not universally shared, it attests to lost faith in societal protections (Goodman, 2023) and fractioned internal disparities (Della Pergola, 2024) which produce a devastating sense of helplessness as world hostility worsens.

In response to escalating Jew-hatred, institutions of higher education and government bodies introduced the Antisemitism Awareness Act of 2019 and its 2023 addendum. The Office of Civil Rights produced a fact sheet against discrimination based on shared ancestry and ethnicity, and the White House released one hundred protective actions against antisemitism (Lyerly, 2023). Educators and researchers partnered with administrative stakeholders to introduce more critical (Magid, 2024) and dialectical approaches (Gould, 2023) into antisemitism studies.

However, research on Holocaust education indicates that contemporary Americans sometimes misinterpret antisemitism (Rajal, 2024). This phenomenon may be fostered by the trend toward teaching about trauma and racism that excludes Holocaust studies (Metzger, 2012). Other problems are scholarly debates about its universal definition (Ury et al., 2024), under-theorization of Holocaust studies (Magid, 2024), and the absence of phenomenological voices in related inquiries (Della Pergola, 2024).

To counter Jewish de-humanization, Rajal (2024) recommends that historical trauma education should promote a “personalized way of remembering” (p. 14) transgenerational sorrow. Similarly, I maintain that ancestral bonding can impart strength to the lineal descendants of trauma victims as “the collective unconscious of subsequent generations” (Henderson et al., 2016, p. 72). This attachment bridges the evolving field of antisemitism studies (Enstad, 2024; Engel, 2009) with critical theory (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002), while upholding an *analytical category* (Lederhendler, 2023) in Jewish scholarship (Della Pergola, 2024).

From an abyss of loneliness, Jews long for shared lineage and a sense of Home. When Home associations (e.g. Judaism and Israel) are demonized (Ehrlich, 2020) in public discourse, threat responses often snowball into danger perceptions. As the Israel-Hamas war continues, grandchildren of Holocaust survivors experience increased anxiety because the current danger evokes memories of ancestral persecution (Shrira, 2015).

Greenblatt-Kimron et al. (2024) studied this phenomenon further and found that TTS (*Terror Threat Salience*) is amplified amidst third generation descendants with Holocaust grandparents. TTS also occurs among Armenian refugee grandchildren (Karenian et al., 2011), Tutsi genocide descendants (Shrira et al., 2019), and Japanese offspring of Hiroshima (Palgi et al., 2012). Recent examinations of intergenerational trauma transmission confirm

that PTSD among our progenitors heightens the terror perceptions of descendants. Therefore, decreasing threat-based anxiety in offspring is crucial (Greenblatt-Kimron et al., 2024). In the following section, I introduce five intergenerational factors in ancestral bonding that reduce the sense of isolation produced by anti-Judaism (Abrams, 2025, in press).

Ancestral Bonding

Ancestral bonding is the third and fourth generations' relationship with the *whole Self* of each ancestor (Abrams, 2022). Though contemporary Jews often have freedoms and opportunities for self-actualization that were unavailable to ancestors, there is a reciprocal resonance with ancestral bravery in enduring otherness (Ifergan, 2024). When an intergenerational relationship is established (Abrams, 2022), cultural memory exploration becomes less overwhelming and impersonal. Cultural memory is a "collective reservoir for all knowledge that shapes behaviors and experiences within interactive frameworks of a society" (Assman & Czaplicka, 1995, p. 126). Five resemblances that link predecessors and descendants in ancestral bonding are (a) threats/danger associated with Jewish identity, (b) longing for Home, (c) resilience and resilience fatigue in co-existence, (d) finding solace in Jewish rituals, and (e) dreaming of imagined or unfulfilled ancestral futures.

Ancestral bonding is present (to varying degrees) in all diasporic communities, encompassing the experiences of transience, exclusion, creating sanctuary in temporary spaces, preserving cultural memory, and maintaining tradition. Most modern-day customs originated in ancestral homelands and were transmitted through multiple migrations. Increased migration in the modern era has impacted the identities of people living in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. Sharing collective memories allows migrants to formulate new identities and acculturate (Elliott-Israelson, 2024) into new host communities. According to Hall (1990), "diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew" (p. 235). Although Jewish descendants may not personally identify with diasporic resettlement, the societal exclusion (Goodman, 2023) and otherness associated with migration are relatable to grandchildren. I offer examples below of transgenerational connections in cases of threat or danger.

Threat/Danger to Jewish Identity

Pieta. In Summer of 2024, I toured the Ghettos *Nuovo* and *Vecchio* of Venice and was struck by a felt sense of danger. I learned that in 1516, Jews inhabited the walled San Girolamo enclosure, a grave fire risk location. The word *Geto* originated among Venetian Jews as a *code communication* (Bergner, 2007, p.152) for daily threats to Jewish existence. Later, the term *ghetto* was recognized in Europe as a restricted location (Ansaldi, 2024), though both curtailment and peril were familiar experiences for European Jews.

I witnessed several artistic contributions at the Jewish Museum of Venice. Yael Toren's (2016) experiential animations, for example, invite observers to internalize intergenerational migration threat. Her brilliant *Pieta*, an avatar superhero, personifies dual roles of *the Carrier* and *the Carried* when bearing the trans-historical brunt of otherness (See Figure 1). Though *Pieta* holds its own suffering, it also hauls the heaviness of others. *Pieta* encourages recognition of the stranger archetype within, and the danger of foreignness in dominant discourse (Toren, 2016).



Figure 1. *Pieta* 3D animation, 2016, printed with permission from Yael Toren

I detect an opportunity for ancestral bonding in *Pieta's* dual reality, wherein a partnership develops between the carrier and carried. Offspring who fear antisemitism are lifted onto elderly shoulders that endured decades of Jew-hatred and thus offer much needed role models and related wisdom. Toren leaves *Pieta* in an open-ended position that is receptive to the other despite environmental disruption (Ifergan, 2024). Ancestral bonding similarly attaches descendants longing for protection (Shrira, 2015) to embracing predecessors. Like *Pieta*, evocative ethnography links marginalized generations through testimony (Hughes, 2019).

Evocative autoethnography examines systemic phenomena alongside individual encounters (Spinazola et al., 2021) and makes space for the narratives of marginalized people (Howard, 2020), carrying testimony into the future through privileged expression (Ifergan, 2024). The elders' position as carriers (Ifergan, 2024) during threatening times alleviates descendant fear, even though the sense of being carried is imagined. Ancestral bonding further prompts *sense of presence experiences*, wherein offspring perceive deceased ancestral presence (Kidron, 2014). This omnipresence induces a deeper longing for Home that is discussed next.

Longing for Home

In 2020, I visited Tarnogród, Poland to become acquainted with my great grandmother Chaja's homeland.

While I delighted in encountering Chaja's birthplace, I was ambivalent about witnessing the scene of her brutal death. My associations of Chaja's Polish Home were fearful, nostalgic, and anticipatory. Once I laid my cheek against the Tarnogród mass memorial, however, I felt deeply connected to Chaja's Whole Self (Abrams, 2022). In my vivid imagination, I heard her melodious voice, perceived her imagined future (Kwan, 2020), and felt her gentle embrace. During those precious moments, my Home association moved from a ravaged Poland to a heartfelt connection with Chaja (Schorer, 1989). I am honored to carry her name and connect to her Whole Self today (Abrams, 2022).

Though I was fortunate to visit Chaja's physical birthplace, homeland encounters are also reciprocated through symbolic art. Amit Berman's (2023) painting *A Transferrable Safe Space*, (see Figure 2.) for example, portrays an inherited capacity to create sanctuary amidst migration. Although Berman's art reveals intergenerational yearning for diaspora belonging, his own home reminiscence is apparent in the painting details (Elliott-Israelson, 2024). Home articulations transcend time and space (Abrams, 2022) and form a collective sanctuary that is open to all. Safe harbors constructed in exodus are pivotal in strengthening refugee resilience when co-existence is



necessary. Similarly, acknowledgement of ancestral hardship offers solace when resilience fatigue arises.

Figure 2. *A Transferable Safe Space*, 2023. Image courtesy of Amit Berman and Alon Segev Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel. Printed with permission of the author.

Resilience and Resilience Fatigue in Co-existence

Challah. Intergenerational resilience and resilience fatigue are transmitted through multiple ways in diaspora communities including ritual (Elliott-Israelson, 2024). Elisheva Revah's (2024) Challah video, for instance, links female predecessors and progenies through traditional Challah baking. Revah's video emphasizes feminine stamina for ritual maintenance throughout migration (Elliott-Israelson, 2024). Upholding Jewish rituals is challenging for co-existing Jews, as holidays are often celebrated in relative isolation to avoid societal discrimination (Hodge and Boddie, 2021).

In the *Challah* animation, Revah (2024) shows women's bodies intertwined in several positions. In one slide, the women stand together, holding hands. This scene appears as a resilience dance to the observer, one in which generations of women "hold each other up," preventing a fall. In the second slide, the females kneel on the floor. This time the women's gazes are lowered, heads turned, and hands unclasped. This clip contrasts the first scene in showing interlineal resilience fatigue. Ancestral bonding, however, honors resilience fatigue just as it celebrates joy.

Like baking the braided Challah, Uitoto women of the Amazon engage in a basket weaving ceremony that symbolizes female resistance and historical consciousness (Santamaría, 2017). Memory baskets are constructed to commemorate deceased ancestors (Echeverri, 2012; Santamaría, 2017) and to hold ancestral presence nearby (Kidron, 2014). Basket weaving is an act of resilience transmission through strong female hands (Santamaría, 2017), but Uitoto women also weave ancestral sorrow into baskets, thus inviting progeny to grieve multi-generational trauma. Since third and fourth generations hold the survivor identity dear (Greenblatt-Kimron et al., 2024), trans-lineal mourning is meaningful. Supported by ancestral resistance and open grief, offspring then find solace in cultural symbolism.

Finding Solace in Jewish Symbolism

Bronec (2019) studied the relationships of contemporary Jews to family heirlooms. The author discovered that ancestral connections are sustained heirloom preservation. The third generation perceives tradition as a form of ancestral bonding and therefore exhibits these artifacts intentionally (Bronec, 2019). Like household relics, interlineal symbols such as food memories, the Golem archetype, and a mezuzah offer solace to Jewish descendants.

One form of immersion in diaspora tradition is through food memories of culinary rituals. "Food imprints our socioeconomic intricacies, ecological attributes, and human interactions with a particular culture" (Reeves et al., 2008; Ghosh & Channarayapatna, 2024), creating communal identities. A related example of food memories is learned from the village of Dholavira in the state of Gujarat, India. Dholavira is home to the Indus (Bisht, 2015), semi-nomadic indigenous peoples who migrated to Khadir Island decades ago (Vidyarthi, 2013) and carry memories of collective displacement (Ghosh & Channarayapatna, 2024). It occupies a remote corner of the Rann of Kachchh salt marshes where the dry climate disrupts food transportation and causes isolation. Since regional resources are limited, culinary rituals in the Kachchh region are simple. Locals consume a diet of seasonal crops (Ghosh & Channarayapatna, 2024), yet despite rudimentary supplies, village kitchens are havens for *existential*

(Sutton, 2008) food memories (Blunt, 2003) among descendants.

Recent interviews conducted with Dholivara elders indicated that current use of antique food utensils and recipes foster feelings and fantasies of ancestral presence in subsequent generations (Ghosh & Channarayapatna, 2024). Over shared meals in tiny kitchens, researchers witnessed the elders' food displacement memories (Hirsch, 2012) and how offspring maintain familial cooking rituals when re-populating Dholavira (Ghosh & Channarayapatna, 2024). The determination to pass on memories of food abundance and scarcity is like Revah's (2024) recognition of intergenerational strength infused in challah preparation.

Similar to food memories, symbols of Jewish distinction bind Holocaust descendants and predecessors in surprising ways. For instance, according to Jewish tradition, the Golem of Prague was created by Rabbi Judah Löw as a protective response to antisemitism in Prague (Knapp, 1995). A *Golem* is a mute, or non-reactive entity (Maidenbaum, 2021), sculpted with the aid of alchemical, mystical (Reingold, 2019), and Talmudic writings (Scholem, 1961). Affectionately known as "Yossele" to the chief Rabbi, the Golem guarded the Jews of Prague with the word *emet* (truth) engraved on its forehead. Though the Golem ran amok and disappeared, its *enduring archetype* (Maidenbaum, 2021, p. 207) lives on.

The Golem is adopted by many as a savior, progressive, or metaphysical archetype (Maidenbaum, 2021) that is transferred through the collective unconscious of generations (Henderson, 2016). It is featured in film, art, and scholarship, including Prague-born author Franz Kafka's work (Abrams, 2023b). Whether people gravitate toward modern Golems (Reingold, 2019), or Kafka's fragmented excerpts (Dekel & Gant Gurley, 2017), a transgenerational clinging to the Golem is authentic to Jewish folklore. The myth of Golem connects contemporary Jews to ancestral experiences of antisemitism, but also to the resilient response of constructing a historical protector (Abrams, 2023b).

Another important structure passed down through generations as a safeguarding talisman is the mezuzah as seen on Jewish doorposts (Bronec, 2019). I visited Iceland in Spring of 2023. Though I was prepared for Icelandic elements, the stoic Viking demeanor caught me off-guard. Yearning for warmth amidst arctic winds, I happened upon a mezuzah in Reykjavík. Iceland's Jewish population consists of just 400 people, so I did not expect to see signs of Jewish life. I hovered near that doorpost with tears in my eyes, mesmerized. The mezuzah was a simple artifact, but for a wandering diaspora Jew, it personified a place of belonging (Abrams, 2023a).

As I left the mezuzah, a rainbow transformed the sky. I recalled then that the rainbow archetype is shared by Jews and Icelandics. In Norse and Abrahamic traditions, a rainbow symbolizes heavenly vigilance and a crossing between earthly and immortal spaces (Abrams, 2023a). This experience emphasized the strength of co-existence for me, but also the comfort that Jewish symbolism brings. Like heirlooms, dreams are a way to imagine predecessors' unfulfilled futures in ancestral bonding.

Realizing Ancestral Dreams

Kwan (2020) introduced the concept of *time-image episodes*, or presently situated collective memories, among third generation Cambodian Americans and their ancestors. Through time-image episodes, descendants construct

meaning from generational silence and ancestral memories, but also recreate non-pathological trauma narratives by envisioning “what could have been” (Kwan, 2020, p. 44) had deceased ancestors survived. Because grandchildren are more removed from historical trauma than previous generations, progeny transform devastation into a renewed “becoming” (p. 34). The re-authorship of predecessor futures is manifested through food memories (Ghosh & Channarayapatna, 2024), storytelling, and testimony (Kwan, 2020), among other traditions.

Collective memory has traditionally occurred through a process of *infinite mourning* (Ehrlich, 2020) or re-telling melancholic stories. In infinite mourning, descendants do not accept historical atrocities and keep the melancholic story alive as a means of honoring ancestral trauma (Abrams, 2022). Though melancholic stories inform trauma narratives, the heaviness of infinite mourning may be unrelatable to third and fourth generations.

Instead, visualizing a future with ancestral presence helps descendants navigate contemporary otherness (Ifergan, 2024). Verbal or imagined exchanges with predecessors prompt historical companionship. When progenies perceive ancestors’ voices, experiences (Kwan, 2020), or words during pivotal times, interlineal presence (Kidron, 2014) is embodied. In the following section, I align ancestral bonding with theoretical and critical frameworks that prioritize intergenerational collaboration.

Theoretical Frameworks

The recent resurgence of institutional antisemitism compels contemporary scholars, clinicians, educators, and policy makers to adapt curricula and interventions accordingly. Despite the need for cultural responsiveness in institutions, critical and historical trauma-informed approaches specific to Jewish experiences are rare in public discourse (Abrams, 2025, in press). While integrating modalities like The Black Perspective (Howard University School of Social Work, 2014), anti-Blackness theories (Myers, 2023), and Afro-pessimism (Wilderson, 2017) is crucial for the purpose of theorizing antisemitism studies (Magid, 2024) and improving Holocaust education (Rajal, 2024), so is the need for theories that resonate with Jewish progeny (Abrams, 2024). Ancestral bonding compliments critical and historical trauma-informed theories by promoting ontological understanding of intergenerational trauma (Strydom, 2022).

Antisemitism is an overt form of communal prejudice (Rajal, 2024). Critical theory assumes that in cases of discrimination, a community opposes *defense of the status quo* to attain inclusivity (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). Though millennial and Generation Z Jews now challenge antisemitism in ways that Baby Boomers and Generation X did not (Ben-Atar, 2021), Jewish needs are not always honored in public discourse (Farber & Poleg, 2019). Several factors contribute to this systemic deficit, including the absence of assessment tools specific to Jewish experiences (Abrams, 2024), the under-theorization of antisemitism studies (Magid, 2024), and limitations of Holocaust education (Pistone et al., 2021). It is helpful for stakeholders, therefore, to endorse the *dialectical schema* (Adorno, 1970) of critical theory alongside a parallel resonance with intergenerational bravery (Ifergan, 2024). Critical theory (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002) supports ancestral bonding by offering a theory of society that is relevant to the socio-cultural dynamic (Strydom, 2022) of contemporary antisemitism.

In a similar vein, *The Black Perspective* acknowledges oppression and is responsive to oppressive sources (Howard University School of Social Work, 2014). While the approach was designed to highlight Black experiences, it is relevant to other marginalized encounters (Howard, 2020) like antisemitism. Encouraged interventions within *The Black Perspective* include historical documentaries, mentorship, and sharing minority narratives (Henderson et al., 2016) that correspond with the common factors of ancestral bonding that implement art, testimony, and collective memories. The mentioned modalities are consistent with treatment of intergenerational PTSD, discussed below.

Treating Intergenerational PTSD

Because Holocaust identity is central to third and fourth generations (Hoffman & Shrira, 2017; Shrira, 2015), perceived terror threat (Shrira, 2015) is common among descendants. It is conducive for practitioners to acknowledge this sensitivity and offer cognitive approaches that decrease stress (Greenblatt-Kimron et al., 2024). In addition to cognitive modalities, narrative, psychodynamic, and family systems therapies all integrate familial relationships (Allen & Windsor, 2019) into treatment, as in ancestral bonding.

Other psychological approaches that align with ancestral bonding are ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) acknowledgement in healthcare (Burke-Harris, 2018), decolonized practices that honor collectivism (Goodman & Gorski, 2015), Bibliotherapy (Perhsson & McMillen, 2010), and Cultural Trauma Theory (Baker & Baker, 2016). Though tending to collective trauma is challenging in a western culture that favors individualism, transgenerational healing is attainable through ontological conceptualization (Strydom, 2022). Likewise, institutional policy makers benefit from psychoeducation about transgenerational trauma and antisemitism.

Challenges in Policy Making

Though legislators engage in antisemitism prevention (Lyerly, 2023), current socio-cultural movements often challenge or resist such interventions. Hostile campus environments, freedom of speech debates, critique of antisemitism policies (Lyerly, 2023), and internal divides complicate legal decisions (Della Pergola, 2024). Policy makers must acknowledge scholarly implications of contemporary antisemitism for purposes of collaboration and knowledge acquisition. Legislators are encouraged to learn about evolving Jewish trends, such as Generation Z's shift from religion (Pew Research Center, 2023) to alternative practices (Ben-Atar, 2021), or that descendants often de-identify Jewishness for social acceptance and to avoid Jew-hatred (Cieslik & Phillips, 2021). The choice between *masking* or *unmasking* Jewish identity (Caplan, 2021) varies among young Jews and should always be honored (Abrams, 2024).

When antisemitism prevention policies are created or updated, new information should be distributed to all. For example, the Office of Civil Rights fact sheet about discrimination against shared ancestry and ethnicity names Judaism as an ethnicity in addition to a religion (Lyerly, 2023). Acknowledgment of shared ancestry validates Holocaust identification among progeny (Greenblatt-Kimron et al., 2024). A need for increased public communication about Jew-hatred is emerging, as well as the necessity for tailored, or individualized approaches to accommodate Jews in diverse environments (Abrams, 2024). Above all, I endorse the celebration of intergenerational resilience that is unique to the Jewish people and personified throughout generations. This appreciation builds solidarity among systems and people working to demolish hatred. Evoking ancestral bonding unites Jewish people on every level.

Conclusion and Future Implications

This article explores ancestral bonding and transgenerational longing as potential sources of healing that align with other ways to heal contemporary antisemitism. Predecessors and progenies connect intergenerationally in ancestral bonding through five shared commonalities. These congruities relieve descendant anxiety when facing Jew-hatred and may be implemented into established critical and historical-trauma informed educational approaches. The incorporation of ancestral bonding into evidence-based theories reflects a current trend of creating or adapting treatment and educational tools that are responsive to Jewish experiences. For example, Allington et al.'s (2022) Generalized Antisemitism (GeAs) Scale instrument measures antisemitism in relationship to Jewish identity. The GeAs scale is the first published assessment tool that is consistent with IHRA's working definition of antisemitism (Allington et al., 2022).

Along with adapted modalities, I suggest multi-level organizational participation in advocacy and training to combat antisemitism. International conferences offer antisemitism and Holocaust education for educators of multiple disciplines. Regional and international committee work is instrumental in addressing Jew-hatred as well. In 2024, Professor Julie Ancis of Rutgers University began facilitating focus groups among university counseling centers for staff and students across the US. She provided valuable data for clinicians, researchers, educators, and policy makers about existing approaches for counseling Jewish students. Ancis's *Evidence-Based Counseling and Psychological Services Model for Jewish Students* also highlights concerns between Jewish clients and therapists and the limitations of existing services in educational and clinical settings (Ancis, 2024). Similar future initiatives for antisemitism prevention would be expansion of organizational open forums that encourage non-threatening discourse (Abrams, 2024).

I endorse the full encompassment of Jewish voices into legislation, education, treatment, and training. Programs featured in the public discourse should therefore be co-facilitated by Jewish people with lived experiences of antisemitism. Results from inclusive initiatives aimed at reducing health gaps in indigenous communities, like the *Family Well-being* program (Williamson et al., 2023) and the "Speak Up, Be Strong, Be Heard" (Carrington et al., 2019) program show that communal co-facilitation of preventative forums yields successful results. Indeed, multi-systemic responsiveness to contemporary antisemitism will ultimately re-humanize Jewish experiences for all (Rajal, 2024).

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GENDER AND FEMINIST STUDIES ARE FAILING THE ACADEMY AND OUR STUDENTS

BY CARY KOGAN



Universities are meant to foster curiosity, open inquiry, factual scholarship, and rigorous debate. These core values promote the advancement of knowledge in a liberal democratic society's search for truth. However, these values are adhered to only when professors create an environment where students can engage critically with multiple perspectives—especially on highly controversial issues. In the last decade or so, these time-honored values have been increasingly disparaged and undermined by professors who prioritize political advocacy over the real mission of the academy.

The danger of elevating activism above critical scholarship and reasoned debate was clearly evident in February 2025 when the Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies at the University of Ottawa and the Joint uOttawa and Carleton Chair in Feminist and Gender Studies announced that they would be hosting an event with speaker Dr. Nada Elia entitled, "Weaponizing Feminism in Service of Genocide¹." Dr. Elia is an associate professor of Cultural Studies and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Western Washington University who in the past has

1 Casey Babb, X post, January 26, 2025, <https://x.com/DrCaseyBabb/status/1883702324201173395>.

Weaponizing Feminism in the Service of Genocide, Eventbrite listing (archived), Internet Archive, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250127023114/https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/weaponizing-feminism-in-the-service-of-genocide-tickets-1207794147809>.

Weaponizing Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones, AllEvents listing, <https://allevents.in/ottawa/weaponizing-feminism-in-the-service-of-genocide/100001207794147809>.

explicitly called for “intifada” during periods of violence against civilians², defended convicted terrorists³, and promoted antisemitic conspiracy fantasies about global Jewish control⁴. Most egregiously, she has openly advocated for the ethnic cleansing of Jews from Israel, declaring she “doesn’t care” where they go⁵. More recently, she alleges that Israel invented claims of Hamas’s sexual assault on Israeli women on October 7, 2023 to justify genocide, though many of Hamas’s crimes were filmed by the perpetrators themselves and posted on the Hamas website⁶.

Elia’s attitudes toward Hamas and Israel may be widely shared in many quarters. But they have nothing to do with genuine scholarship or sound pedagogy. Her claims about October 7 would receive a failing grade if they appeared in an undergraduate essay because they ignore abundant material evidence and are based on factual distortions and false premises. Moreover, the decision of feminist professors to platform a speaker who denies the brutal and horrific rapes of women and then blames the victims as the “real” perpetrators is a shocking betrayal of feminism.

I happen to teach at the University of Ottawa, and over the past 18 months, several students have complained that classes taught by professors affiliated with the Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies here insist on ideological conformity. For example, last year one student reported that in a class offered by the Institute, they were forced to engage in anti-Israel action by completing an assignment in which they were expected to explain how they would support a “Strike for Gaza.” The ideological monoculture is further reflected in a statement issued by the Palestinian Feminist Collective in 2021⁷, and indorsed by the institute of which Elia is a co-founder. That statement deems Israel to be solely responsible for regional conflict and calls for anti-normalization, condemning any dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians that is not premised on this appraisal of the conflict. It negates all other viewpoints and is doubly disturbing because it was signed by the unit rather than by individual members, making it nearly impossible for students or junior members of the faculty to hold or express different or more nuanced viewpoints. Signing the statement on behalf of an entire academic unit also violates institutional neutrality, a principle that prevents the University (and by extension its departments) from taking a position on political or social issues unless they are directly relevant to the mission and operation of the institution. By signing as a department, the Institute asserts that there is only one acceptable point of view, and it makes very clear that debate and rigorous scholarship are unwelcome.

2 Elia, N. (2023, November 6). *Why be afraid of the word ‘intifada’?* Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/why-be-afraid-intifada>

3 Elia, N. (2016, May 5). *Palestinians undeterred: Organizing for justice in Palestine from Ferguson to the homeland.* Mondoweiss. <https://mondoweiss.net/2016/05/palestinians-undeterred-organizing/>

4 Elia, N. (2023, November 6). *Israel’s global reach threatens freedom of speech everywhere.* Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/israels-global-reach-threatens-freedom-speech-everywhere>

5 The Mike Report. (2013, August 23). *Seattle professor Nada Elia hates on Israel (USA as well).* <https://mikereport.wordpress.com/2013/08/23/local-hate-seattle-professor-hates-on-israel-usa-as-well/>

6 National Post. (2024, February 16). *Documenting Hamas rapes: The women who are telling the world what happened on October 7.* <https://nationalpost.com/news/world/israel-middle-east/documenting-hamas-rapes-october-7>

Gettleman, J., Schwartz, A., Sella, A., & Shaar-Yashuv, A. (2023, December 28). *‘Screams Without Words’: How Hamas weaponized sexual violence on Oct. 7.* The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/28/world/middleeast/oct-7-attacks-hamas-israel-sexual-violence.html>

7 Gender Studies Departments in Solidarity with Palestinian Feminist Collective. (n.d.). *Gender Studies Departments in Solidarity with Palestinian Feminist Collective.* <http://genderstudiespalestinesolidarity.weebly.com>

The Institute's dogmatic anti-Israel stance is not new, however. It was vividly apparent before Elia's arrival and reflected in a Letter to the Editor in *The Fulcrum*, a student newspaper at the University of Ottawa, from October 2024⁸. The letter praises "engaging with Palestinian justice" but frames engagement with Zionist or Israeli perspectives in search of peace on the basis of a two-state solution as inherently illegitimate. It construes Zionism (in any form) as a tool of colonialism, apartheid, and genocide while negating any Jewish connection to the land and ignoring the vibrant, diverse Israeli campaigns for peace and coexistence. It condemns any form of academic or intellectual engagement that does not embrace their rigid and distorted ideological stance. Furthermore, the professors' call to boycott, divest, and sanction (BDS) Israeli institutions, rejects dialogue or collaboration with Israeli scholars including those who are Muslim, Christian, Druze, Arab Israeli and Palestinian, despite the fact that 25% of professors at the University of Haifa are Arabs and over 17% of the students at Hebrew University are Arab Israelis, while Jewish Israelis are not allowed to work at Birzeit University in the West Bank⁹.

The letter also calls for the exclusion of Zionists from feminist spaces, defining "Palestinian justice" as a moral litmus test that determines one's legitimacy as a feminist. This ideological gatekeeping means that Zionists—or even those who hold nuanced, balanced views—are unwelcome, which is both deeply exclusionary and completely at odds with the principles of academic pluralism. Meanwhile, the uOttawa Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies amplifies the most extreme voices from the Jewish community citing Independent Jewish Voices (IJV), a self-proclaimed anti-Israel organization whose position reflects the views of merely 1% of Canadian Jews (at most) (Brym, 2025). Members of IJV have been invited to give presentations in the Institute's classes while members of the mainstream Jewish community have not. The Institute thereby silences mainstream Jewish perspectives and practices a form of tokenism which aligns closely with their anti-Israel ideology.

The letter also quotes various academics who engage in pseudo-scholarship, including Jasbir Puar, who argues that "Israel deliberately and systematically maims Palestinians in an attempt to quell their resistance" and steals organs from Palestinians for transplant or research (cf., Nelson, 2019, Gararrd, 2019). In "Speaking of Solidarity and Its Censors," published in *Jadaliyya* in 2016¹⁰, Puar claimed that Palestinian families "speculate" that the bodies of Palestinians killed in the conflict are mined for organs for scientific research. She frankly acknowledges that she has no actual evidence to support her claim but justifies this accusation by saying that she is not making an "empirical claim about current organ mining" only arguing about how Israel treats the bodies of "those they colonize." In truth, however, no one has ever harvested organs from a corpse, so the claim is obviously baseless. Nevertheless, Puar's ambiguous and incendiary statements suggest that if Palestinians believe that organs are being harvested, it is of no consequence whether the claim is factual or not.

Finally, the Institute's letter references Indigenous groups in Canada who endorse Palestinians as an indigenous people but does not acknowledge the existence of First Nations groups who acknowledge the indigeneity of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, which pre-dates Arab colonization by thousands of years (Engel, 2019). They ignore the voices of Anishinaabe people like retired Justice Harry Laforme and Karen Restoule who strongly object to the violence and hate that was being promoted at the encampments, including those on the University of

8 The Fulcrum. (2024, October 23). Letter to the editor: "Let us do our job: Feminism is Palestine". <https://thefulcrum.ca/opinions/letters/letter-to-the-editor-let-us-do-our-job-feminism-is-palestine/>

9 Leibovitz, L. (2014, September 29). *Jews not allowed in Palestinian university*. Tablet Magazine. <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/jews-not-allowed-in-palestinian-university>

10 Puar, J. K. (2016, March 16). *Speaking of Palestine: Solidarity and its censors*. *Jadaliyya*. <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/33095>

Ottawa and Carleton University's campuses¹¹.

Given the strict ideological conformity of the Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies and the blatant propaganda Nada Elia has promoted in the past, several colleagues and community members expressed their misgivings about her impending talk to the administration at the University of Ottawa. The Network of Engaged Canadian Academics (NECA), a faculty network of 400 Jewish and non-Jewish professors on 45 Canadian campuses concerned about rising antisemitism also sent a letter to the President and Provost of the University of Ottawa seeking answers to the following questions: 1) How will the University of Ottawa reconcile its obligation to ensure a safe and inclusive campus environment with the decision to host an individual who advocates for terrorist organizations and harmful, racist ideologies? 2) Would the University of Ottawa host speakers who openly support hate or discrimination against other minoritized groups? 3) What specific measures will be taken to reaffirm the University of Ottawa's commitment to inclusivity and safety for minoritized groups while hosting speakers who promote divisive and harmful rhetoric?

One colleague received a response from the Provost of the University of Ottawa that affirmed the University's commitment to freedom of expression and academic freedom but indicated that unless there were reasonable grounds to believe that Elia would commit a criminal offence--presumably referring to hate speech, considered a criminal offence under Canadian law--they would not cancel the event. Significantly, however, NECA never asked for the event to be cancelled but rather that people with differing viewpoints to be allowed to attend, given that registration process was not open to the public. The Provost declined to discuss the problematic nature of the registration process, but stipulated that the organizers of the event must have "a responsible person present to intervene in case of hateful remarks." That being so, the Institute of Feminist and Gender studies cancelled the public lecture and invited Elia to speak as a guest lecturer in one of their courses on Women, Gender and Development instead. The move to the classroom apparently shielded the Institute from having to include an outside observer who might be able to document any Jew-hatred espoused by the speaker.

While these discussions were taking place at the University of Ottawa, Carleton University announced that they would be hosting Nada Elia in a public event. The decision to shift to Carleton University neatly circumvented the requirement by the University of Ottawa's Provost to have a "responsible person" present. In fact, the organizers of the Carleton event designed a registration process that screened out all but those who shared their anti-Israel ideology. The organizers forced all those wishing to register for the event to publicly give a "thumbs up" to the online description of the event, which included the same odious title, "Weaponizing Feminism in the Service of Genocide" before receiving a password to register. Anyone disagreeing with the premise that feminism is being weaponized by Israel to commit genocide need not apply.

Appeals to Carleton leadership by professors, community organizations, and government officials (including Rachael Thomas, a Member of Parliament representing Lethbridge, Alberta) were not dealt with responsibly or fairly. Carleton did not ensure that the event allowed for multiple voices to be heard or the speaker's hateful speech challenged. A request for a "responsible person" to be present was denied. The President of Carleton responded to the concerns of members of the Jewish Inclusion Committee at Carleton regarding Elia's antisemitic

¹¹ National Post. (2024, May 1). *We are Anishinaabe Zionists: Hateful anti-Israel camps disrespect our lands*. <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/opinion-we-are-anishinaabe-zionists-hateful-anti-israel-camps-disrespect-our-lands>

rhetoric by invoking the need for multiple viewpoints and encouraging debate—yet the Elia talk was only open to vetted participants. Any notion that Israeli or Jewish academics being ‘allowed’ to speak is in any way equivalent to a person who spreads hateful rhetoric is absurd and dangerous. Rather than taking a moral stance against hate and propaganda on campus, Carleton shirked its responsibility, presumably out of fear of a backlash from anti-Israel activists in the professoriate and student body.

In the end both of Nada Elia’s speaking events took place. Given how reprehensible Elia’s antisemitic statements are, the universities’ lack of leadership was utterly deplorable. In order to live up to academia’s ideal of free and open inquiry, they should have ensured that there was a place where those in disagreement with the speaker’s worldview could be challenged. Instead, an unknown number of students were exposed to propaganda that went completely unchallenged. Insisting on ideological purity, preventing facts from being presented and alternative viewpoints from being aired is a form of intellectual discrimination. Yet, ironically, this decision was taken under the banner of protecting academic freedom.

Let’s be clear, shall we? I defend my colleagues’ right to benefit fully from academic freedom, including the right to advance positions and ideas that are completely at variance with my own. But academic freedom must be accompanied by academic responsibility, which includes a commitment to truth and a recognition of expertise. Classrooms must not be misused to promote misinformation and lies. Students deserve the opportunity to learn about multiple viewpoints on complex issues and learn to sharpen their critical thinking skills for their future careers. Learning how to engage in civil discourse on contentious, divisive, and controversial topics is vital to the future of our liberal democratic society. Instead, the Institute’s self-serving professors are shirking their duty as educators and indoctrinating students out of the misguided belief that they (and only they) know and disseminate the truth.

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*Portions of this article appeared in a Letter to the Editor of *Fulcrum*, the student newspaper at the University of Ottawa.

FEMINISM, AUTHORITARIANISM AND LEFT-WING ANTISEMITISM

BY DANIEL BURSTON, PHD



On March 20, 2024 California State University Long Beach sponsored an event entitled “Weaponizing Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones” featuring Nada Elia, a Visiting Associate Professor of Cultural Studies and Women’s and Gender Studies at Western Washington University and Tina Beyene, an Assistant Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies at California State University, Northridge. The first speaker, Elia, alleged that Israel invented claims of Hamas’s sexual assault on Israeli women on October 7, 2023 to justify genocide, despite the fact that many of Hamas’ crimes were filmed by the perpetrators, posted on their website and sent to the parents and families of victims in the aftermath of the pogrom. Moreover, on October 8th, 2023 and for several weeks afterwards, Hamas and its supporters gleefully celebrated their mind-boggling brutality as the first installment in a renewed effort to “liberate Palestine.” Then, in a baffling reversal, many of these same people denied that these events occurred in the first place, though evidence to the contrary was abundant, incontrovertible and eventually acknowledged as heinous by the United Nations Women’s Committee on March 4, 2024, long after the events in question.

Elia’s talk of March 20, 2024 was probably intended as a rebuttal to the (long overdue) statement from the United Nations Women’s Committee on March 4, 2024. That alone was somewhat disturbing. More disturbing, however, is the fact that her talk was sponsored by the Women’s Gender and Sexuality Studies Department at California State University’s Long Beach Branch. A similar event, featuring three speakers, but with a similar message, entitled “Feminist and Queer Solidarities with Palestine,” moderated by Paola Bachetta from the Women’s and Gender Studies at University of California, Berkeley, took place on February 11th, although this event convened off campus and over Zoom. Finally, Nada Elia spoke again, this time at the University of Ottawa, on February 25, 2025. As Cary Kogan describes in this issue of *Kesher*, her talk, entitled “Weaponizing Feminism in the service of Genocide” and sponsored by the university’s Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies made the same false claim, that the stories of sexual violence were largely fabricated as part of a global Zionist conspiracy.

If these were isolated incidents they would be depressing enough. But events and statements like these are now commonplace in activist circles, making it distressingly obvious that much of mainstream feminism has been severely compromised (if not completely captured) by ostensibly “progressive” voices and pro-Islamist (anti-Western) ideologies. “You can’t be a feminist and a Zionist” is their mantra, thereby nullifying the courageous efforts and accomplishments of thousands of Jewish women who worked to defend and promote the welfare, dignity and rights of women at home and around the world in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

This tragic and shameful chapter in the history of the women’s movement merits careful documentation and analysis elsewhere. Meanwhile, note that this kind of pseudo-scholarly propaganda shares a well-worn playbook with Holocaust denialism and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In this scenario, victims of mass murder (or their lineal descendants) are charged with fabricating or grossly exaggerating the extent of the crimes committed against them with a view to extorting some unfair advantage and justifying (or covering up) their own dishonest agenda. In the process, the perpetrators of these crimes are recast as the victims of a Jewish or Zionist plan to mislead and manipulate a credulous (non-Jewish) public in the service of a nebulous but sinister world-wide conspiracy.

In any given instance, this hoary rhetorical strategy is modified to fit whatever recent horrors it is designed to minimize, excuse or distract us from. After all, it has successfully deepened and disseminated anti-Jewish mistrust and hatred for well over a century! Those who twist the truth deliberately in this way are quite conscious that they are fabricating stories and/or denying historical reality for political gain. There is no mystery about their motivation. They know what they are doing when they are doing it, and why. Another group that endorses statements like these doesn’t know—and more importantly, doesn’t care—if these claims are true or not. Truth is expendable or irrelevant to them. If false claims and accusations perform the rhetorical function they were designed for—namely, to erase or significantly diminish any sympathy for the real victims—they are happy to repeat them *ad nauseam*.

For the sake of convenience, let us call the first group “the haters” and the second group “the cynics.” Finally, at events like this there is a third group; credulous consumers of propaganda who sincerely believe that this pernicious nonsense is true, rather than a willful misrepresentation of reality or merely a cudgel with which to beat one’s opponents. Let’s call them the “true believers.” For them truth matters, although they themselves are quite unaware of what the truth is. It is impossible to quantify precisely how many participants at events like these fall into each of these categories, although the first two clearly comprise the most hateful and intransigent antisemites. But while it is tempting to write them all off completely, some credulous consumers of antisemitic propaganda are acting on misplaced idealism and may eventually come around.

What are the psychological characteristics that these groups share, and what are the differences between them? As noted previously, the haters—who knowingly invent and disseminate antisemitic propaganda—are completely conscious of their motivations for doing so. The cynics, who are indifferent to the truth or falsity of their beliefs, are at least partially conscious of their motives, given their overt political agenda. But the credulous consumers who march and chant alongside the haters and cynics are often unconscious of the mental processes that produce their reality distortions. The mental processes that facilitate their collective flight from reality presumably include Freudian defense mechanisms like displacement, denial, projection, reversal, splitting and rationalization (among others). And while their reliance on defense mechanisms may be relatively transparent to outsiders, their *motives* for clinging so fiercely to their illusions—and for deploying these defense mechanisms in the first place—are equally, if not more, unconscious.

In addition to misplaced idealism, among the many motives at play among the more credulous type of feminist anti-zionist may be guilt, *ressentiment*, a need to belong or a narcissistic need to be experienced by others as especially virtuous or politically astute, progressive, etc. But whatever the underlying motives and mechanisms are, sadly, they seem to engender an insatiable appetite for lies, provided that the lies comport with their pre-existing beliefs and prejudices and come from an authoritative or “trustworthy” source that validates their overarching belief system.

The greater someone’s indifference or hostility to the truth, the more dogmatic they are. Dogmatism consists in the fervent embrace of claims, statements or beliefs that are either demonstrably false or are open to reasonable doubt, but which are nonetheless embraced by large numbers of people. Those who do *not* endorse or embrace them are deemed to be “outsiders,” “unbelievers” and viewed as ethically or intellectually deficient. And among extremely dogmatic authoritarians, people who *challenge* their beliefs publicly are deemed to be dangerous or depraved and targeted for reprisals of one sort and another.

As Milton Rokeach observed long ago (Rokeach, 1960), the beliefs held by dogmatic people are often a product of dichotomous thinking, which classifies people into one of two simple categories; believers and infidels, capitalists and communists, good guys and bad guys. Granted, there may be instances where these categories are necessary or useful. But there are many others where they are not. Adhering rigidly to binary classifications in instances like these often masks the real complexity of social and political processes, omitting or suppressing features of reality that don’t fit neatly into the dogmatists’ preferred narrative. Sadly, people whose critical faculties are atrophied or encumbered in this way are unwilling or unable to recognize or to grapple with complexity, ambiguity and nuance in their analysis of social problems.

As Theodor Adorno and Else Frenkel-Brunswick pointed out in *The Authoritarian Personality*, dogmatism and antisemitism are both highly correlated with authoritarianism (Adorno et al. 1950). But while Adorno et al. focused exclusively on right-wing antisemitism, Holocaust minimization and denial now flourish on the extreme right *and* the extreme left. This comes as a surprise to many people, including many social scientists, because left-wingers embrace many causes that right-wingers typically oppose—trade unions, reproductive rights for women, LGBTQ rights, indigenous peoples’ struggles, racial and environmental justice, universal health care coverage—and therefore see themselves as empathically *anti-authoritarian*. As if offering them encouragement, Canadian social psychologist Bob Altemeyer, a leading researcher in this field, even declared that left-wing authoritarianism is “the Loch Ness monster of psychology—plenty of shadow but no monster” (Altemeyer, 1996).

Of course, the tacit implication of this remark is that left-wing authoritarianism is a rumor with no substance. But if recent studies are any indication, right and left-wing authoritarians both disdain liberal democratic norms and institutions, harbor intolerant or openly hostile attitudes toward those who don’t share their world view and share a pronounced willingness to resort to violence and intimidation to persuade others to dance to their tune. Moreover, they often embrace conspiracy theories, which give voice to their irrational fears and wishes, cover up contradictions and fill in gaps in their explanatory models and narratives about the way the world works (Burston, 2025).

Of all the conspiracy theories around, antisemitism is undoubtedly the oldest (Bronner, 2000). And there was always antisemitism on the Left, which is why August Bebel denounced it as “the socialism of fools.” Granted, left-

wing antisemitism was less powerful and conspicuous in North America than it was in Europe and the Middle East until recently. But it has been proliferating steadily since the collapse of the Oslo peace process and the Durban Conference on Racism and now constitutes a grave and growing threat to Jewish communities—as well as to serious scholarship—all around the globe.

So, let's ask ourselves what accounts for the deep-seated ideological differences between right and left-wing authoritarians? The crucial difference, psychologically speaking, lies in the patterns of identification and idealization that they exhibit or embrace. Right-wing authoritarians typically idealize and identify with the charismatic leader, the “strongman”, or the aggressor. They value tradition, hierarchy and are fixated in stage three or stage four of what Lawrence Kohlberg identified as “conventional normativity.” By contrast with their right-wing counterparts, left-wing authoritarians identify with and idealize the (real or imagined) victims of aggression. Their ethical sensibility tends to be neither pre-conventional, conventional or post-conventional (in Kohlberg's terms) but is often *anti-conventional* in character. This yields different ideological outcomes and cognitive distortions than one finds among extreme right-wingers.

Similarly, right-wing authoritarians typically divide people into two categories, e.g. the strong versus the weak, the winners versus the losers, the superior versus the inferior, the pure versus the impure. By contrast, their left-wing counterparts bifurcate humanity into the oppressed and their oppressors, imperialists and anti-imperialists, the good and the bad, BIPOC and white people. These different ways of carving up humanity prompt right-wing authoritarians to insist on racial or religious purity as a condition of group membership. Left-wing authoritarians, by contrast, aspire to be more inclusive on race and religion, but nevertheless insist on *ideological* purity.

For example, consider this quote from John Molyneux of the *Socialist Workers Party* (UK). He claimed that “an illiterate, conservative, superstitious Muslim Palestinian who supports Hamas is more progressive than an educated liberal atheist Israeli who supports Zionism (even critically) (quoted in Hirsh, 2018, p. 63).” This illustrates the left-wing authoritarians' tendency to idealize and identify with members of groups that he or she believes are oppressed and conversely, to devalue, denigrate or dismiss any member of a group he or she identifies as oppressors. The fact that the illiterate, conservative and superstitious Hamas supporter is likely to be intensely patriarchal, misogynistic, anti-LGBTQ+, and embraces a political movement that is theocratic, authoritarian and antisemitic to the core—while the Liberal Zionist has few, if any of these attributes—is irrelevant in this political calculus. The former is deemed more “progressive” by virtue of his membership in an oppressed minority, while the latter failed the test for ideological purity, which consists of a resolute rejection of Zionism, coupled with the tacit acceptance or active support of an Islamist organization; one that trains young children to hate and kill Jews, not just Israelis.

In 2008, when Molyneux made this absurd claim, many people on the left still regarded a statement like this as over the top, if not absolute rubbish. But not anymore. Now it is simply conventional wisdom in many, if not most activist circles; a litmus test that determines whether someone deemed is eligible to participate in “progressive” spaces. So, let's address the elephant in the room shall we? The more deeply enmeshed the Left is with Islamist organizations and movements like Hamas and Hezbollah, the more authoritarian and estranged from reality it becomes, and far less incapable of really facilitating the search for peace. And unless or until these trends are addressed and reversed, antisemitism—both overt and disguised—will continue to flourish in its ranks.

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Place of All Possibilities: Cultivating Creativity Through Ancient Jewish Wisdom
By Adina Allen

Book Review by Daniel Noam Warner

It goes without saying that the *Tanach* (the Hebrew Bible, also known as the Old Testament, spanning from Genesis through the Prophets) is central to Jewish culture. More than any particular land or creed, Jewish identity is bound to a book—one that is read and re-read across generations. This much is universal. However, what one makes of the text, and how one interprets it, remains an open question.

Some take a more conservative approach, treating the Tanach as a strict guide to righteous living. Others explore more creative interpretations, seeking new and meaningful connections within the text.

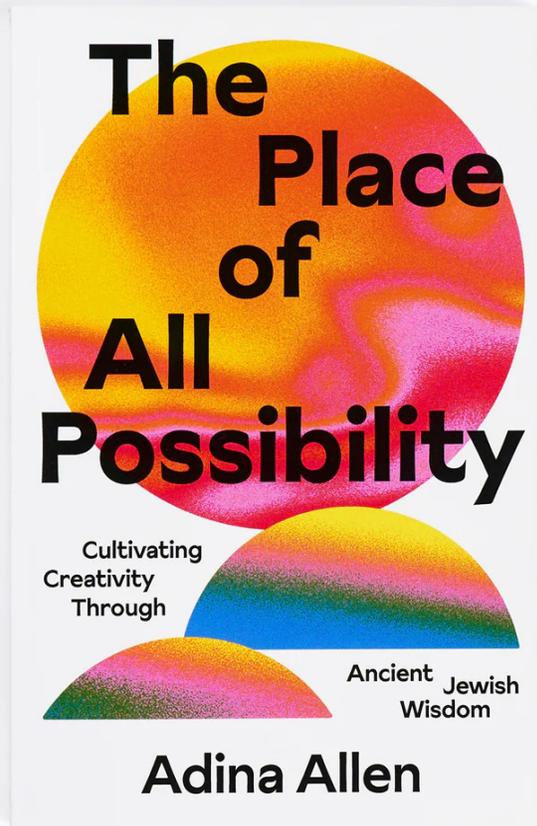
Rabbi Adina Allen, author of *The Place of All Possibilities: Cultivating Creativity Through Ancient Jewish Wisdom*, believes there is room for both

perspectives in contemporary Jewish life. Ordained at Boston's Hebrew College, Allen was immersed in rigorous Torah study, with a sharp focus on grammar and encyclopedic knowledge. She respects these classical methods and demonstrates her fluency in them throughout her work. However, she finds that when studied in isolation, these traditional approaches can feel limiting.

"They short-circuit our deeper learning," she explains, "obstructing the primordial power of these texts to activate that authentic, vital place within us, where new meanings are born." Torah, she argues, offers more than laws and maxims; it has the power to renew itself in the hearts, minds, and hands of each generation, evolving to meet contemporary challenges.

Allen longed for her Torah study to evoke the same feeling she experienced in an art studio—"alive, alert, illuminated, in tune." This realization led her to reflect on the influence of her mother, renowned art therapist Pat B. Allen. "From an early age, my mother gave me a paintbrush and a pen as tools to understand myself and the world around me," she recalls.

Pat B. Allen's *Art is a Way of Knowing* (1995) introduced the Open Studio Process, a method that helps people



reflect on their emotions and translate them into creative expression. Inspired by this model, Adina Allen merged the principles of art therapy and self-reflection with Jewish study, giving birth to the *Jewish Studio Process*—the foundation of her book.

For Allen, Torah is a wellspring of creativity, waiting to be engaged in new ways. *The Place of All Possibilities* serves as a guide, offering exercises and techniques to help readers approach these ancient texts with fresh eyes.

Her process begins with a passage of scripture—any passage, though she shares personal favorites. She then blends classical and innovative interpretive methods to uncover unexpected connections. Her sources range from ancient Talmudic scholars like Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (Rashi, 1040–1105) to contemporary thinkers such as Audre Lorde (1934–1992). She also experiments with Hebrew words, breaking them down into phonetic components, much like a psychoanalyst teasing out hidden meanings.

Allen's goal is not to unearth a single, definitive "Truth" but to discover something new—both in the text and within herself.

Once her textual analysis reaches a natural pause, Allen shifts to artistic creation. She transforms her insights into visual art, suspending judgment and allowing inspiration to guide her.

One compelling example of the *Jewish Studio Process* is her meditation on Genesis 1:2:

"And the Earth was chaos and void, with darkness on the face of the deep, and a breath of God fluttering upon the face of the water."

Allen explores Talmudic debates surrounding this verse, particularly the controversy over whether it implies the existence of pre-existing matter before divine creation. She considers how Rabbi Rabban Gamliel might have resisted this idea in order to uphold God's omnipotence. Yet, for Allen, this notion is not a challenge to faith but an invitation:

"The philosopher's words can empower us to see the raw materials that exist in our lives—half-formed thoughts, unclear emotions, nascent ideas—as part of our own creative process."

From here, she reflects on the nature of chaos and creation:

"Like God, our challenge is to find the beauty in what we have—the primordial, chaotic stuff of our lives: longing, questions, grief, confusion—and to create from there."

Her exploration concludes when she feels it has run its course. She then introduces an accompanying creative exercise.

For this passage, she suggests turning to an unlikely source of inspiration: the junk drawer.

“You know the place—where rubber bands, old batteries, lip balm, birthday candles, old letters, and all manner of odds and ends accumulate.”

Allen encourages readers to spend a few minutes writing about the objects they find, allowing memories, associations, and emotions to emerge freely. Then, she offers reflection prompts, recommending the exercise be done with a *chavruta*—a traditional Torah study partner—who can join in this journey of meaning-making.

With her spouse, Jeff Kasowitz, Allen has taken the *Jewish Studio Process* on the road, offering workshops nationwide.

“Through community programs, immersive experiences, creative facilitator training, and professional development partnerships, JSP is working to activate the creative power of the Jewish community and beyond.”

Their work helps organizations break through stagnation and reimagine their futures. “We partner with organizations that are feeling stuck or looking to make big changes, helping them reconnect to the power of their imagination to envision new possibilities.”

So keep an eye out—this process may be coming soon to a Jewish Community Center or *shul* near you. There is a world of possibility waiting to be explored by those seeking to infuse new life into ancient traditions.

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Levinas for Psychologists

by Leswin Laubscher

Book review by Daniel Noam Warner

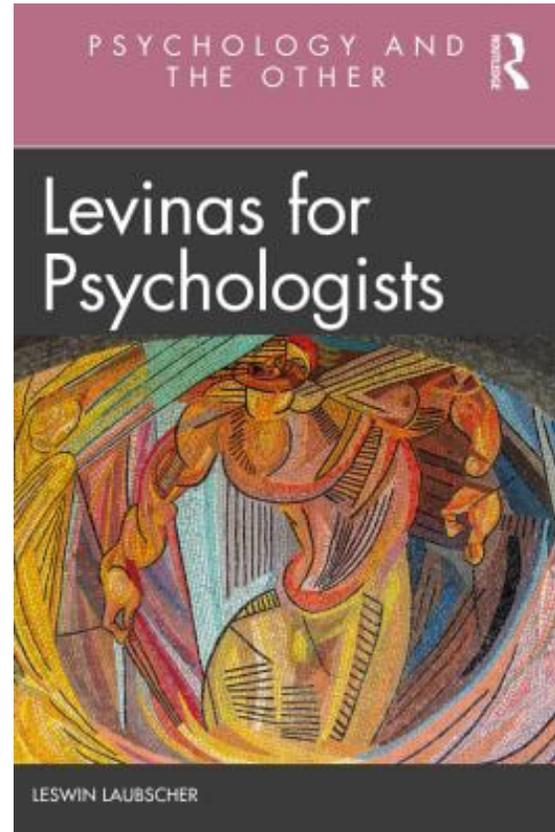
In the world of professional psychology, phenomenological psychology remains a persistent—if marginal—school of thought. After all, psychology’s legitimacy derives largely from its claim to scientific authority: its ability to predict and control behavior, and/or to explain the mind naturalistically, i.e. in relation to events, processes and biological structures. Phenomenology, by contrast, resists this naturalistic, reductionistic approach, which bypasses what it deems to be most essential—the experiencing human subject.

Instead, phenomenology insists on placing lived human experience at the center of psychological inquiry both in research and clinical practice. Exactly what this entails varies from thinker to thinker, but as Leswin Laubscher, author of *Levinas and Psychology* (Routledge, 2024) explains, “phenomenology generally critiques efforts to reduce the particular to the procedural, to subordinate the specific to the general, or to presume to capture ‘the thing itself’ in tidy systems.” In this tradition, Emmanuel Levinas (1905/6–1995), a philosopher and Talmudic scholar, plays a vital, if complex, role.

I was somewhat familiar with Levinas’ influence on phenomenological and humanistic psychology before reading Laubscher’s new book. In contemporary circles, certain Levinasian concepts—such as “the face of the Other” and the link between ethics and responsibility—have become key reference points. But Laubscher has deepened my appreciation for Levinas’ foundational role in the development of phenomenology itself, as both a philosophical and a psychological movement. More importantly, he has illuminated the crucial role Judaism played in shaping his thought.

Levinas’ work matters more today than ever because of the strains facing psychology as a profession, as well as society more broadly. Regardless of where one stands on psychology’s scientific status, science itself has lost much of its cultural authority in an era where public health data is routinely dismissed if it contradicts prevailing political ideologies. Yet the decline of scientific authority has not produced an appreciable resurgence in phenomenological or humanistic perspectives. Instead, we are witnessing a resurgence of dehumanization: migrants and minorities are routinely described as “vermin” or “monsters,” regardless of the facts. When prominent political leaders who dehumanize others are democratically elected and empowered, what hope remains for ethical awakening?

Might a Levinasian phenomenological method—born of a Jewish thinker grappling with the irrational brutality of



Nazified Europe—offer us a way forward today?

Levinas was born in late 1905 (or early 1906, depending on the calendar used) in Kovno, a town located in the Pale of Settlement—then part of Russia, now Lithuania—where Jews were permitted to live under Tsarist rule. His family had lived there for generations. Though socially isolated from their Russian and Lithuanian neighbors, they experienced relatively little antisemitism and envisioned a future more Russian than Jewish for young Emmanuel. His father was a bookseller, and Levinas' prodigious intelligence emerged early: by his teens he was fluent in Hebrew, Yiddish, Lithuanian, Russian, and German, and had read widely across the literary canon—from Dostoevsky to Shakespeare.

Political upheaval during World War I and the Russian Revolution forced his family to flee. While still a young man, Levinas went to study at the University of Strasbourg in Alsace, France. There, he learned French and encountered the phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Phenomenology offered a radically new way to engage with questions of meaning and experience—not through abstract theory, but through close reflection on the structures of lived experience. As Laubscher notes, what impressed Levinas most about Husserl was his “rigorous method for reflection,” which aimed to reveal what was implicit or obscured within experience itself.

In 1928, Levinas enrolled at the University of Freiburg to study with Husserl directly. He managed one semester with the aging master and another with Husserl's then-rising student, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Levinas was captivated, later claiming that Heidegger “made [phenomenology] sparkle.”

Heidegger's phenomenology, especially as expressed in his seminal work *Being and Time*, continues to shape and inform much of the field today. That book explores how humans seek authenticity in the face of social conformity (what Heidegger called “the they”) and makes important distinctions between the ontic (the everyday, surface-level world) and the ontological (the deeper structures of Being). For Heidegger, confronting one's mortality—acknowledging the inevitability of death—offers a path to authentic existence. Levinas, at the time, was one of Heidegger's earliest champions and translators.

By 1930, Levinas completed his degree and moved to Paris, becoming a key conduit through which phenomenological thought entered French intellectual life. His translation of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* introduced a whole generation of French thinkers—Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Paul Ricœur, Jean-Luc Marion, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Lacan, and others—to phenomenology. Though never part of their inner circle or an existentialist celebrity, Levinas was an indispensable contributor to their intellectual world.

In 1930 he also became a French citizen, a moment of great personal meaning. As Laubscher notes, Levinas described France as “a nation to which one can attach himself by spirit and heart as strongly as by origins.” This remark reveals a central tension in Levinas' life: the hope for identity beyond ethnicity—a Jew from a provincial town in Eastern Europe, finding a place in cosmopolitan Paris and contributing to global thought.

World War II, of course, brought all this to a halt. Levinas was conscripted as a translator for the French Army, and

because of arcane Nazi policies regarding Jewish officers, once captured, he was not sent to a death camp but to a labor camp. At war's end he was released—only to learn that his entire extended family had been exterminated in Lithuania. His wife Raissa and their daughter Simone, however, survived in hiding, thanks to the writer Maurice Blanchot.

These events fundamentally reshaped Levinas' worldview. Phenomenology is built on articulating lived experience. In one famous example, Sartre unpacks the feeling of waiting for a friend at a café (“Where is Pierre?”) to explore the meanings of presence and absence. But for Levinas post-Holocaust the café scene seemed a completely inadequate lens. What words could possibly thematize the Shoah? As Levinas would later write: “Nothing has been able to fill, or even cover over, the gaping pit... [or to] cancel the unjustified privilege of having survived six million deaths.”

Even more troubling, Levinas' former intellectual hero—Martin Heidegger—had embraced National Socialism and sought to make his philosophy the intellectual cornerstone of the Third Reich. The fact that a philosophy which aimed to emancipate the individual from mental slavery of the masses had fueled one of history's most violent mass movements forced a reckoning.

After the war, Levinas published *Existence and Existents* (1947) and *Time and the Other* (1948), but these works went largely unnoticed. They seem, in hindsight, to be remnants of his pre-war thinking. What followed, however, was a striking shift. Levinas withdrew from formal philosophy and devoted himself to Talmudic study under a mysterious teacher known only as “Shushani” (likely a pseudonym for “a man from Shushan”). While directing a Jewish high school, Levinas immersed himself in Jewish learning, which he described as more “confessional” than philosophical. As Laubscher notes—citing Ethan Kleinberg—this period of study may have offered Levinas a way to spiritually reconnect with the world his family and community had lost.

Levinas reemerged in 1961 with *Totality and Infinity*, now his most cited work. Initially rejected for publication, it was instead accepted as a doctoral thesis, winning high praise from Christian philosophers Paul Ricoeur and Gabriel Marcel, and causing his friend and reader, Jean Wahl to declare prophetically that it was a thesis “about which other theses will be written.”

Totality and Infinity presents a post-Holocaust phenomenology. Many of Levinas' most enduring ideas emerge here: the “face of the Other,” responsibility before freedom, ethics before ontology. His writing here also marks a shift toward postmodernism in its suspicion of totalizing explanations and its exploration of language's limitations.

Laubscher excels in making these abstract ideas vivid. One of the most powerful passages in his book recounts an experience he had at Auschwitz:

In the Birkenau section of the death camp, specifically *Camp Canada*, where the belongings of those destined for the gas chambers were sorted and valuables expropriated, there is a display of photographs... One, a young woman with a sad and attractive half-smile, looked directly at me. Cradled in her arms is a sleeping child... She calls out to me, seizes me, accuses me, and reminds me of a responsibility I did not ask for and would not want by my will, but cannot ignore... She has laid siege

to me, ordered and ordained me, by an obligation prior to commitment... I continue to find myself in that assignation... a responsibility without prior commitment... commanded beyond and before the calculation of response.

In this moment, we see Levinas' core concepts dramatized: the inescapable ethical demand made by the Other; the encounter that interrupts and transcends cognition; the sense of responsibility that precedes conscious choice. The young woman's gaze is not reducible to meaning or metaphor. It simply is—and in being, it commands.

This is only a small sample of Levinas' vast philosophical contribution and Laubscher's able exposition. His prose is famously difficult to penetrate —poetic, recursive, elusive. Laubscher does great work guiding readers through the thicket, offering examples and explanations to make lines like “saying saying saying itself” or “expose the exposure instead of remaining in it as an act of exposing” more intelligible.

By the late 1960s, Levinas left Jewish school administration and took up university positions, including a professorship at the Sorbonne. By the time I was in college in the 1990s, his work was required reading alongside other postmodern French thinkers. Today, entire conferences and books explore Levinas' relevance for psychology—particularly in understanding healing, intersubjectivity, and ethical responsibility.

When I see images of shaved migrants lined by masked ICE guards, labeled “thugs,” marched into El Salvador's mega prison—I'm struck by how hard governments work to hide the moment of the facial encounter. The same is true for sexual minorities bullied by law, for workers displaced by AI, and for women reduced to reproductive functions—while hypothetical fetuses are personified on billboards. Our institutions know that ethics begins with the face.

Dehumanization moves quickly; its machinery depends on preventing encounters with the Other. Levinas reminds us that ethics is not gone—it is latent in the encounter. In the gaze. In the moment we allow ourselves to be seized. Responsibility is not optional. It is the condition of our own possibility. We can be more than the numbed and docile “they” that upholds systems of oppression. Only through the encounter with the Other can we reclaim an ethical life—not as a theory, but as our way of being.

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The Connections Paradigm

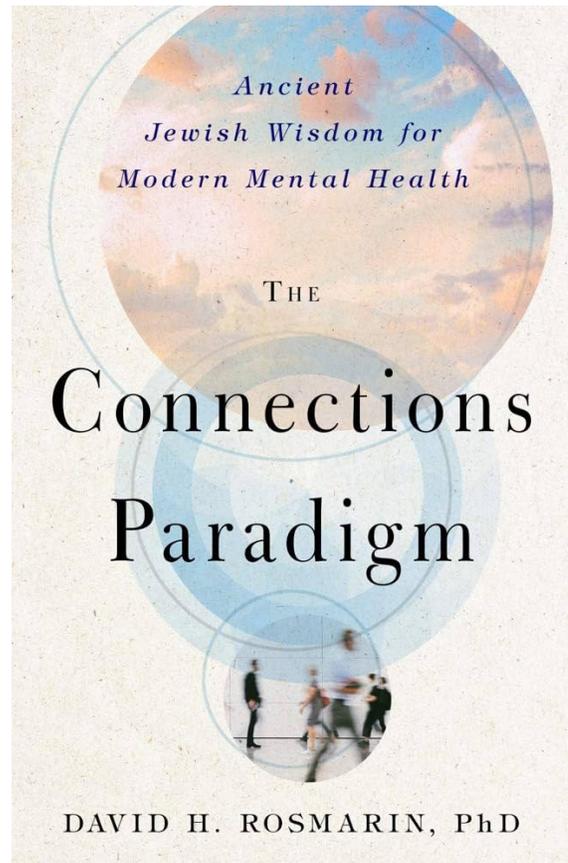
Ancient Jewish Wisdom for Modern Mental Health
by David H. Rosmarin, Ph.D.

Book Review by Lawrence M. Glanz, Ph.D.

Dr. Glanz is a clinical psychologist, and director of a group private practice in Pittsburgh PA.

What can Jewish wisdom bring to the mental health crisis of our times? Well, quite a lot, according to David Rosmarin, the author of *The Connections Paradigm*. Rosmarin is Associate Professor at Harvard Medical School and director of the Spirituality and Mental Health Program At McLean Hospital, as well as the author of numerous articles and books on spirituality and mental health.

Rosmarin is an Orthodox Jew, trained in contemporary mental health theory and methods, who found them lacking what he considers a vital element. Current approaches focus on returning patients to their baseline functioning, he asserts, rather than helping them to achieve their most satisfying and fulfilling state of contentment.



Going beyond CBT, DBT, ACT, or other acronymic theories, Rosmarin turned to a more fundamental perspective based on principles outlined by his consulting rabbi who had studied them in their original Hebrew texts. Rosmarin claims his explanation of the Connections Paradigm represents its only English translation.

To be clear, this paradigm is not a theory, but rather a framework or lens through which one can approach treatment of almost any patient. It consists of three elements, or levels: inner connection, interpersonal connection, and spiritual connection. Pathology is viewed as shortcomings within or among these levels, and treatment addresses these shortcomings.

According to the paradigm, the purpose of life is love and connection, the first level of which is connection within the self. Rosmarin describes this connection as between body and soul. The body has elemental needs and the soul provides a big picture guidance for the body's wellbeing. The goal is love of self and optimal personal functioning.

Rosmarin cites an example of this inner connection with a professional ballerina, who overtrained, but under slept and ate a very restricted diet, the better to keep her weight down. She was depressed but refused to change her habits, citing the demands of her art. Rosmarin struggled with her and finally appealed to her in the following fashion: "You have such incredible gifts and talents—your body is worth investing in—don't you want to learn to support and love her more than you currently do?" He persuaded her she could maintain high standards while developing greater self love. The dancer gradually modified her habits and achieved a better inner balance, recognizing self love and better health must precede and would support her performance.

The second level is interpersonal connection, and rests on the foundations of the first level. Proper care of self opens the way to positive and loving relationships. These are achieved by noticing and providing for the needs of others in an empathic and compassionate manner. Altruism and generosity are key qualities that promote positive interpersonal connections. A proper balance between care for self and care for others maintains them.

The author emphasizes the importance of both giving to others and allowing others to give in return. In one example he cites a young woman who gave too much of herself. She spent so much time volunteering, that she neglected her friendships and began to feel very lonely. Rosmarin surmised she was holding other at arm's length due to feelings of inadequacy. He encouraged her to open herself to receive kindness from others and not just give of herself in an effort to bolster her own self esteem. "Remember, I reminded her, it isn't a sign of weakness to let others help you." She responded well and made healthier interpersonal connections with friends and family over time.

The third, and highest connection is spiritual, between the self and God. Rosmarin explains that events on Earth occur beyond human understanding and control. Our efforts to control so much of life are often futile and misguided, and lead to discontent, anxiety and despair. An understanding and effort to connect with God brings about gratitude for God's gifts, a proper humility, and contentment, which goes beyond treatment of symptomatology.

In a lengthy case study, Rosmarin illustrates his thesis with a patient who had suffered several severe losses and became deeply embittered. He blamed his losses on his own failings. The author worked with him extensively to cede responsibility for his losses, acknowledge the limits of control, and accept that he is in God's hands. As he came to accept this, the patient became less depressed and more hopeful.

Rosmarin doesn't neglect his secular training. He cites examples in which he employs CBT and other methods with his patients. In one instance he describes an exposure protocol for a spider phobic. But he repeatedly makes the argument that the most meaningful results come from following the steps in the connections paradigm as a path toward a fulfilling life.

I found the book to be an enjoyable read. I was captivated by its simple, straightforward explanations, and themes understandable to any person familiar with Judaic philosophy, a philosophy that has permeated our Western ideals and will be well accepted by many patients regardless of their religious faith or lack of same; however Rosmarin does become somewhat preachy as he exhorts the reader to adopt a theological orientation. The appeal to a higher power struck me as similar to that made in Alcoholics Anonymous and may be a turn off for some patients. I also question the ethics of evangelizing with patients. As a therapist, I acknowledge the influence my own convictions have upon my work, but these must be balanced with a respect for the patient's autonomy.

Despite this criticism, it is tempting to look at patients through Rosmarin's paradigm and keep it in mind, even as one treats a patient via any of the current theoretical approaches in which we have been trained. While it may not have a scientific basis, its ancient wisdom represents countless generations of lived experience and an optimistic life affirming point of view. A very Jewish point of view.