# *Kesher*


JOURNAL OF THE
**ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH PSYCHOLOGISTS**
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# KESHER:
# JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH PSYCHOLOGISTS

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Dear Readers,

Welcome to issue number 4 of *Kesher: Journal of the Association of Jewish Psychologists*. As we embark on a new year in the Jewish Calendar – 5786, to be precise – I want to wish you Shana Tova and reflect a bit on the year behind us. First, I wish to thank our contributors, regardless of whether they wrote a letter to the editor, a book or movie review, a personal essay, a research paper, a report about local trends and developments – whatever! All your submissions were most welcome, and I hope you keep them coming. We can't do this without your continued involvement and sincerely hope to hear from all of you again.

Next, I wish to remind readers that – as our name implies – our mission is to facilitate and enhance communication and a sense of community between Jewish psychologists and psychotherapists in all of our discipline's areas of specialization, regardless of their specific theoretical orientation (e.g. cognitive-behavioral, neuropsychological, psychodynamic, humanistic, Jungian, etc.), and regardless of whether they live in Israel or the Diaspora. There is a need for a journal like ours in times like these, when many, perhaps most of us face challenges in our professional lives that were undreamt of even a decade ago. Moreover, though many AJP members live in the USA, all of us benefit from learning about conditions for teaching, learning, research and clinical practice elsewhere – e.g. Canada, Israel, Italy, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Australia, and so on. As the AJP grows steadily in numbers and in influence, I hope that we hear from even more folks living *outside* the USA to help us make that happen.

With that said, I must thank Dan Warner for coming aboard as Kesher's managing editor and book review editor for issue number 2 (and following), and Oren Baum and his production team at UpOnline for their diligent and meticulous work on issues 3 and 4. Thanks to their efforts and many skills, I am confident that we will be able to produce four lively and informative issues per year going forward.

Finally, as regards this current issue, I wish to thank Kirk Schneider for inviting me to contribute a paper to a forthcoming (special issue) of *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology* he is editing in honor of our late friend Ilene Serlin, z'l, which will appear sometime in 2026. Though my paper on the Jewish roots of Abraham Maslow's ideas appears here first, the copyright for it belongs to Sage Publishers, which publishes *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. Friends of Ilene's should look for this special issue, which will doubtless contain many lively and soulful tributes to her.

Members of the Association of Jewish Psychologists (AJP) were able to meet at the recent American Psychological Association convention in Denver, Colorado. Here are some fun group pictures.

# Connect with *Kesher*

***Kesher*: The Journal for the Association of Jewish Psychologists welcomes contributions that provide thoughtful connection across Jewish psychologists.**

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# HOW AUSTRALIA CHANGED AFTER 10/7/23 - MAYBE FOREVER?

**JENNIFER LEE**

Melbourne, Australia, once wore its "most liveable city" title like a badge of honour. I've lived my entire life in Melbourne and used to say a daily bracha at the good fortune that brought parents and grandparents here, Holocaust survivors and escapees of the communist revolution. One side of my family is Hungarian, the other, Czechoslovakian. Firm matza balls and savory gefilte fish, just the way it's supposed to be….

Lately though, I wonder if that bracha has an expiration date. Right now, life in Australia isn't so great for Jews. The trouble probably started with the COVID pandemic, which precipitated 262 days of lockdown, enforced isolation, economic carnage, and creeping authoritarianism. The pandemic declaration did not end until October 2022 with the government still mandating COVID-19 vaccinations in certain industries until October 2024. The result was a fractured society where citizens limped out of their homes, where basic freedoms still felt conditional, and law–abiding citizens found themselves tiptoeing through ideological minefields. A society desperate for relief and a whipping post for its post–traumatic stress.

Then came October 7th 2023. And on October 8, 2023, while Jews around the world were reeling from the most barbaric massacre since the Holocaust, the pro–Palestinian movement exploded in full force on the steps of the Sydney Opera House screaming "f--k the Jews' and "gas the Jews" – although a questionable police investigation later concluded that it was not "gas the Jews" being chanted, but "where's the Jews"; as if the Jews of Sydney had somehow been misplaced. On that day, the social, cultural, and moral fabric of Australia began to fall apart at the seams.

However, this isn't a piece about Israel or Palestine. This is a piece about Australia; about the tectonic shifts in our civic and cultural identity that were triggered, exposed, and accelerated by the events of October 7. What followed wasn't just a resurgence of antisemitism. It was a litmus test for the soul of this country. And so far, we're failing it.

You can feel it—not just in the way people move through the city, but in the way they speak, or don't speak, and in the rapid recalibration of what is now considered "normal."

I've always worn my Jewish identity publicly without apology. Even today, I don't cower, and I don't back down. I've faced online mobs, whisper campaigns, and smear attempts. None of it scares me. What does scare me is the moral decay I now see infecting the institutions I once respected and relied upon. Antisemitism is embedded in DEI ideology through its rigid oppressor–oppressed binary, which reduces complex identities into simplistic moral categories. Jews, frequently perceived as white and economically successful, are wrongly cast as oppressors, erasing both their historic persecution and current vulnerability. Intersectional frameworks further sideline Jewish experiences by prioritizing other forms of marginalization, while the demonization of Israel as a colonial oppressor feeds antisemitic narratives under the guise of social justice. This binary logic fuels harmful stereotypes about Jewish power and privilege, marginalizes Jewish voices, and excludes antisemitism from serious inclusion efforts.

I first encountered Hybrid Warfare on Facebook in 2014, although I did not know its name yet. As Israel reeled from the brutal kidnapping and murder of three innocent teenagers and another Gaza war, I watched in disbelief as global narratives twisted reality beyond recognition. Suddenly, Israel was no longer the victim, Jews everywhere became fair game for abuse, and the West—the home of liberal democracy and human rights—was portrayed as the villain. What struck me was how coordinated, how sophisticated, and how insidious it was. Everyone online had the same scripts and slogans. This was content and news reportage filtered through doctored images, moral inversion, and slick propaganda that blurred the lines between truth and fiction. To understand it I followed the evolution of identity politics, the weaponisation of language, and studied the way people of influence exploited the free and open societies they sought to destroy. And I resolved to help others see what I see: that we are not just in a war of weapons, but a war of ideas—and if we don't defend our values, no one else will do it for us.

Since October 8th, 2023, many people have been shocked by the speed and scale of the anti–Israel, anti–Jewish, and anti–Western narratives swirling around us. For me, it was merely a more brazen and more organized continuation of the playbook from 2014, albeit with far greater reach thanks to the amplification on social and mainstream media, and the complete absence of effective counter messaging. Within a week of October 7, Melbourne's streets were transformed. The people chanting for intifada and waving Palestinian flags weren't met with resistance; they were given police escorts. "Free Palestine" and "From the river to the sea" became the slogans du jour. Watermelon T–shirts, antisemitic merchandise and memes abounded in the hate rallies, university campuses and online, morphing into chants of "All Zionists are Terrorists". Very few academics, journalists, bureaucrats or politicians paused to refute it. Zionism had become a dirty word. Those that dared to challenge this rhetoric, its genocidal intent or revisionist history were cancelled, bullied, intimidated and often chased out of their workplaces and social circles.

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Since October 7, doxxing increasingly became a weapon of ideological warfare—often by exposing names, personal and professional affiliations, and even family connections across social media or anonymous

Photo courtesy of Jenni Lee from a rally involving Palestinian protestors in the Summer, 2025, Melbourne.

online databases. In this new climate, a simple statement of solidarity with Israel could result in job loss, campus investigations, reputational ruin, or threats to personal safety. The intent is clear: to punish heresy, enforce ideological conformity, and excommunicate dissenters. For example, in late 2023 or early 2024, a pro-Palestinian activist created a spreadsheet of approximately 600 Jewish Australians that were sharing their concerns about the rapidly escalating antisemitism in their respective creative fields via a Whatsapp group. This was not even a Zionist group, strictly speaking. Many participants were liberal, progressive Jews who are ambivalent about their Jewish identity and relationship to Israel. Nevertheless, many lost their jobs, faced academic investigations, received death threats, or were socially ostracised; a telling symptom of Australians' collective hostility to Jews regardless of their political leanings.

In an era where digital footprints are weaponised and cannot be erased, this mass doxxing campaign has destroyed careers, reputations, and any sense of safety, sending a chilling message to Australia's Jewish community. Speak up, and you will be punished. It is the favoured weapon of the pro-Palestinian activist community whose repercussions are still felt acutely 20 months later. As a result, if good, decent people, Jewish and non-Jewish, speak up, or try to explain history, context, or the hard-won values of our civilisation they'll be accused of being racist, Islamophobic, or simply too old to understand. The propaganda machine has been so effective at distorting moral frameworks that even talking about Australian values, self-respect and self-preservation, can be rebranded as bigotry and racism. This is no accident. That is exactly what hybrid warfare aims to do: divide societies not just along political or ethnic lines, but within the family unit. Because a divided, demoralised society—where children mistrust their elders' judgement—is a society that can no longer defend itself.

What began as weekly pro-Palestinian rallies has now developed into a daily campaign of ideological intimidation, with our capital cities, Sydney and Melbourne in particular, held hostage to a movement that is no longer about Gaza. Run by local organised socialist and Marxist groups with ties to political parties and unions, these protests have turned increasingly aggressive and targeted in the absence of any real authority or policing to challenge or shut them down. They continue to target an array of Australian and Jewish businesses, philanthropists, and cultural institutions for harassment. The National Gallery of Victoria, Toll Holdings (a major integrated logistics provider), and the Future Fund (an Australian Government superannuation fund) for example, along with many of Australia's Jewish high net worth families and their foundations have all been named, shamed and threatened, not for anything to do with war or foreign

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policy, but simply because they are associated with Israeli or Jewish enterprises, cultural patronage, or community leadership. This isn't activism—it's coercion. It's about punishing Jews, not all necessarily Zionist, for participating in civic life.

The goal here is not peace—it's control. What we're witnessing is a cultural siege: an effort to force Australians to accept an extremist, zero-sum worldview in which anyone who does not actively adopt the cause is branded a racist, a settler-colonialist, an Islamophobe, or worse—complicit in global genocide. From the weaponisation of identity categories to the daily incitement and disruption of civil society, this campaign has little to do with Palestinian liberation and everything to do with social dominance. This is not protest—it's ideological warfare dressed in the language of justice, and it is testing the limits of Australian liberal democracy.


Supporters of Palestine and Palestinian justice took to the streets of Melbourne in bigger numbers (20,000 to 25,000 people) for the second rally in as many weeks.

Photo by Matt Hrkac | 22 May 2021, 14:03

Today, the Australian Jewish community—like most diaspora communities I suspect—faces an aggressive and decentralised adversary; a potent alliance of Muslim and pro-Palestinian forces that operates with agility, emotional appeal, and digital sophistication. These actors have seized cultural high ground, leveraging identity politics, victimhood narratives, and grassroots mobilisation to outmanoeuvre legacy institutions. Despite repeated overtures from emerging grassroots leaders, digital campaigners, and strategic communicators who have offered to collaborate in confronting this hostile environment, formal Australian Jewish bodies have, at best, been indifferent and, at worst, dismissive. This has created a widening credibility and capability gap between what the community urgently needs and what institutional leadership can deliver. The result is stagnation, missed opportunities to convert adverse events into inflection points, and a fractured response to the greatest public affairs and safety challenge facing the Australian Jewish community in two generations.

We are no longer in an environment where slow-moving institutions and backroom diplomacy are sufficient to protect our community. The threats are fast, public, and unforgiving—and our response must match that pace. Until our communal organisations evolve to meet this moment with urgency, transparency, and strategic competence, individuals and grassroots networks will continue filling the vacuum. But this is not sustainable.

Somewhere along the way, the noble pursuit of justice was hijacked by the business of grievance. What was once about fixing problems has become about maintaining them—because there is far more money, power, and influence in sustaining victimhood than in solving anything.

At the heart of this model is a sinister ideology: the bigotry of low expectations. We are repeatedly told that minority groups or third-world cultures must be shielded from accountability, from merit-based success, from the universal values that lead to prosperity. In the West, standards are lowered to accommodate rather than

elevate, and basic personal responsibility is dismissed as a form of oppression. Meanwhile, third-world societies are excused for systemic dysfunctions that, if left unchallenged, will only deepen their crises. Rather than resisting this toxic industry, the Australian government has become one of its biggest enablers, funnelling taxpayer money into Indigenous and identity based activism while simultaneously weakening the foundations of Australian society. Instead of standing firm against imported ideological conflicts, it has legitimised and amplified them, embedding grievance-based narratives into policy and public institutions.

A clear example of this can be seen in the way the pro-Palestinian movement has co-opted Indigenous activism in Australia, weaponizing flawed "stolen land" narratives to equate the issues and manipulate public sentiment. Activists now draw a grotesque moral equivalence between Australia's history and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, pushing the idea that both our nations are "settler-colonial" states that must be dismantled. The absurdity is obvious—Israel is the indigenous homeland of the Jewish people, and the comparison falls apart under the weight of historical fact. But the goal was never accuracy; the goal was to conflate unrelated grievances to broaden the activist coalition, further entrenching division and resentment in Australian society.

Instead of rejecting this narrative outright, the Albanese government has allowed it to fester. At the same time, the Albanese government has opened the floodgates to activist funding, directing massive resources towards organisations that promote grievance-based narratives instead of solutions. From taxpayer-funded programs that demonise Australia's national identity to grants supporting "decolonisation" rhetoric in universities, the government is actively bankrolling the erosion of Australian values in favour of imported ideological warfare.

We need to do better. Fast. In particular the "Stolen Land" narratives are accompanied by weaponized labels, with politicians, media influencers and activists now readily calling ordinary Australians "occupiers" and "colonizers", "racists" and "oppressors". Applying labels like "occupier" or "land thief" to entire groups neglects and negates the diverse experiences and motivations that make up our population. Formal Australia Day festivities in Victoria in 2025 were cancelled under duress from the "Invasion Day" activist movement. We saw masked men and women chanting and carrying signs like Abolish Australia, Invasion Day, Stolen Land, Globalize the Intifada etc. Burning Australian Flags, while proudly holding Palestinian and Indigenous flags aloft.

The result? Australians, like Jews, are being told they must apologise for their identity, tolerate ideological hostility in their communities, and fund a grievance industry that offers them nothing but hate and contempt in return.

Sound familiar?

*Jennifer Lee is a strategist, communicator, and advocate whose career has spanned hospitality, community leadership, and cultural commentary. She grew up within the family's business, the Brighton Savoy, a renowned boutique hotel and event centre in Melbourne, Australia, that stood as a community institution for over 55 years. A proud Jew, Zionist, and granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, she strives to bring clarity, courage, and cultural fluency to some of the most urgent debates of our time.*

# FROM THE HOLLYWOOD DREAM FACTORY TO MY MOTHER'S TESTIMONY: A RETURN TO ORIGINS

**BY GEORGE HALASZ**

I landed in Los Angeles on Tuesday 29 July 2025 expecting to bask in the sunlight and ogle the towering palm trees, feeling keen to plug into familiar cultural inspirations. On previous visits (before Covid) I always made a point to visit Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Getty Museum. After years of pandemic-related travel bans on Australia, this brief interlude felt like a catchup-pilgrimage. But what began as a casual pleasure-seeking excursion turned into something far deeper.

I arrived at LACMA filled with anticipation, only to find it was closed on Wednesdays. My heart sank. Why hadn't I checked to see if it was open? Why was I so impulsive? Why the urgency to book the Uber? Turning my eyes away from the closed ticket booths I saw a gleaming, unfamiliar building cast in steel and glass. The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures had opened since my last visit. It was open till 6.00pm. My heart lifted.

Inside, I plunged headlong into cinematic wonder. A mixed reality (MR) headset transported me through cyberpunk aesthetics and cutting-edge virtual production. But much as I enjoyed the surreal collages and storytelling, it was the third floor's 'Hollywoodland: The Jewish Founders in the Making of a Movie Capital' that touched me to my core.

There, in a quiet gallery with QR-code-activated screens, I encountered the stories of men who fled pogroms and poverty to invent a new mythic homeland, creating an imaginary America on screen; Laemmle, Mayer, Goldwyn, Fox, the Warner brothers. A short-film documentary explored the roots of these men's dreams, telling of the obstacles they faced, the censorship, xenophobia, anti-Jewish sentiment, and how they forged a thriving industry against the odds, inventing the American Dream with innovative scenes on backlots. But as the presentation unfolded, I heard the word antisemitism spoken not once, but repeatedly.

My sunny holiday reverie was abruptly shattered. I had been on edge since October 7, 2023. Hearing the word antisemitism triggered me into another timeline and a more complex and challenging mental state. From savoring the fantastical possibilities of cinema, I was suddenly catapulted into the depths of my emotional life. I felt strange moments of multiple (internal) collisions that are quite difficult to describe. 'Mixed realities' incorporating past and present, the frantic search for safety or survival, feeling alternately calm and overwhelmed, all infused with flashbacks accompanied me the rest of that Wednesday. The Holocaust. My mother Alice. Her trembling voice giving testimony to Spielberg's Visual History Foundation (VHF) in 1998. My own fluid identity unravelling like a reel of celluloid around these intergenerational truths.

In other words, what had promised to be an ordinary (if pleasing) museum visit became a searing encounter with my past, present, and future selves. I sat, transfixed, as the documentary described the moral courage of Carl Laemmle, who broke Thomas Edison's monopolistic control of the film industry, opening the gates to independent storytelling. Laemmle not just as a Hollywood mogul but, like myself, an activist; a new spiritual ancestor who reminded me of my own professional battles with censorship, cancellation, silence, and the callous sidelining of our family research on inherited trauma. Suddenly I'd found a forebear in Hollywood's founding rebellion.


And then on the floor below came my most personal moment: the display about Steven Spielberg. Beyond celebrating cinematic storytelling, for me, the connection to the museum's Spielberg Family Gallery was visceral. After Schindler's List swept the Oscars in 1994, Spielberg used his platform to launch a moral revolution. His speech, invoking the memory of six million, wasn't just moving. It changed the course of our family's life. Inspired by his vision, my mother gave her full testimony to the then VHF, later the USC Shoah Foundation. That act of truth-telling became the catalyst for our own mother-son documentary project, a deeply collaborative exploration of trauma, memory, and survival that has informed my academic research for more than two decades.

In those recording sessions, we entered a mixed reality of our own making; one part memory, one part research, one part heartache. A triangulated process where the personal became scholarly and the scholarly became sacred. At the museum, that same triangulation between history, innovation and identity was everywhere on display. I saw it in the Inventing Worlds and Characters exhibit, where designers conjure emotional landscapes out of costume and set. I saw it in the blurring of lines between real and virtual. And I saw it in myself, standing at the threshold between the mythic past of Hollywood and the lived experience of being Jewish post-October 7, when Jewish trauma resurfaced with shattering intensity.

Though we're apt to forget it sometimes, the immigrant story at the heart of Hollywood reflects the paradox of

Jewish existence: the urge to assimilate while bearing the scars of otherness. The studios conjured comforting fantasies of American belongingness while their founders were barred from country clubs and vilified in the press. They made musicals while their cousins in Europe - my grandparents, uncles and aunt among them - were rounded up for slaughter.

That duality also lives in me, the son of Hungarian survivors, raised in post-war Melbourne. After my museum visit I experience anew how I carry inherited dread beneath my professional mask. October 7 unmasked that dread. It revived the intergenerational terror my mother tried so hard to suppress through silence, and only later, to express through her testimony and her speech.

Now, in a gallery built by Hollywood's descendants, I found myself holding both timelines: the escape offered by mythic dreamland juxtaposed with the unrelenting reality of rising global antisemitism. The immersive exhibit became the perfect analog for my own identity.

As I walked out of the building into the late afternoon sun, I didn't feel I had visited a museum. I felt I had returned to a site of origin, one that connected Jewish memory, American myth-making, and my own unfolding family narrative—visceral and visual. I felt my mother's voice trembling before Spielberg's camera to the sound of my own footsteps echoing in that cinematic temple on Fairfax. This wasn't just a return visit to a museum. I had been returned to my origins, to who I am.

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# A BRIEF COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THREE DEFINITIONS OF ANTISEMITISM

**BY LIYA LEVANDA, PsyD**

**Introduction**

As antisemitism continues to rise, efforts to establish a clear definition of antisemitism have become both more urgent and more contentious than ever. Having a definition does more than just establish legal structures through which to prosecute hate crimes: these definitions shape how we interpret hate speech, advocate for Jewish safety, address workplace discrimination, and engage in broader conversations about Jewish identity, Zionism, and political activism. However, antisemitism's complexity—its historical, social, and political nuances—means that no single definition is universally accepted. Some definitions have even faced accusations of being discriminatory themselves, especially as governments and institutions attempt to navigate tension between protecting Jewish communities and upholding rights to free speech and political dissent. This work examines the three most widely discussed definitions of antisemitism: the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition, the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA), and the Nexus Document. In exploring the origins, strengths, and limitations of each, the article aims to help mental health professionals and the general public think critically about how these definitions influence both personal awareness and professional practice.

**The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition**

The IHRA, an intergovernmental organization focused on Holocaust-related issues, adopted a "non-legally binding" definition of antisemitism in 2016. As the most widely recognized definition, it has been endorsed by numerous governments and institutions around the world. It is unique from the other definitions discussed in this article in that it was not intended to focus primarily on antisemitism in the context of Israel and Palestine. This has been a strength in that it is more generalizable, and also a limitation in that it leaves a significant gap in helping the general

public understand antisemitism in the context of Middle Eastern affairs.

As such, the IHRA definition has been criticized for its vagueness and perceived misuse. Activists and scholars have noted that political leaders such as U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have weaponized the IHRA definition of antisemitism to further their own political agenda under the guise of protecting Jews (e.g. Deckers and Coulter, 2022). For example, Trump's executive order on antisemitism cited the IHRA definition in ways that critics argue violated rights to free speech and stifled political dissent (Human Rights Watch, 2023; The Institute for Middle East Understanding, 2021). These actions, framed as defending Jewish students, have raised concerns that they might actually increase antisemitism by turning Jews into scapegoats for Trump's actions. But concerns about the weaponization of the IHRA were being voiced well before the executive order: in 2023, the European Legal Support Center (ELSC) published a report highlighting 53 incidents between 2017 and 2022 where pro-Palestine and/or anti-Israel advocacy was targeted as being in violation of the IHRA definition of antisemitism, most of which were later dismissed as unsubstantiated (ELSC, 2023). Examples of incidents in the report include a student being investigated for a tweet stating "If you are silent when it comes to Palestine, you would have been silent at the time of the Holocaust" and several Arab employees being fired allegedly due to antisemitic or anti-Israel comments (ELSC, 2023).

There are two specific examples of antisemitism listed in the IHRA definition that have been particularly targeted: "denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor" and "applying double standards by requiring of [Israel] a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation" (IHRA, 2016). Critics argue that these examples can be weaponized to conflate legitimate criticism of the Israeli government with antisemitism, which they say muddles nuanced political discourse and silences Palestinian voices. At the same time, rejecting these examples altogether can make it more difficult to identify real instances of antisemitism that undermine Jewish identity, history, and self-determination.


This "meme" by the organization @Key48return" makes their images publicly available in order to better spread their political messaging.

Other common commentaries on these examples rely on narratives that deny Jewish indigeneity to the region by labeling it as settler colonialism, which constitutes antisemitism in and of itself (Barnett, 2021). This sentiment is reinforced by the American Jewish Committee who, in their "Translate Hate" glossary, refer to the label of settler colonialist as "categorically false" when used to refer to Jews (2023). This is because the definition of settler colonialism specifically refers to foreign groups invading and ousting indigenous groups (LeFevre, 2015). Jewish indigeneity to the region has been proven historically and archaeologically, and so labeling them as invaders rather than an indigenous people returning to their homeland after centuries of displacement and persecution, and rewriting their story of survival and self-determination as one of oppressive settler colonialism, perpetuates

antisemitic tropes of Jewish power and control. While there are a multitude of valid critiques to be made about the current power dynamic between Israel and Palestine, as well as valid concern over the immense death the region has seen over time, it is both inaccurate and harmful to engage in critique that denies Jewish indigeneity.

Blaming the IHRA definition itself for its misuse is a misplacement of responsibility. Kenneth Stern, one of the definition's original authors, has emphasized that the definition is non-legally binding, stressing that it was not created with the intent to police free speech, but rather to guide understanding (Press, 2024). As the American Jewish Committee notes, "any tool can be misused and it's important to speak out against those exceptions when they occur (AJC, 2023). Using the IHRA definition to target opposition under the guise of fighting antisemitism or to inflict undue harm on Palestinians is a problem reflecting the authority in charge, and not the tool they are choosing to interpret in a violent way. Writer Ben Cohen argues that the onus for understanding the context and definitions within the IHRA definitions lies within the ones wielding it, and that perhaps an amenable solution would be to update this two-decade-old framework to improve on what he asserts to be the best definition (Cohen, 2021). Scholar and former special envoy against antisemitism under the Biden administration, Deborah Lipstadt, has similarly defended the IHRA definition, asserting that although the definition is not perfect, it does not weaken the fight against antisemitism, as some allege (Rosenfeld, 2024).

**The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA)**

Published in 2021 by a group of scholars affiliated with the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA) came about as a response to the IHRA's identified shortcomings. The JDA aims to clarify what constitutes antisemitism, especially in relation to Palestine and Israel, while preserving space for free speech and political dissent. One of the JDA's key contributions is its direct assertions that neither support for Palestinian liberation nor evidence-based criticism of Israel are inherently antisemitic. This has made the JDA the definition of choice for numerous human rights organizations, activists, and academics who felt that the IHRA was too easily used to suppress political opposition, notably the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions (BDS) movement and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP).

One concern about the JDA raised by pro-Israel organizations like StandWithUs is that it normalizes double standards. The definition states: "Political speech does not have to be measured, proportional, tempered, or reasonable to be protected under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and other human rights instruments. Criticism that some may see as excessive or contentious, or as reflecting a "double standard," is not, in and of itself, antisemitic. In general, the line between antisemitic and non-antisemitic speech is different from the line between unreasonable and reasonable speech" (Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, 2021). Discussion of double standards is common in anti-discrimination legislation (Kontorovich, 2023), and double standards have long been maintained by antisemitism scholars such as Israeli political and human rights advocate Natan Sharansky as textbook antisemitism in his "3 Ds" tool to identify antisemitism (2004). Double standards are a common centerpiece of antisemitism debates, as many feel that applying unique moral scrutiny to the world's only Jewish state, while ignoring similar or worse actions taken by other countries, is discriminatory (World Jewish Congress, 2022).

Despite being created to be more sensitive to Palestinian narratives, some Palestinians criticize the JDA for continuing to center Jewish perspectives without giving equal attention to Palestinian narratives, suggesting

**The ways we define and discuss antisemitism matter deeply—not only in political forums, but also in therapy rooms, classrooms, board meetings, and more.**

that this reinforces power dynamics that perpetuate Palestinian oppression. While Palestinian narratives should, of course, be platformed where relevant and appropriate, one could argue that it would not be appropriate to focus a definition of antisemitism on the perspectives of those who do not experience antisemitism. JVP (n.d.) speaks to this in their statement, noting that centering Israel-Palestine in conversations around antisemitism means that both Israel and Palestine would need to be represented. JVP cautions that overly emphasizing Israel in discussions of antisemitism risks distracting from real issues of antisemitism many Jews in the diaspora face.

There are other Palestinians that believe the JDA only reinforces Palestinian oppression. Sociologist and professor at Mount Royal University Muhannad Ayyash argues "like all liberal documents that have been produced in the thick of a colonial or settler colonial moment, this document keeps intact the colonial contract whereby the colonial masters retain the position of privilege and supremacy in voice and status over the colonised" (Ayyash, 2021). This framing, however, can veer into dangerous territory. As detailed in the previous section, denying Jewish indigeneity, and equating Jewish return to their indigenous homeland with settler colonialism, is textbook antisemitism.

**The Nexus Document**

The Nexus document was released in 2021 by the Nexus Task Force, which is affiliated with The Bard Center for the Study of Hate at Bard College. The Nexus Task Force is composed of an interdisciplinary team of experts and scholars, and is tasked with addressing issues around antisemitism, Israel, free speech, and democracy. The Nexus Document was created to understand antisemitism in American politics in relation to Israel and Zionism. It has been praised for its nuanced sensitivity when it comes to Israel-Palestine in specifying that criticism of the Israeli government, even contentious critique, is not inherently antisemitic.

The Nexus Document also highlights the importance of considering intent and context when identifying and evaluating antisemitism, e.g. "someone's personal or national experience may have been adversely affected by the creation of the State of Israel. These motivations or attitudes towards Israel and/or Zionism do not necessarily constitute antisemitic behavior" (The Nexus Document, 2021). This emphasis on intent has been praised for acknowledging the diverse experiences of groups harmed by Zionism, such as the Palestinians, in naming that their reactions to Zionism should be understood in context of such harm. However, this emphasis has also been criticized for being a cover to promote harmful rhetoric. Extenuating circumstances such as being directly harmed by Zionism may help us understand why someone opposes Israel, but it should never excuse antisemitism. Furthermore, as StandWithUs (n.d.) has noted, prioritizing intent over impact risks excusing coded or more subtle examples of antisemitism simply because the perpetrator did not intend to be antisemitic, thus avoiding accountability.

While the Nexus Document provides important nuance, it has faced similar critique as the JDA in normalizing double standards. It states: "Paying disproportionate attention to Israel and treating Israel differently than other

countries is not prima facie proof of antisemitism" (The Nexus Document, 2021). The critiques of this point are similar to those detailed in the previous section. Such oversight, many argue, is a significant blind spot in antisemitism analysis.

From the London March 17th, 2018 rally. Image courtesy of royalty-free images from Shutterstock.

A significant limitation of the Nexus Document is its failure to define Zionism despite its repeated references to the term, as well as its assertion that "opposition to Zionism and/or Israel does not necessarily reflect specific anti-Jewish animus nor purposefully lead to antisemitic behaviors and conditions" (The Nexus Document, 2021). Such oversight weakens its ability to clarify the hotly debated question of whether or not anti-Zionism is antisemitism. There are many different definitions of Zionism and anti-Zionism held by different groups and organizations, and even Jews themselves can't seem to come to a consensus on a universal definition of Zionism (Himeles, 2024). The lack of a working definition in the Nexus Document leaves too much room for ambiguity when evaluating whether or not anti-Zionist speech and behavior crosses into antisemitism.

**Summary and Conclusion**

The ways we define and discuss antisemitism matter deeply—not only in political forums, but also in therapy rooms, classrooms, board meetings, and more. The IHRA, JDA, and Nexus definitions each attempt to address the challenge of identifying antisemitism, and each bring something valuable to the table. The IHRA definition provides broad recognition and application, but some of its vagueness means it risks being misapplied. The JDA addresses much of this vagueness, but its normalization of double standards and politicization raise concern. The Nexus Document offers nuance and balance, particularly in understanding Zionism, but also fails to define Zionism, and its reliance on intent can be seen as dismissive of unintentional antisemitism.

No framework is perfect, nor is any single framework comprehensive in addressing every relevant party's concerns. Each is inherently political, reflecting the reality of the politicization of Jewish identity. All three definitions offer insight that, when used thoughtfully, can support efforts to combat antisemitism, but each also carries risk if misused by the wrong party. Given the unique contributions and limitations of each, perhaps the most ethical and practical approach is to pursue literacy and fluency in all three. This thorough education ensures a thoughtful approach to antisemitism and empowers mental health professionals, policymakers, community leaders, and the general public to respond with integrity, compassion and nuance: qualities necessary to combat antisemitism and create lasting peace.

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# AN INTERVIEW WITH HENRY "HANK" GREENSPAN – RESEARCHER AND ARTIST ON HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

**INTERVIEWER: KOBI KABALEK**

*Henry (Hank) Greenspan is an emeritus psychologist, oral historian, and playwright at the University of Michigan who has been interviewing, writing about, and teaching about Holocaust survivors since the 1970s. Rather than obtaining a one-time testimony, Greenspan pursued multiple interviews with the same survivors over weeks, months, and-with a few survivors- decades. Sustained conversation led to what one survivor called "learning together" – a process of deepening exploration and collaborative interpretation. Greenspan's approach and its yield is most fully described in On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony.*

*Among his plays, REMNANTS is also based on Greenspan's fifty years of sustained conversations with survivors. The piece was first produced for radio and distributed on National Public Radio (NPR) in the U.S. As a stage play, REMNANTS has been performed at more than 300 venues worldwide. Greenspan's most recent play, "Death / Play, or the Mad Jester of the Warsaw Ghetto," dramatizes the perspective of those who did not survive – and knew they wouldn't.*

Note: The interview below was originally published in The Journal of Holocaust Research. 2024, Vol.38. 1, 74-86. Routledge. Re-printed here with permission.

**Kabalek:** We first met when we were working on the 2014 Scholar's Forum in Dapim, "Engaging Survivors: Assessing 'Testimony' and 'Trauma' as Foundational Concepts." At that time, you were pretty critical of the way scholars have used both concepts. Is that still true?

**Greenspan:** Yes. It may be more true for "trauma' which has come to stand for virtually any bad thing that happens to people—far beyond victims (including survivors) of genocide.

A prosaic example. A couple of years ago I was asked to consult with a project titled the "trauma of the covid pandemic" for college students. I met with a group of students and asked how they would describe their pandemic experiences if they couldn't use the word "trauma." They said expectable things: fear of becoming ill, worry about others, unpredictability of the future, relative isolation and loneliness, relative helplessness, missed opportunities and occasions (family holidays, graduations, etc.), anger over covid politics and inequitable healthcare, and so on. I then asked what, specifically, would "trauma" add that was not already covered by the feelings and experiences they'd listed. The answer, for almost all of them, was nothing. The only exceptions were those who had lost loved ones without being able to be with them or even attend their funerals. And even this had more to do with grief than trauma.

Actual "trauma" is a horrific experience. It is equivalent to "shock" in physical medicine, and the endpoint of each—if not interrupted—is, literally, death. There are many other agonies that Holocaust victims endure or once endured: humiliation, betrayal, loneliness (which Améry called the essence of the experience), degradation, brutalization, helplessness, inability to help others, and, above all, loss on a scale beyond capacity to grieve. All of this may be "related to" trauma as everything is related in psychological life. But we do better in starting with particulars and etching out connections than to drown all of this under a single construct. Most simply, if everything is "trauma" then nothing is—both trauma itself and the range of other agonies endured. Henry Krystal—a founder of contemporary trauma theory, survivor, and teacher of mine—feared precisely that the use of "trauma" had become so inflated as to become meaningless.

**Kabalek:** And testimony?

**Greenspan:** I confess that I have felt both guilty and gratified when I note that colleagues in my presence become anxious when they use the word "testimony," subbing my terms like "accounts," "retelling," or "recounting." But what is often missed is that it is not an issue of terminology. It is mainly an issue of practice. Testimony is very important. It is about declaration: "This I witnessed," or "endured" or "believe"— stated "for the record," "posterity," the "archive." By contrast, retelling, as I have used it, is about process—the construction of an account rather than the account itself. In my own work, that mainly has meant sustained and collaborative exploration in contrast with declaration. It reflects my practice of meeting with the same survivors multiple times and "learning together" as Agi Rubin—a survivor and one of the closest people in my life—called it. In "learning together" what we call "testimony" is the beginning of conversation rather than the end. It is the first word rather than the last.

In practice, I often brought short excerpts from earlier interviews to later ones, and the survivors and I pored over them together. "Can you clarify that?" "What did you mean here?" and so on. As I've described, learning together in this way often led to new insights that neither the survivor nor I could have predicted beforehand or arrived at alone.

Testimony, then, is one mode of retelling—very important for documentation, postwar trials, and archives. But not every time—not even most of the time—that a survivor talks about the war are they providing "testimony."

**we do better in starting with particulars and etching out connections than to drown all of this under a single construct**

Especially when survivors reflect "off the record" and in a trusting relationship, they say many things that they would never include in a publicly accessible testimony. As I have described, sometimes these later memories and reflections can be viewed as "counter-narratives" that significantly revise, and complicate, what they shared in earlier accounts.

So, speaking generally, the argument here parallels that about trauma. Not every agony survivors know is trauma. Not every time survivors recount and reflect—especially "off the record'—is "testimony."

**Kabalek:** You are known for this practice of sustained conversations with survivors over several meetings, even for years with some people. Have all the survivors you've gotten to know wanted to do this "learning together" with you?

**Greenspan:** Absolutely not! For many survivors, giving a single testimony in whatever archival project is genug (enough). They don't want to obsess for years with someone like me! There are many reasons. Some, especially those who stopped after a single session, say it was simply too difficult. Some have said they already have said everything they could say, especially those who have written memoirs. They might say, "just read the book" or similar. It has been interesting to me that, in recent years, younger colleagues have found it more difficult than I did to engage survivors beyond a single interview. When I began, there was no obvious model of what an "interview with a survivor" was supposed to look like. So, survivors and I could make it up as we went along. Today, it appears that the single testimony model has become so presumed that survivors have a hard time believing there could be another way.

In any case, there is no question that the survivors I've come to know best are a select group. I'd say, too, that there is selectivity in all approaches. As Noah Shenker has informed us so well, each of the large archival projects has a notion of their ideal "narrators" that reflects the specific assumptions and methods of that project. And every writer about survivors I know has their "star witnesses"— a relatively small group who are quoted recurrently— chosen from the much larger number who are never cited by those working from whichever archive.

This is standard in oral history. In Sandro Portelli's wonderful oral history on Harlan County, it is clear there are a few key informants who serve as mediators with others he cites. Testimony archives are not oral history projects in that sense, but those who write from them do create a kind of collective narrative or portrait based on the relatively small number of survivors who seem to most clearly articulate the author's core arguments.

Indeed, I would go a provocative step further. Even though we were not there, there is at least a sense in which the books and articles we write that include survivors' accounts can be understood as our own "Holocaust testimony": our truth about the destruction, most usefully supported by the specific survivors (out of many others) we choose to quote. That doesn't mean, usually, that survivors are our puppets. It means, again, that we learn from and with them, and then we relay back — in our writing — what we have learned. What we relay reflects what we've heard and everything else we think we know about the history, survivors more generally, and — inevitably — what has

been most catastrophic both in our personal lives and in collective life as we perceive it.

**Kabalek:** Personal lives?

**Greenspan:** Yes, first for the survivors themselves. The dimension of my work that is most often missed is my grounding each survivor's account not only in various communal models for narrative voice and form — akin to what Pollin-Galay calls "social ecology" — but also the constellations of meaning that frame their personal lives. What is "traumatic" — being consumed by the "worst possible thing" — will vary depending on what is the "worst possible thing" for particular people. That could mean being totally abandoned, being brutally and helplessly exposed, having to witness what one should never witness, and so on. Again, not everyone's "worst nightmare" is the same, even if virtually all worst nightmares were consumed within the terror that was the Holocaust. But what frames an individual's retelling are the remnants of such meanings, even if they were overwhelmed during the destruction.

That is why the subtitle of the first edition of my *On Listening* was "Recounting and Life History." By "life history," I mean what psychologists mean: the deep structures of meaning that recurrently shape our perceptions. As a psychologist, I would call these structures of meaning, "psychodynamics." But I avoid such terminology in my writing about survivors—not because it is not useful but because I felt it would be distracting. And I could make the same interpretive points in everyday language.

If that is true of survivors, it is no less true for us who write and speak about survivors. We also bring our particular constellations of meaning, our personal lives, to the work. All this contributes to what we notice, what we emphasize, what we ignore, and so on. Nobody engages this work — or any serious, evocative work — without yearnings; fears; our personal deep memories; in short, an emotional life that matters. Note I do not say "determine." I say "matters," including sensitizing us to dimensions we might otherwise miss. Of course, we also see that in our students all the time. The nightmares they may have in our courses are their particular nightmares — what learning about the Holocaust evokes that is most nightmarish for them, as individuals. We who teach and write are not different.

**Kabalek:** So, do you think that everyone who teaches and writes about the Holocaust should be psychoanalyzed?

**Greenspan:** Ha! Not for that reason, it's too expensive and there are too many hopelessly meshuga among us! Still, we bring who we are either way. My hero William James said that every philosophy reflects, among other things, a particular person's character. No less true in Holocaust studies. Which is why we interpreters must also do better at "learning together," collaboratively building from our varying perspectives toward more inclusive insights. In general, we are not good at that, a point to which I'll return.

**Kabalek:** Great. But, first, the obvious question arises:  What happens when there isn't a survivor across the table? When they are no longer here for "learning together."

**Greenspan:** Simple answer. "Learning together" in this way is over. Period. "Learning together" requires two living people. Some things end. Not only the kind of work I pursued, but so many other ways that I and others have

had the opportunity to join our lives with survivors. Hopefully, we are mature enough to accept that reality. My students know this well. Years ago, anticipating the loss of survivors, one said, "They can't learn anything new that emerges from sustained conversation, and therefore we can't either."

And, no, I do not think one can "learn together" with an "interactive biography" or other digital invention. I do accept that many robots—probably most—could beat me in chess.

But is all lost without living survivors? Of course not. In my own courses, 90% of our work has not depended on survivors being in class. We study Levi, Améry, Delbo, Kluger, and less well-known survivor accounts in depth. We make use of video testimonies in my particularly obsessive way. I ask my students to make a written transcript of a portion of a video testimony in which I know that there is a lot going on—a lot that would usually be missed by simply watching it through.

One must listen at the pace of transcription, as I did when I transcribed my own interviews in the first years. This itself is a lesson for students — the hard, perseverant labor that genuine "listening" requires, far beyond the sentimental rhetoric with which "deep listening" is often celebrated. Meanwhile, and very gratifying to me, my sustained conversation approach has been adopted by other projects. Some of these concern survivors of other genocides — Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia — many of whom are very much with us. Equally gratifying is the fact that my approach has been used in projects aside from genocide — living with and after a range of illnesses; women's, gay, and ethnic studies; even sports! Whether it's genocide survivors or any other topic that involves interviewing, there has never been a single model of how to proceed. There are many, each with limitations and benefits.

Likewise, there is no single, definitive testimony. Each is one moment of retelling, affected by a zillion contingencies, some of which are knowable, many of which are not. That is not different for survivors than for any of us. No one tells the "whole story" about anything. We tell mutable versions. The testimony archives are very valuable collections of versions. Not more and not less.

In any case, my students don't meet with any survivors before they have already spent months immersed in survivors' recounting in memoirs, recorded interviews (including mine), and other sources. This is necessary preparation, in my view, just as I myself didn't interview any survivors until I had spent years reading memoirs, Holocaust history, and related literary and philosophic work.

So, all these other ways of learning remain very much with us, even if not with survivors directly. That is an irremediable loss. But it is not a grievous one except as it involves, for some of us, losing people who were among our closest teachers and friends. I miss some survivors every day. They are in my head and in my heart. And, often enough, in my words when I speak or write about this topic and others — especially those that concern life's meaning and lack of meaning. Within loss and grief, I go on, as most of them went on after much greater losses.

**Kabalek:** You often tell the story of your grad school professors who told you "the survivors are all dying."

**Greenspan:** Yes! And that was in 1975! It wasn't only my would-be dissertation committee. There were many in those years who were bidding survivors farewell, decades before that had demographic substance. It's an

interesting phenomenon. Terrence Des Pres, whose work deserves more attention than it currently receives, noted in the mid-70s how resistant we are to really listen to what survivors have to convey. I have often described the rhetorical ways we usher them off the stage, even while seeming to honor them. Both the pedestal and the consulting room have served, often enough, our keeping survivors at "safe distance."

Parenthetically, I think Hasia Diner overstates the case that the "silence" was a "myth" with regard to engaging survivors in the early years. Of course, the situation was complex. But I have read too many survivor diaries, written in the first years in the U.S., which precisely describe that silencing. Wiesel said the same as late as 1978, describing an "invisible ghetto" in which survivors were enclosed.

In any case, the example of the professors — who also told me in 1975 that "all the work on survivors had already been done" — has served me well. When I share it with students, I note that just because one is a professor doesn't mean you know shinola about what is not your particular field — the baroque flute, perhaps.

**Kabalek:** So, you are basically arguing that listening to survivors is not always what it seems.

**Greenspan:** Indeed. Among other things, what my experience in grad school taught me is that we are more resistant to serious listening to survivors than it may seem. I do not want to claim my own listening is somehow better than that of others. But I have argued that we often celebrate the idea of "testimony" — congratulating survivors for "giving it" and ourselves for "getting it" — rather than seriously engaging what survivors have to retell. And talking about survivors, of which there is no shortage, is not the same as sustained talk with them. As I have described in a few places, celebrating survivors may even serve as a substitute for actually engaging them, a point Ruth Kluger made as well.

**Kabalek:** Let's talk about students and your own experience as a teacher. Along with making written transcripts of portions of video testimonies, what else do you do to help them "listen to survivors" in engaged ways?

**Greenspan:** Ah, teaching, which is really the core of everything else. Not surprisingly, we engage passages slowly, obsessively, Talmudically. When we read Améry or Delbo or Levi or others, we often read passages out loud, slowly, often more than once. What does he or she mean by that? What are the possibilities?

**Both the pedestal and the consulting room have served, often enough, our keeping survivors at "safe distance."**

In general, I'd say I emphasize two prongs. On one side, I push students to take what survivors say literally rather than metaphorically, which is what they — like most of us — tend to do. So, when Améry writes that torture "overcomes the contradiction of death" does he really mean that, in torture, being alive and being dead are not mutually exclusive? I suggest that is precisely what he means. Other survivors, they learn, say the same essential thing. So here they learn that our usual categories — the living/dying distinction being only one — are often not reliable when we listen seriously to survivors. As Larry Langer often emphasizes, we have to unlearn as much as learn.

The other prong is that our own experiences from "normal life" are not entirely useless. We can't "mind meld," but we can approach. Eventually, we reach a point at which we know we can't know more. But reaching that point has to be earned rather than presumed from the start.

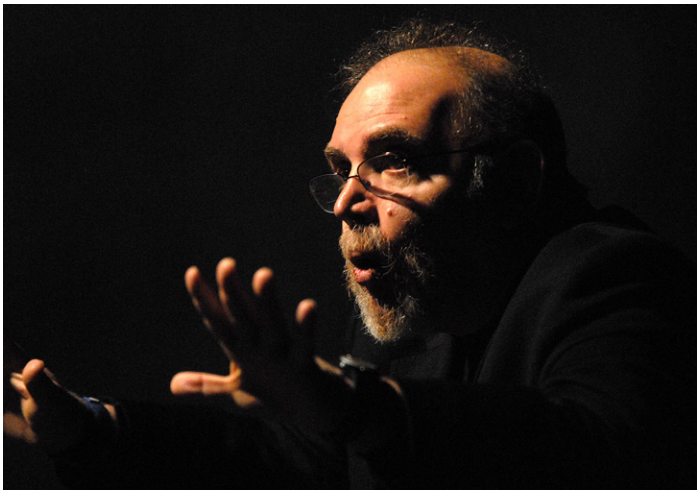
Over the years, I have developed strategies to facilitate our approach. For example, in trying to understand trauma as experienced, I ask my students to think about their experience in nightmares, and how a nightmare is different from a bad dream. Typically, we arrive at the notion that the essence of a nightmare is not only the terrifying things that are happening — the monster is approaching, the car is about to go over the cliff, and so on. It is helplessness in the face of the terrifying things: being "stuck in molasses," unable to flee, wanting to scream and nothing comes out — not a word, not a sound. Absolute helplessness in the face of imminent destruction is, indeed, the essence of trauma. It is the core of Améry's "Torture" essay. Retrieving a scream is what enables Delbo not to drown — she says "die"— within an Auschwitz nightmare after the war. It is the main theme of Henry Krystal's psychiatric understanding of trauma.

The silence that has become one of the Holocaust archetypes is thus made visceral: being literally muted by terror as happens in many nightmares. So, thinking about nightmares provides an approach to listening better to those who lived a nightmare — an approach, a suggestion, not an arrival. Understanding this bit hints at how much remains beyond.

**Kabalek:** I am reminded of the start of your play, REMNANTS, which you have been running for over 30 years, and which draws on your sustained conversations with survivors.

**Greenspan:** Yes, the first line of the play is "During the war I lost my voice." This, too, is not metaphoric. The opening monologue is spoken by a woman who was, in fact, muted by terror, as is not uncommon among kids in the midst of atrocity. She regained her voice after liberation under the care of a smart doctor who had her run in the hills and "make any sound at all." Slowly, she was able to cry, then scream, and finally speak again. "I could speak words again, after two years of no words at all."

Having established this visceral ground, she herself widens the implications, suggesting that "all our words, whatever we say about the Holocaust, are just so many different refinements of a cry, salvaged from a scream, salvaged from silence" — that is, the silence of being muted.



**Kabalek:** Does she mean all survivors or all everyone?

**Greenspan:** Great question. I leave it deliberately open, but I think audiences get that she is talking both about herself — and others who experienced the terror — as well as we "secondary witnesses." Like a lot in the play, the intent is to go deeper than

I think we usually do in understanding what it means to engage this history at all. At core, I believe our endless words are all grounded in a scream. Perhaps we talk so much in order not to simply scream. Extrapolating from that, perhaps the entire corpus of "Holocaust Studies" is one large defense against a collective scream.

**Kabalek:** So, let's talk about REMNANTS and about your playwriting in general. How does that figure into the rest — your scholarly work and your teaching, especially.

**Greenspan:** Most simply, it follows directly from both. It has certainly been a way of teaching more widely than my classroom and reaching people I'd never reach otherwise. The early radio broadcasts on NPR stations and three hundred different stage venues add up to a lot of people. But the main thing here is that I never do a performance — or show a video of a performance — without a discussion after. Those discussions often last as long as the piece itself. And here I can bring whatever I have learned about survivors and the Holocaust to bear, as relevant. As I've realized more and more, the point of performance — or most anything else we do, including our books and articles — is to get to the schmooze, questions and reflections, after the play. Certainly, for me, if the proverbial curtain came down and everyone went home, I'd consider it a pointless event. Most theatre folks don't think that way. Honestly, unless the play is a comedy, I don't understand how they can tolerate not having post-performance discussion.

Doing REMNANTS — and these discussions — has also been a kind of a thirty-year natural experiment in the ways this history and its survivors have been understood, perhaps imagined, in different settings, with different audiences, at different times. One example: Roughly ninety percent of the time, there is a question about "survivor guilt." Almost as often, there is something about "trauma" or "PTSD." But in all these years, I could count on two hands the number of times anyone has spontaneously asked about grief and how survivors contend with loss on this scale. Loss is explicit in the piece. And the,re is nothing more essential to being a survivor, at least most survivors, than loss. I'm still here, the others — a town, a life, a world — are gone.

I have speculated about why this is. Most obviously, survivors' loss, like survivors' rage, leaves us helpless. Agonized as it can be, guilt promises at least the possibility of forgiveness or atonement. Trauma may be healed by therapy of some kind. But loss? We have no sympathy cards for genocide survivors. And, of course, usually no graves, no funerals, and often no knowledge of how, when, where people were killed. Collective memorials mean something, perhaps most to mark the fact of erasure. As I wrote in a different play, they serve to help us "remember our forgetting" and "grieve our inability to grieve" — by "us," I mean all who are capable of imagining such a disappearance.

These issues are at the core of the play I reference here which is not about survivors but those who did not survive — and knew they would not. It is an old guy's topic, of course. And perhaps also a topic in the age of actual and potential extinctions in which we are living — viral, environmental, political, and beyond. Want another happy thought?

**Kabalek:** Yes, but I'm not sure I'll get one. So how did this playwriting begin?

**Greenspan:** On one level, I guess it's like why someone takes up any artistic form. For me, and especially for

REMNANTS, much is rooted in my first interviews in the 1970s and doing my own transcribing. Listening over and over again to those voices, as one must do to transcribe, they become imprinted — not only the words, but the accents, cadences, narrative style, switches in direction, and all that makes voice different from text. Again, the word "visceral" comes to mind. Embodiment. And when one knows the speaker increasingly well, they do become part of one. Their style, posture, even the smell of their surroundings — a kitchen or plush chair or screen porch — are all part of their recounting. I am working with a young actor who will eventually also do the piece solo. But inevitably, it is like any actor who meets a character in a script and must, in the end, create or recreate them. Not so for me.

Very little of that physicality can be replicated in a written text, no matter how many citations from survivors are included or how long a memoir. Video testimonies also capture only a small bit, framed, and staged in settings that "work" cinematically for whatever project.

Perhaps most basically, some of us are simply driven to show as well as tell. We not only talk about some important thing a friend may have said, but we also "do them" in some way — trying to convey, and again embody, their being as well as their words. I don't know. Maybe those ancient cave paintings are similar. Maybe it wasn't some magical way to bring in the herd. Maybe it was someone saying, "I saw one hell of an antelope today, look!!" And then he couldn't stop painting antelopes. There's a happy thought.

**Kabalek:** Indeed.

**Greenspan:** As you know, in the first years, I sent REMNANTS out as a script for others to do. It was not yet a solo performance. Some of those troupes did well. Some made me crazy. One production in Hollywood (of all places) had each survivor dressed in striped prison uniforms (even though they had survived), speaking with a poor-man's Elie Wiesel accent, and with an ersatz tattoo on their arms — probably Magic Marker. As we know, such tattoos were Auschwitz-specific. So, it was really survivor-figurines, pop iconography. At a similar show by a different cast, one of the survivors represented, my beloved Agi Rubin, sidled up to me afterward and whispered. "Never let them do it again." She then winked. "Never again!" I didn't.

**Kabalek:** So, your goal is for us to see survivors as "real people," perhaps like Vladek Spiegelman in Maus, rather than creatures from "another world."

**Greenspan:** Yes, ideally, it's seeing survivors as us! Otherwise, the destruction didn't really happen to anyone, just those poor "Holocaust people," not anyone like ourselves.

In REMNANTS, each person has a different style, tone, voice, emphasis, et cetera. But I have to say there is a certain ritualizing as well, much as I might resist it. As Geoffrey Hartman once pointed out, every one of the segments of the piece has a crafted ending, a kind of "ta-da" moment. He was right. Well-crafted or not, that reflects literary intent—what I bring to the mix—that is not "only" a survivor speaking.

So, I have to say again that REMNANTS is, in part, my own testimony, even though I was obviously not there. It is based on particular moments in my conversations with survivors when they hit on an image, or unanticipated

thought, or simply a cadence of voice that seemed to get to the core: the essence of living through and after the destruction that includes contending with us. As you know, about half the play is about listeners, and our limits as listeners, as perceived by survivors.

At the same time, if I had not spent years teaching and reading about the Holocaust, I might well not have recognized such moments—and their potential implications—when they happened. So that was part of how I crafted the piece. The monologue "Burying the Cemetery," for example, begins with the survivor asking, "How do you destroy an entire people?" That's equivalented to asking, "What is genocide?" His answer is not a summary of the Genocide Convention or a pack of atrocity images. It is a very specific and situated retelling of an act of erasure—being made to disinter mass graves, burning the corpses, pulverizing the ashes, crushing the pilfered gravestones on which the "work" happened, and spreading all of it in a meadow upon which grass seed was planted. After the grass started coming up, "it looked just like any other meadow. There was no sign that anything unusual had ever happened there. And that's how the Germans murdered the murder of my people. And how we buried the cemetery."

I had to know something about relevant history and been familiar with other similar accounts (as in Leon Wells's *The Janowska Road*), to recognize the broader implications of this survivor's memory. And the writing—the pacing, the condensing, the unfolding—reflects whatever my own literary skill in conjunction with survivors' recounting, and their own natural and intentional poetry. So, yes, that is part of why I say it is, among other things, my own Holocaust testimony.

**Kabalek:** Sounds like you feel guilty about that.

**Greenspan:** I feel challenged to sort it through. Since I heard some accounts of the same episode many times from the same survivor, choice and condensation were inevitable. I often quote one of the survivors represented who was asked by a reporter whether the play presents "exactly what she said" in our interviews. This is the woman who lost her voice. She responded, "It's not exactly what I said, but it's exactly what I meant." For a psychologist and a playwright, that's comforting stuff. But it does not resolve all the questions that pertain.

Of course, the main thing is to be honest about one's method. And it has been extremely gratifying to me that the piece has worked for such a wide range of people — from Raul Hilberg and our other distinguished colleagues to mature high school kids. That's still a kind of mystery, maybe a miracle, to me. I'll take it.

The other thing that has been most meaningful is audience response that goes beyond the piece being "moving," "powerful," "riveting," and all those crazy nice things people say. But my favorite thing to hear is "It's not what I expected." There is so much Holocaust representation since those early days in the 1970s. No question, I think, that people go to programs mostly assuming they "already know" and have "heard it all before." REMNANTS is also deliberately written to get under that fence of presumptions, which gets taller every day. Thus, the use of images and references — UFOs, Norman Cousins, and others — that survivors actually said but which are as far from the Holocaust iconic as could be. In the "How to Survive" monologue, which begins with comedic shtick, I know things are going well when audiences laugh. I assume in that moment they have forgotten what the piece is actually about. I intend that; it's a set-up. And when the Holocaust comes back, it comes back in spades. I am a tough guy.

But bringing forth the "unexpected" — if also informing — may be the best a playwright can do. Or teacher for that matter.

**Kabalek:** How about survivors? How have they responded, especially those represented?

**Greenspan:** The survivors represented have seen it many times. Their response was the most important, and, yes, it has been gratifying. Likewise, survivors in other venues. I consider them my most important "critics." If it's kosher for them, it's kosher for me. So far, it's kosher.

One thing I found especially striking. What I learned, almost by accident, is that some of the survivors represented borrowed from my recreation of their retelling in REMNANTS when they spoke in schools or similar settings. In other words, they borrowed back from me my version of the account I borrowed from them! I found that amazing and, I'll say, initially distressing. Is that kosher?

**Kabalek:** Or just another example of learning together.

**Greenspan:** Great! Yes. What I've come to realize is that we all do that all the time. We tell an important story to a friend, who may suggest some image or connection that we hadn't made, and the next time we tell that story we may well include some of what our friend heard, and without giving them a footnote! The point is that our stories — which include our "testimonies" — largely emerge between us and other people. Way before survivors spoke with me, they usually had spoken with other survivors many times. And I have no doubt that their accounts evolved over the course of these multiple retellings, borrowing from each other's thoughts, responses, similes, associations, as we all borrow in life. Once again, there is no "full story" or "final version" of any account. At least not before a due date, or the big due date in the sky.

**Kabalek:** You think a lot about aging, and death…

**Greenspan:** Really? Oh. Indeed. Part of the territory, yes? Even aside from the organ recital which I'll not play.

**Kabalek:** In our recent conversations, you have mentioned the necessity of adopting the method of learning together, or the schmooze, more broadly for scholarly work within Holocaust Studies, as well as beyond it.

**Greenspan:** Yes. I believe this follows from what I said earlier about each of us constructing our own version of the Holocaust, our own de facto testimony, however many interviews we've done or reviewed, history we've learned, attention we've paid to relevant evidence. Along with that, and careful as we may be, our work inevitably also reflects who we are — all that is deepest that personally drives us to engage this history at all and retell what we have learned.

It is precisely the inevitable differences in our perspectives and conclusions that allow us to learn together. Just as, in the best interviews, survivors and I attained realizations that were in neither of our heads beforehand, and that would never have emerged at all without deeply attentive conversation, the same can happen among colleagues.

We all know this from our most memorable conversations and from our most memorable teaching. When a seminar group, deeply responsive to each other's ideas and the material being considered, attains insights that did not exist until they put their collective heads together, the result is often amazement and euphoria. Amazement over what they discovered together. Euphoria that they were able to do it.

In general, academia is not about such shared euphoria. It is not about what happens, and can only happen, between people. Facilitating such moments finds no place on a CV and rarely contributes to tenure, promotion, and other forms of professional advancement. As scholars, most of us are "rugged individuals," and that's what is usually incentivized.

As you know, a lot of my work since retirement—along with playwriting—has been dedicated to creating groups in which deeply learning together, often amazing each other, is precisely what we do. A mid-career colleague wrote about one such group: "It is hard for me to express how much those Sundays mean to me as a professional, but most of all as a person. Maybe it is the only place where I actually can allow myself to be both professional and personal—to really be me. All the versions of me."

Strange as I know it will sound to many, I now realize that conjoining the "professional" and the "personal," mind and heart — without slighting either — has been my ideal over all these years: whether as an interviewer, a teacher, a playwright, or a colleague.

**Kabalek:** I see things very similarly, which is probably why we've been having such insightful conversations over the years. Before we conclude, I would like to suggest that along with the scholarly and educational focus on listening to the last Holocaust survivors, we can learn much from interviewing the interviewers. With the growing acknowledgment that survivors' accounts are formed by the situation in which they are recorded and the persons with whom they speak, comes also the opportunity to explore learning together about the Holocaust through the perspectives of those who interviewed survivors for many years. This conversation has been a part of that.

**Greenspan:** Thanks, comrade. It is probably inevitable that earlier work is largely forgotten in a developing field. I mentioned Terrence Des Pres who has no less to teach us now than when his seminal book came out in 1976. Indeed, what I said earlier about the significance of the scream owes a lot to Des Pres. While we may resist it, Holocaust studies — like many other fields — tends toward supersessionism. No doubt this reflects the competitive and individualistic ethos of scholarship more generally, and the incentive system as discussed. As someone who reviews a lot of manuscript and journal article submissions, I am often amazed at how little authors know about work that preceded their own and makes directly relevant arguments. Here again, learning together — across scholarly cohorts as well as within each — is the exception. And that means genuine progress is less likely to happen.

It's also fun. I found it thrilling to cite William James today, a person I first met when I was a sophomore in college. But here he is, with something he wrote 116 years ago and that I first read 55 years ago. The schmooze rolls on.

**Kabalek:** Indeed. In any event, is there anything you'd like to add for now, knowing there is no definitive testimony?

**Greenspan:** Well, you haven't asked me about my epitaph because you'd rather not indulge my morbidity. But here it is, as currently imagined: "He was often unexpected."

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# MASLOW, JUDAISM AND HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

**IN MEMORY OF ILENE SERLIN**
**BY DANIEL BURSTON**

In 2011, Ilene Serlin published a brief meditation on "The History and Future of Humanistic Psychology". It appeared in The Humanistic Psychologist mid-way through Obama's first term in office and one year into the Arab Spring. Much of her argument focused on the need to maintain and promote a psychology that is soulful and seriously engaged with spirituality and the arts. To that end, she quoted luminaries like Rollo May and James Bugenthal. But significantly, perhaps, she leaned more heavily on Abraham Maslow's ideas than she did on other sources of illumination. For example, she wrote:

...Abraham Maslow described what he called the "sickness of the soul" or "metapathologies" which result from a deprivation of "metaneeds" such as a need for beauty, meaning or joy. The task of the psychologist would be to function as a "metacounselor", or "older brother" who would remind people of their metaneeds and their interconnectedness. People who fulfill these needs are called "self-actualizers" and experience life fully with total absorption . . . Maslow noticed how the self-actualized individual is similar to what he called the "creative" individual. Since creativity is the opposite of dissociation, it also connects us to ourselves, to others and the world around us. . .

Finally, Maslow's self-actualized person would not just be . . . self-absorbed . . ., a stereotype so often levelled against humanistic psychology but would, as a result of the process of self-actualization, become interested in improving the world. In this image, the self-actualized person would integrate the intrapersonal, interpersonal, social, spiritual and aesthetic levels of experience. The self-actualized person would . . . create meaningful experiences, create and discover beauty, and live with grace and courage in the constant confrontation with the anxiety of non-being. For Maslow, who taught at Brandeis and was Jewish, self-transcendent spirituality meant living as a "mensch" with integrity and devotion to "tikkun olam" or repairing this world.

The ideal of the whole human being, not just a "psyche" or "mind" or "behavior" who takes responsibility for

cocreatng the world with God is what it meant to be fully human (Serlin, 2011, p. 429).

No doubt Maslow's ethical sensibilities and approach to spirituality were profoundly influenced by his Jewish upbringing. After all, in many ways, Maslow's approach to ethics is a clear and straightforward application of Hillel the Elder's famous saying: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me. If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?" (Pirkei Avot, 1, 14). In other words, Hillel rejected a one-sided ethics of self-affirmation (a la Nietzsche), and the equally one-sided ethics of infinite obligation towards the other (a la Levinas).

Similarly, it is no coincidence that in Maslow's concept of the self-actualized person, self-affirmation and creative self-expression dwell companionably alongside solidarity with all humankind and hatred of injustice. Far from being mutually opposed or antagonistic to one another, said Maslow, self-affirmation and solidarity with others are both requirements for optimal human flourishing. An emphasis on one to the exclusion of the other leads to distorted development—narcissism on the one hand, or moral masochism and fanaticism on the other.

However, Ilene was overreaching somewhat when she implied that being a whole human being for Maslow entails taking responsibility for cocreating the world with God. Rightly or wrongly, Maslow never invoked the Almighty in his theoretical work. Instead of interpreting Maslow here, Ilene appears to be channeling Maslow's contemporary, Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972), rather than Maslow (1908-1970) himself. In God In Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism (Heschel, 1955) Heschel argued that the Hebrew Bible is often misinterpreted as merely demanding that we be God's obedient servants, rather than willing partners and collaborators who are created in His image to cherish, sustain and celebrate His creation.

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Granted, like Maslow, Heschel was a religious pluralist who believed that no single religion has a monopoly on spiritual truth. But in many ways, Maslow more nearly resembled Heschel's good friend, Mordechai Kaplan, who sought to secularize Jewish culture, and deemed the belief in God to be altogether secondary to its ethical dimension (Kaplan, 1958). But Maslow didn't have much choice in the matter, did he? After all, when he wrote about peak experiences, self-actualization and so on, he was writing about traits, processes and experiences that are generically human, not merely Jewish. And to communicate effectively with non-Jewish audiences, and avoid the charge of religious parochialism, he had to translate his insights out of a specific religious idiom and into a new, secular frame of reference; one that was intelligible to religious and non-religious psychologists alike.

Maslow wasn't the only Jewish psychologist theorizing in this way during the 1960s, however. His older contemporary, the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, was more forthcoming about the impact of his religious upbringing on his theoretical commitments (Fromm, 1966). When Fromm speaks of the "x" experience that is common to all religious traditions, but potentially accessible to people with a non-theistic orientation as well, his kinship with Maslow is patently obvious.

Erich Fromm's impact on humanistic psychology (and Maslow specifically) has been discussed elsewhere (Joach,

2015). For now, suffice it to say that Fromm kept his distance from American humanistic psychology in part because he disliked what he took to be the exaggerated antipathy toward Freud among some proponents of the Third Force. Of course, Fromm was extremely critical of Freud's ideas and methods, too (Fromm, 1972). But in other ways, he was fiercely loyal to Freud, arguing that many of his central ideas needed to be modified, deepened and expanded, not rejected in their entirety (Fromm, 1970). That is why I characterize Fromm as a leading figure in Freud's "loyal opposition" (Burston, 1991).

Though Fromm did not affiliate with the Third Force movement, the core values that he and Maslow shared were humanistic, and in this sense, at least, Fromm was a humanistic psychologist. What do I mean by a humanistic psychology? One that affirms the fundamental unity of the human species, on the one hand, and the singularity of each and every human being on the other; one that affirms our duty to promote and defend human dignity and the well-being of individuals as ends in themselves, rather than as means to the ends of others; one that does not regard people as the passive playthings of Fate—or of language, ideology, etc.— but allows for a significant degree of agency, choice and self-determination in the formation of individual identity (Burston, 2003). In addition to the preceding, both Fromm and Maslow strongly supported democratic norms and values, opposed racial and religious bigotry, and valued a truth-loving disposition; one that shuns lies and falsehoods.

In order to understand the intellectual kinship between Fromm and Maslow, I went back and re-read Maslow's essay entitled "A Theory of Metamotivation: The Biological Rooting of the Value Life", which is chapter 23 of The Further Reaches of Human Nature, published in 1971. And I am very glad I did. I had not glanced at this essay for more than four decades and had forgotten how subtle and how powerful Maslow's writing could be.

Though Maslow's ideas about human nature are out of fashion in many quarters, if we approach them judiciously, there is still much of enduring value here. Maslow's reflections on "metaneeds" (or B needs) in chapter 23 of The Further Reaches of Human Nature are too complex and far ranging to summarize in detail here. But one thing that struck me—not for the first time—was the emphasis Maslow placed specifically on work as a vehicle for self-actualization. In optimal circumstances, said Maslow, work can become creative and playful, a source of intrinsic gratification quite apart from any material rewards it may confer. Furthermore, he asserted that for self-actualized people, their work is woven into to their sense of identity, rather than a merely a means to other ends. Conversely, work that lacks these qualities and is merely a product of necessity or external compulsion becomes mechanical and deadening. (Again, note the resemblance to Fromm.) Yet I wonder: How often do clinicians take time to explore their clients' work-history, their current work life and the meaning (or meanings) that specific roles or functions play in their psychological life anymore?

Another interesting feature in section XIII of this essay is the following observation. Maslow wrote:

The Freudians, at least in their official writings (though not in good therapeutic practice) are still reductionistic about all higher human values. The deepest and most real motivations are seen to be dangerous and nasty, while the highest human values are essentially fake, being not what they seem to be, but camouflaged versions of the deep dark and dirty. Our social scientists are just as disappointing in the main. A total cultural determinism is still the official, orthodox doctrine of many of most of the sociologists and anthropologists. This doctrine not only denies intrinsic higher motivations but comes perilously close sometimes to denying human nature itself (Maslow, 1971, p.310).

Section XIV of this same essay makes a slightly different point, arguing that we are often ambivalent towards or frankly afraid of our higher values. In this context, Maslow suggests that:

We defend ourselves against the B-Values. Repression, denial, reaction formation and probably all the Freudian defense mechanisms are available and used against the highest within ourselves (Maslow, 1971, p.311).

Re-reading these passages after many years it dawned on me that Maslow's attitude toward psychoanalysis was more judicious than I had previously supposed. After all, while he rejected Freudian drive theory, he did not jettison the baby with the bathwater but invoked the Freudian defense mechanisms to describe the strategies we use to avoid embracing (or at least tangling with) our higher values. Beyond that, Maslow reminds us that not only do we repress the "deep dark and dirty" impulses we harbor in the depths of the unconscious. We also repress those prosocial strivings that might otherwise propel us toward greater self-actualization and greater responsiveness to the needs and suffering of others—a process Maslow termed "self-deprivation". Another resemblance with Fromm! (Burston, 1991).

These reflections have a strong (if somewhat indirect) bearing on Ilene's observation that humanistic psychologists ". . . are now allies with psychoanalysis in such important matters as the template and managed care (p. 430)". Why did these old adversaries suddenly become friends? Was it simply because of the threats posed by their common enemies? No, not really. Let's remember that Ilene published her essay some forty years after Maslow's essay was published, when orthodox Freudians were now (quite literally) a dying breed, and the advent of object-relations, self-psychology and relational psychoanalysis had displaced Freudian drive theory with some very different concepts of human motivation among most psychoanalytic and psychodynamic practitioners. Did they replace the Freudian theory of the drives with Maslow's model or terminology? No. But analysts from these schools seldom belittled our artistic or our spiritual strivings as Freud and his followers had, and acknowledged their importance as domains of human experience and activity; a very significant change of perspective. Moreover, with the notable exception of Lacan's followers, by 2011, most psychoanalysts had dropped the old emphasis on "abstinence" and "neutrality" and accepted the importance of empathy (a la Carl Rogers) in the clinical setting, rendering their clinical postures and practices much more similar than they had been previously.

Another thing that struck me here were Maslow's misgivings about sociologists and anthropologists who come "perilously close" to denying the existence of human nature. This is an issue Ilene did not address, unfortunately, but one which was frequently on my mind in 2011. The tendency to cast doubt or even deny the existence of human nature among social scientists was already in evidence in the sixties and seventies, as Maslow attests. But it was intensified appreciably by the Academy's embrace of postmodernism, poststructuralism and deconstructionism in the 1980s. These closely related schools of thought spawned a lot of virulent anti-humanist rhetoric—especially, though not exclusively from Foucault and his admirers—which dismissed the very idea of human nature as an ideologically freighted conceit cooked up to conceal a hidden (racist, imperialist

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or cisheteronormative) agenda.

By way of illustration, I recall a memorable exchange I had with a (non-binary) Ph.D. student in my social psychology class in 2014. We were mid-way into the spring semester when I had gently suggested to my students that they should refrain from dismissing the idea of human nature entirely; that the idea was not entirely discredited but still defensible on several grounds. I could feel their unease gradually mounting as I spoke, when one student got up abruptly and admonished me that there is no such thing as human nature; that anthropologists had recently demonstrated that there are no universals rooted in our biology or our evolutionary history.

I forget his exact words—(yes, he preferred masculine pronouns)— or which anthropologists he cited specifically, but this student spoke with a fierce postmodern eloquence, eliciting nods and murmurs of approval from at least half the class. Having studied anthropology myself, once upon a time, I responded that if you survey the field carefully, you'll discover that every human society (without exception) has the following characteristics. First, it must make provision for its members' material needs, including food and water, clothing, shelter, etc. Second, it educates its young on how to acquire these basic necessities using the technologies available to it; how to survive, or preferably flourish, in their surrounding environment. Third, even in the absence of a nuclear family, every human society has kinship systems designed to assess degrees of consanguinity, and assigns special names, roles, functions and statuses to its members according to their place or position in the kinship nexus. Fourth, every human society has an origin story and makes in-group/out-group distinctions to explain and legitimate their sense of peoplehood or collective identity. Fifth, every culture or society employs symbols, tells stories and creates art in the form of music, singing, dance, carving, painting, bodily ornamentation, etc. Sixth, every human society develops rituals to mark significant life transitions— birth to death and points in between— and burial rituals, which they observe except when they are under extreme duress, scrambling to survive.

I concluded that though different cultures all do these things somewhat differently, the fact that they all do them points to the existence of generic human needs and attributes that we call human nature which must have some basis in our biological make-up, including practices that do not directly serve our physical survival, such as the creation of symbols, myths a and story-telling, art, rites of passage, etc. (Maslow's position, too, obviously.) Of course, we might call it something other than "human nature" if we chose, but that still begs the question of what fundamental human needs these human cultural characteristics answer to.

My student was at a loss for words and sat down quietly. But a few minutes later, he sprang up again. Although he wasn't convinced by my arguments, he said, he thanked me (somewhat disingenuously) for what he termed my "provocation"— namely, my response to his critique. He reluctantly acknowledged that I'd given him food for

thought and said that he'd get back to me about this issue sometime soon. (He never did.)

This is the most dramatic example I recall, but it was not an isolated incident. Throughout my teaching career, many doctoral students (and a sprinkling of undergrads) that I taught dismissed the idea of human nature as a purely social construction, something unmoored in our biology, a relic of a bygone era or an ideological subterfuge— and they weren't afraid to say so, either. That is why I paused for a moment when I read Ilene's concluding remark to the effect that humanistic psychology "does not need to be as defensive anymore" (p. 430.) Granted, we should not be "defensive" about our humanism. But surely there is a difference between "being defensive" and mounting a vigorous defense of your beliefs and values, something humanistic psychologists still need to do, at least in my opinion.

**. . . identity is never simply socially constructed or determined for us by external forces or influences. There is always an element of choice or human agency involved, meaning that identity is something that is co-constructed by the individual and their environment**

So much for the past, then. And what of the future? That's obviously much harder to say. In the interval between 2011 and the present, we have witnessed the rise of a multitude of new movements and ideas, including Occupy Wall St., Black Lives Matter, Critical Race Theory, Critical Social Justice Theory, Intersectionality, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives, Afropessimism, etc., many of which contributed to the "racial reckoning" that ensued in the midst of the COVID pandemic in the wake of George Floyd's murder in 2020. All of these movements have had an impact on the profession of psychology, and Ilene could not possibly have anticipated all these developments at the time. But we must take cognizance of them now, as they are part of the American intellectual landscape, even if some appear to be waning somewhat in power and influence. How do we address—or apply— them in the clinical setting?

Obviously, opinions will vary, and I do not intend to launch into detailed reflections on this matter here. Suffice it to say that the concepts, templates and new vocabularies generated by these recent movements evolved in response to deep and lingering social problems—ones we cannot, in conscience, ignore. But forgetting lessons of the past or attempting to map these perspectives onto the clinical setting can do a deep disservice to psychotherapy clients. Why?

As noted previously, humanism is predicated on the belief in the fundamental unity of the human species and the singularity and worth of every human individual. That being so, any attempt at defining identity by reducing individuals to avatars of their particular "race" or gender and/or the various intersections of these with their class, religion, etc., ignores both the universal and the uniquely singular dimensions of human experience. As a result, sadly, you can "do the work" prescribed by DEI and anti-racist activists and academics and forget that— in psychological terms, anyway— our identities are never simply a product of our "positionality", privilege or lack thereof, but are always somewhat fluid. During the course of a lifetime, our priorities and subjective sense of self shifts in response to both internal and external changes. So even if the constitutive elements of our identity— race, class, gender, faith, language etc.— remain relatively constant, the priority that we assign to one element over others changes over time, depending on the needs and challenges of the moment. For example, I may prioritize my identity as an American citizen over my party affiliation—an increasingly rare choice, nowadays. Or I may

identify first and foremost as a person of African, Muslim or Jewish heritage rather than as an American citizen. Alternatively, I may identify as a Christian above all, rather than as an American or a person of color. I may even choose to identify as female if I am biologically male (and vice versa).

In short, identity is never simply socially constructed or determined for us by external forces or influences. There is always an element of choice or human agency involved, meaning that identity is something that is co-constructed by the individual and their environment (Burston, 1996, chapter 9; Burston, 2003). The task of the humanistic and existential psychotherapists is not to elucidate or transform their patients' identities in light of templates or theories that are foreign to their clients' frame of reference, even if they may have wider relevance to society as a whole. The clinicians' job is—among other things, of course— to help them grasp the (conscious and unconscious) meanings they've assigned to the identity (or identities) they have chosen and had thrust on them; to help them assess whether, or to what extent, these identities promote their well-being, and what their choices going forward might be. If we lose sight of this fact and attempt to impose a particular sense of identity on clients based on preconceived theories, however subtle we supposed them to be, and no matter how popular or prevalent in the profession or the culture at large, we may never really meet, much less understand the human being entangled in these theoretical constructs. Indeed, if we're not careful, "doing the work" in the context of treatment risks becoming an exercise in intellectualization and self-estrangement, a process of constructing a mask, rather than facilitating a journey of authentic self-discovery.

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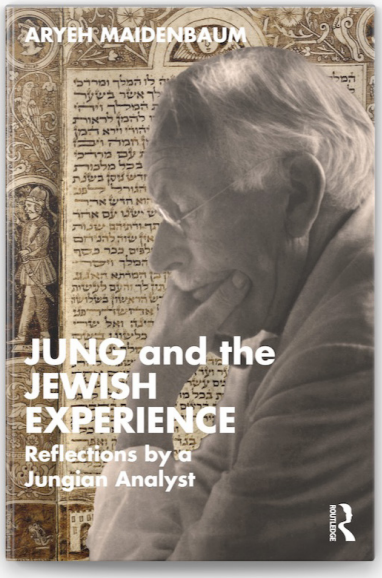
# BOOK REVIEWS




***Jung and the Jewish Experience: Reflections by a Jungian Analyst.***
by Aryeh Maidenbaum

Book Review by Barbara Cerminara

This book has garnered praise from Jungian authors and scholars across various disciplines, and for good reason. Its profound impact stems from Maidenbaum's unique and personalised blend of Jungian psychology and Jewish thought, a blend repeatedly lauded with phrases such as 'Jungian and Jewish worlds' (Perera), 'Jung's psychological theories and Jewish cultural and literary traditions' (Scheindlin), and 'Jewish Jungian perspective' (Belford Ulanov). Endorsements consistently draw attention to the book's insightful examination of archetypal themes such as the Wandering Jew, as well as the deeply personal and experiential quality of its narration. Notably, the endorsements highlight the book's courageous engagement with significant and often difficult subjects, such as the 'archetypal roots of anti-Semitism' (Scheindlin), the 'rise of anti-Semitism' (Belford Ulanov), and the persistent historical question of Jung's alleged antisemitism.

Maidenbaum's book is intended for a broad audience, reaching beyond Jungian or Jewish circles. To facilitate this, it includes a helpful chapter dedicated to clarifying Jungian and Jewish terminology. Despite its accessibility, the book also offers a compelling framework for Jungian scholars, providing a unique lens for understanding Judaism and its potential to enhance post-Jungian thought. What truly distinguishes the book is its deep appreciation for both the Jewish tradition and Jungian psychology, with these two strands so seamlessly integrated that they consistently and mutually enrich each other.

Reading like a testament, this work is a reflection penned late in life, clearly intended as a legacy. Beyond exploring the enduring power of Jewish myths through a Jungian lens, it chronicles Maidenbaum's own journey of individuation—his personal myth. Honouring his former analysts, particularly Rivkah Scharf Kluger (who trained with Jung and lived in Haifa, Israel), Maidenbaum details his necessary distancing from a somewhat restrictive Orthodox upbringing only to rediscover—through Jungian analysis, studies, and clinical practice—a profound appreciation for his Jewish roots. 'Through my Jungian work', writes Maidenbaum, 'I have come to appreciate—indeed, be proud of—this heritage' (p. 2).

The effectiveness of blending Jewish tradition and Jungian thought is vividly demonstrated in 'Dreams, the Talmud and Jung'. The chapter highlights the centrality of dreams in both Talmudic wisdom and Jungian practice. Maidenbaum presents a compelling clinical vignette about an Israeli patient deeply stuck, both literally imprisoned in Switzerland and entangled in a highly destructive marriage. Therapy had reached an impasse, which was finally resolved by the emergence of two crucial dreams, one from the analyst and one from the patient.

Maidenbaum dreamt of being a passenger in a car driven by his patient's wife, with the patient sitting next to her.

Whilst the view is magnificent, the dreamer realises that they are traveling aimlessly, with no clear destination. For Maidenbaum, the dream revealed that the therapy had stalled, with the patient's idealization of his wife dictating its lack of direction.

Sharing his dream prompted the patient to reveal his own: 'I dreamed that I was Samson and was strong enough to pull apart the bars of my cell and walk out of prison' (p. 17). This dream marked a crucial turning point. While consciously linked to Samson's strength, the dream image held a deeper message. Maidenbaum explained that Delilah, responsible for Samson's downfall, was a key element in the story. By highlighting Delilah's role, Maidenbaum was able to connect with his patient. The entrenched denial and resistance that had previously hindered their work gave way to trust and the beginnings of genuine self-understanding.

It is this very capacity for profound integration, rooted in a unique synthesis of traditions, that makes the publication of this work so timely. Against a backdrop of escalating polarisation and a disturbing rise in antisemitism, this book feels profoundly restorative. It offers a higher level of integration, speaking directly to the hope and resilience required by Jews facing adversity around the globe. Crucially, in a climate where the words 'Zion' and 'Zionism' have become almost taboo in certain circles, Maidenbaum offers a compelling counterargument, reclaiming the original meaning of these terms. This perspective reflects the experience of those Jews in the galut (exile) who share a profound, inalienable bond with the land of Israel, and especially Jerusalem. Of Jerusalem, Maidenbaum writes:

In prayer, three times a day for thousands of years, Jews have recited the hope of returning to Jerusalem, to Zion (another name for Jerusalem), and end the annual Passover seder with the words "next year in Jerusalem." For Jews, Jerusalem has always signified hope, a longing to return to ancient days when we had our own country and were whole as a people. A derivation of the name "Jerusalem" (Heb., *Yerushalayim*) can be said to be wholeness, from the root of the word *shalem* ("whole"). Without a return to Jerusalem, Jews will always be incomplete, a message etched on Jewish collective memory. (p. 131, italics in original)

Over centuries, Maidenbaum continues, Jewish poetry, writings, and prayers consistently reminded Jews to keep alive the hope of returning to Jerusalem. This dream materialized with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

Throughout the book, Maidenbaum consistently addresses the issue of antisemitism, demonstrating how Jewish history remains inextricably linked to this shadow counterpart. The persistence of the theme underscores an inescapable reality. Some myths, such as the story of the Golem of Prague—explored in the chapter 'The Golem of Prague: An Archetype'—are tinged with sadness. This giant protector of the Jewish people was apparently created by Rabbi Loew, the *Maharal*, during a particularly virulent period of Jew-hatred (the Golem eventually runs amok and is 'deactivated' by the Rabbi).

However, Maidenbaum offers a measure of relief by employing the Jungian method of amplification—drawing parallels with other myths—thereby situating the Jewish experience within the broader arc of human history. For instance, Maidenbaum finds parallels between the antisemitic trope of the Wandering Jew, condemned to roam until the Second Coming of Jesus, and the myth of Sisyphus. Both figures endure an endless, repetitive

punishment. Similarly, the creation of the Golem from clay finds its mythical counterpart in the Greek tale of Prometheus.

Resilience, hope, compensatory dreams, and humour are identified by Maidenbaum as crucial aspects of the Jewish psyche, allowing for survival through centuries of persecution (the section on humour is indeed particularly amusing). As Maidenbaum explains, Jung considered humour as a 'nonrational coping mechanism of the psyche, on both personal and collective levels' (p. 137). 'Using an alchemical term as metaphor', Maidenbaum elaborates, 'humor helps turn [...] lead into gold' (p. 137).

Maidenbaum posits that antisemitism is an archetypal phenomenon, a profound dislike of Jews with roots stretching back to the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman worlds. Understanding the archetypal essence of antisemitism—effectively, anti-Judaism—is paramount, writes Maidenbaum. These early prejudices not only amplified but also established the framework for the anti-Jewish myths that fuelled generations of persecution in Europe.

Maidenbaum's claim that antisemitism is 'archetypal' undeniably makes sense considering the widespread and enduring nature of anti-Jewish sentiment. However, this very characterization presents a significant challenge to the possibility of its eradication. If, as Jung posits, archetypes are inherited features of the human psyche, then labelling antisemitism as such implies an innate, unavoidable quality. This raises critical questions: If antisemitism is inherent, how can humanity ever truly overcome this scourge? Are we condemned to witness its perpetual recurrence?

While a full discussion of archetypes is beyond the scope here, it's worth noting the ongoing debate within Jungian circles regarding the concept since Jung's death. This discussion has prompted recent scholarship to increasingly emphasize epigenetics, suggesting that any inherited archetypal material is limited to a basic inclination toward or anticipation of certain relational patterns (Saban, 2025). When it comes to how Jews are perceived, this rudimentary tendency is powerfully fuelled by deeply ingrained and culturally transmitted prejudices, accumulated over thousands of years of Jewish existence marked by wandering, and significant encounters with diverse peoples. In this context, it might be more precise to consider the emergence of a persistent 'cultural complex' (with an archetypal core) that is activated under specific circumstances (an example would be the resurgence of Jew-hatred following the October 7th massacre).

Building on his profound understanding of Jewish experience, Maidenbaum undertakes a critical examination of historical antisemitism within the Jungian milieu in Zurich during Jung's era. This insidious prejudice culminated in the implementation of a participation quota for Jews at the Analytical Psychology Club. Though unofficially in place since the 1930s, this policy was formally instituted in 1944 and upheld with Jung's full knowledge until 1950. In the chapter 'Was Jung Anti-Semitic?', Maidenbaum details the extensive journey that led him to edit two seminal publications on this controversial subject.

This chapter doesn't cover new ground, yet it effectively portrays the author's profound personal struggle, caught between his Jewish and Jungian identities. He candidly admits that the task is 'neither an easy nor a dispassionate' one (p. 45). Maidenbaum, whose Jewish background exposed him to discrimination that almost jeopardized his qualification as a Jungian analyst, details the simplistic and unfeeling responses he encountered when questioning

a signatory of the document implementing the quota. He also highlights the resistance he faced within some Jungian circles against publishing his findings.

Regarding Jung, Maidenbaum's conclusions in the present work largely align with those he articulated in Lingering Shadows and restated in Jung and the Shadow of Anti-Semitism. In these earlier books, Maidenbaum (1991, 2002) asserted that Jung 'was neither a Nazi sympathiser nor a rabid, overt anti-Semite. Accusations along these lines are false and either unknowingly ignorant or maliciously slanderous' (2002, p. 89). Similarly, in this current work, he reiterates that Jung was 'neither a Nazi sympathizer nor the blatant anti-Semite that many have accused him of being' (p. 59). While acknowledging Jung's responsibility concerning 'collectively held anti-Semitic attitudes prevalent at the time throughout Europe' (p. 59), Maidenbaum consistently maintains that Jung 'was not anti-Semitic on a personal level' (p. 59).

A comprehensive review of the extensive literature on Jung's activities during the 1930s falls outside this scope (see among others: Jaffé, 1989; Maidenbaum, 1991, 2002; Guggenbühl-Craig, 2002; Samuels, 1993, 1996, 1998; Grossman, 1999; Kirsch, 1991, 2012; Cocks, 1997; Sherry, 2010; Lammers, 2012; Liebscher, 2015; Dohe, 2016; Cerminara, 2021; Burston, 2021). However, it is important to note that these activities present a difficult and problematic legacy for Jungians.

On June 26, 1933, a mere seven weeks after the public burning of Freud's books, Jung became president of the Berlin-based General Medical Society for Psychotherapy (GMSP). This appointment occurred as Hitler was rising to power, systematically enacting policies that stripped Jewish citizens of their rights, with the GMSP demonstrating a growing accommodation of, and eventual alignment with, Nazi ideology.

Despite internationalizing the GMSP, German members, led by Matthias Göring (cousin of the Reichsmarschall), retained dominant influence. Jung claimed his presidency aimed to protect depth psychology and Jewish psychotherapists. However, Jews could still join the German society until 1938 (Cocks, 1997). As president of this reformed Society (International General Medical Society for Psychotherapy), Jung published deeply controversial remarks, highlighting perceived differences between 'Aryans' and Jews. For example, he stated, '[t]he Jews have this peculiarity in common with women; being physically weaker, they have to aim at the chinks in the armour of their adversary' (Jung, 1934b, para. 353). He further described Jews as nomadic and inherently unable to create their own 'cultural form', instead relying on the 'host' nation for their development (para. 353). As Andrew Samuels (1993) notes, this characterization implicitly linked Jews to parasites, a dehumanizing trope central to Hitler's rhetoric.

Jung's choices are further questionable given that, as a Swiss citizen, he faced no direct personal threat and could have used his prominent international voice to condemn the regime. In contrast, some in the psychoanalytic world did speak out. Gustav Bally warned Jung against cooperating with the Nazis in 1934. In 1938, Donald Winnicott urged Mrs. Chamberlain to condemn Jewish persecution (Samuels, 1993), and Walter Benjamin critically noted that 'Jung [had] recently leaped to the rescue of the Aryan soul with a therapy reserved for it alone' (Benjamin and Scholem, 1992, p. 197). By 1937, Jung's association with Nazi Germany was so well known that Otto Rank called him an 'apostle of Nazism' upon his arrival at Yale University (cited in Sherry, 2010, p. 157).

While Jung showed private generosity towards some Jewish individuals, his public actions demonstrated a callous indifference to their fate. Though his ideas weren't entirely aligned with the Nazis, his conduct revealed an ambiguous relationship with the regime.

Regardless of his reasons, Jung's decision to discuss differences between 'Aryans' and Jews in Nazi terrain remains morally problematic. He remained president of the Society until 1940, despite becoming associated with Göring's 1933 manifesto promoting Nazi ideology, attended a 1937 parade for Mussolini as Göring's guest, and signed a 1939 document wishing Göring success, despite knowing of Nazi atrocities (Bair, 2003). Jung later admitted, 'I slipped up' (Jaffé, 1989, p. 100), but never issued a public apology.

Given these facts, Maidenbaum's analysis of Jung's antisemitism and alleged Nazi collaboration appears unduly lenient, a leniency that seems to stem from both Maidenbaum's acknowledged ambivalence toward the subject, and a wish to avoid overtly accusatory tones.

My position on this matter echoes Daniel Burston's framework from his work, Anti-Semitism and Analytical Psychology. Burston differentiates between two distinct categories of antisemitism: low-brow/high-intensity and high-brow/low-intensity, with Jung falling into the latter. The low-brow/high-intensity form is overtly 'incoherent or irrational', built upon 'bizarre conspiracy theories and lurid stereotypes' (2021, p. 7), and designed to incite the masses directly (as exemplified by figures such as Julius Streicher). Conversely, high-brow/low-intensity antisemites typically 'tend to avoid—and often profess to deplore—direct incitement' (p. 7). Their method is to marginalize and denigrate Jews through 'religious, philosophical and/or pseudo-scientific arguments' (p. 7), a method seen in the works of individuals such as Martin Heidegger. Crucially, this subtler form can offer cover or support to the less-educated, more explicit antisemites when circumstances demand.

My minor disagreement regarding Maidenbaum's discussion of Jung's antisemitism doesn't diminish the value of his book. This work masterfully synthesizes Judaism and Jungian thought, allowing these vibrant bodies of knowledge and experience to enrich one another. For Jewish readers, Maidenbaum's profound affection for Judaism and Israel offers a particularly timely and restorative experience in this turbulent climate. Far from being a forbidden subject, the Jewish homeland, Zion, is intrinsically woven into Maidenbaum's lifelong spiritual exploration —a voyage of individuation shaped by the interplay of Jewish and Jungian traditions.

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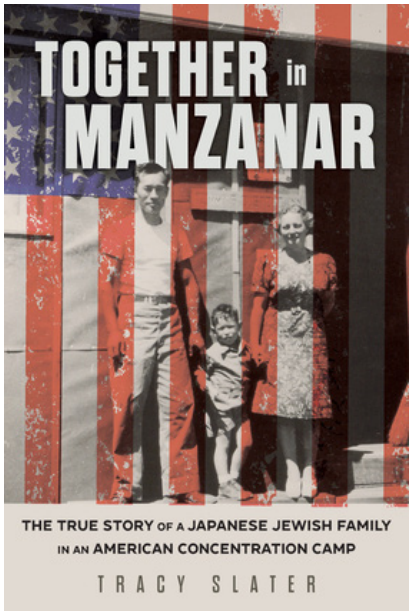
***Together in Manzanar: The true story of a Japanese Jewish family in an American concentration camp.***
***by Tracy Slater***




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

It was shocking to me when I asked several people of various ages and backgrounds whether they had ever heard of Manzanar, and most had not. Yet, I confess I too had little knowledge of this episode in American history until the actor George Takei of Star Trek fame described it several years ago. I do not recall it ever being taught in high school or encountering it in college history classes.

Manzanar was one of ten internment camps run by the federal government between 1942 and 1945. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japanese warplanes, the government declared large areas of the west coast a military zone, fearing further invasion by Japanese forces. All Japanese residents, whether US citizens or not, were compelled to leave their homes and report to internment centers for the duration of the war effort. At its peak, the centers housed 120,000 people. Manzanar held as many as 10,000. No consideration was given to due process, individual rights, or exceptions. Children as well as adults were mandated to go and to stay in these centers, including children of mixed marriages in which one parent was not of Japanese origin.

How could such a thing take place in the United States? Are we not a nation of laws? One must recall the context at that time, of the devastating events of Dec. 7, 1941, when a peaceful naval base was attacked. No US territory had ever been the victim of an invasion, and this shock sent the nation to war. Yet one wonders why only Japanese people were forced into what became American prison camps, and not Germans or Italians. Suspicion ran high about a "race" of people during a time of heightened paranoia and prejudice. If the Germans could scapegoat Jews, perhaps this effort mirrored it to some extent. What became of these people?

Tracy Slater addresses many of these questions in her well researched account of a mixed race couple whose experience in Manzanar illustrates the stresses and problems many others underwent. While it focuses on the dramatic story of one couple, the wife of Jewish origin, the husband of Japanese and their struggles during perilous times, their story illustrates the issues common to this era of history.

Elaine Buchman was the daughter of immigrant Jewish parents who had fled the pogroms of Russia at the turn of the Twentieth century. They settled initially in Manhattan, and Elaine was born in 1906. Karl Yoneda was the son of Japanese immigrants and was born in California.

The Buchmans moved to Los Angeles when Elaine was fourteen, and that is where she eventually met and married Karl. It was her second marriage, and she had a daughter by her first husband. Both Karl and Elaine became activists, influenced by labor and union movements, assuming leadership positions in left leaning organizations.

They married during the great depression and endured periods of discrimination and prejudice in the 1930's. They had a son, born in 1939, and he became a small but critical example of the dilemmas to follow.

It was a time of turmoil in Europe and in America. Antisemitism was on the rise on both continents and prejudice against Asians led to closing off immigration on the West Coast. In 1938 Japan brutalized Nanking China, and Kristallnacht took place in Germany. Fascism increased at home, fomenting suspicion across the country toward minorities. This set the stage for what was to come.

Following America's entry into war, fear of Japan mounted, culminating with Executive Order 9066, issued by Franklin Roosevelt In February, 1942 enabling the forced removal of anyone deemed a threat from the entire West Coast. As a result, anyone with even "one drop" of Japanese blood was compelled to comply. Karl Yoneda, who had been working as a longshoreman was fired and ordered to report to Manzanar, then under construction in the desert. He made the best of his situation, spinning it as his patriotic duty to report, and later appealing to join the US military.

When Karl and Elaine's son was also ordered to report, the Yonedas faced an impossible choice. Elaine had a teenage daughter to raise as well as her three year old child, and he had been diagnosed with asthma. She appealed pleading a three year old could never be a threat, but no exceptions were permitted.

The book follows Elaine's choice to enter the camp to care for her son despite the wrenching abandonment of her daughter, and the consequences for each member of this divided family. Slater provides graphic details of the camp itself and the chaos and divisions that emerged. Administering Manzanar and the other internment camps became a nightmare, as factions arose within the Roosevelt administration. In Manzanar itself, the internees clashed over loyalties, political leanings, and mistreatment.

The author details uprisings in the camp, maltreatment of the internees, an emerging cohort of Japanese loyalists, and government mismanagement and cover ups. The trauma resulted in mental health consequences for the Yoneda family. The daughter who had been left behind never fully reconciled with her family. The son had a better outcome, but not without struggle. The book follows the family through the war and its aftermath. Karl's mother, coincidentally, resided in Hiroshima and her fate following the dropping of the atomic bomb was unknown for many months. Karl himself, wanting to prove his loyalty, fought to become a soldier in the US Army, and was finally given permission. He served honorably for the duration.

Slater is nothing less than meticulous in sourcing her account. She ends the book with over fifty pages of notes and a detailed index. The book is not for the casual reader, but rather for those interested in understanding the extent to which a government will go during extraordinary times, the responses of people subjected to these measures, and the forces that propel them. It will be of keen interest to social psychologists and sociologists studying these forces, and to contemporary scholars looking for parallels to current events.

And there are parallels. I find it unlikely that the publication of this book was coincidental. Many of the problems affecting the Japanese in those days are echoed by the immigration issues seen today. The forced roundups, the separation of families, the faceless bureaucracy all are echoes of this era. Moral and political dilemmas are nothing

new, and the actions and choices people in those times made can teach us lessons, if only we pay attention.

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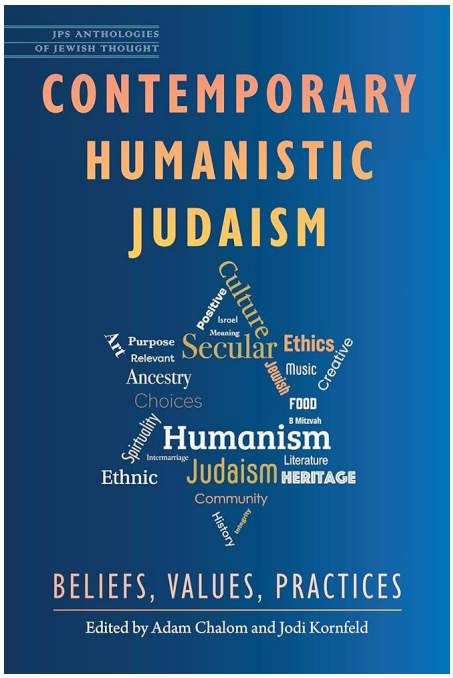
***Contemporary Humanistic Judaism***
***Edited by Adam Chalom and Jodi Kornfeld***




Book Review by Dan Warner

Our times seldom inspire awe or confidence in the human prospect. More often than not humanity is responsible for its own ills—climate disasters, perpetual wars, racial discrimination and above all, it seems, persistent inability or refusal to address the problems we create. The very idea of a "universal humanity" seems far fetched, challenged by surging nationalisms, while "universal human rights" can feel like just another fig leaf for oppression. And now, with society leaning into artificial intelligence (romantic AI relationships included), one wonders if we have finally abandoned hope of finding solace or enlightenment in one another altogether.

It is against this backdrop, with admirable chutzpah, that Humanistic Judaism declares the importance of "human power and responsibility." In *Contemporary Humanistic Judaism: Beliefs, Values, Practices*, editors and ordained Humanistic Jewish rabbis Adam Chalom and Jodi Kornfeld gather key thinkers in the movement to define its contours and celebrate the promise of our humanity.

The movement itself traces back to the 1960s, when Sherwin Wine (1928–2007) founded a congregation in suburban Detroit. Discovering Wine's thought through this volume is possibly its greatest reward. A disciplined, philosophically oriented thinker, Wine engaged the Jewish tradition with intelligence and ferocity. His seminal 1983 essay, *Judaism Without God*, is both razor-sharp and irreverent. "Finding a just God in Jewish history," he quips, "is like finding icebergs in Brazil." He surveys the many conceptions of God in Jewish thought, finding the term so elastic as to be meaningless. Attempts to redefine God in modern terms—say, as a "force for good"—he dismisses as little more than "either psychotherapy or social security."

Yet Wine's project is not primarily destructive or merely provocative. Humanistic Judaism does not dwell on God's absence—it just begins there. As Wine himself put it, Humanistic Judaism is "a healthy non-theological religion which derives its morality from human need and which finds in Jewish history a reflection of the 'absurdity' of the universe. Jews, as Jews and as individuals, are ultimately responsible for their own fates."

This vision is lived through ritual, community, and memory. Humanistic congregations gather in sanctuaries to sing, reflect, and care for one another. But their sanctuaries look different: no Torah scroll in the ark, but rather the Hebrew word Adam—humanity—displayed prominently. Liturgy, too, is rewritten. The Shema, traditionally affirming God's unity, becomes instead: "Hear, O Israel, Our People is One, Humanity is One."

This shift embodies the movement's central thesis: that meaning comes not from God, but from our relationships with one another and from the Jewish story retold. As the editors remind us, "Judaism can often be understood as a

religion of memory; we retell our stories regardless of their historicity, and we add our own stories to the collective library." In this way, identity is constructed less from literal history than from the act of narrating it.

Humanistic Judaism is also expansive in defining who counts as Jewish. As Israeli thinker Yaakov Malkin writes, "a Jew is a person who self-identifies with the Jewish people and its culture, religion, ethnicity, and heritage.... If you say you are Jewish, you are." But this openness carries obligations: once you identify as Jewish, the real question is with whom and where you create community.

Much of the book highlights this work of community-building: congregations, social media dialogues, communal prayers, and charitable activities. It is recognizably Jewish life—minus God, with humanity at the center.

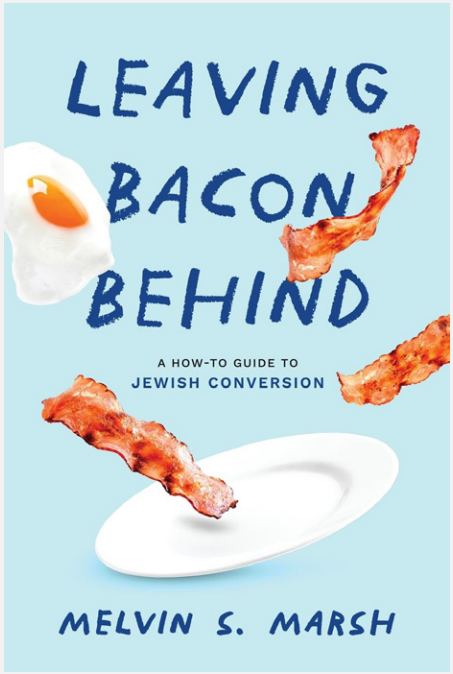
Still, one wonders: can humanity truly bear the weight of religion? Is not religion precisely what we turn to when humanity's failures overwhelm us? Today, when the humanity of "others" is so often denied, this question feels urgent. Denise Handlarski's essay notes a tension: Jews are at once a marginalized minority and a privileged group within Western society. This dual position, she argues, enables Jews to speak with authority about exclusion and injustice. Yet, one doubts whether such reflections will resonate with non-Jews entangled in harrowing or adversarial relationships with us, e.g. Palestianians whose homes and livelihoods have been destroyed by rampaging settlers, or a Gazan family reeling from loss and living on the brink of starvation.

Judaica scholar Tzemah Yoreh exemplifies the movement's attempt to wrestle with such realities. He articulates, with empathy, the Jewish experience of rootedness in Israel: the validation of heritage, the pride of studying Torah on the land of one's ancestors, the stubborn refusal to give up a "scrap of land" after centuries of persecution. He does not offer solutions, but insists on a humanistic baseline: Palestinians, too, are human beings deserving dignity. This principle, he argues, must guide Jewish congregational discussions of Israel and philanthropy.

Yoreh's essay, originally published in 2019, reflects a moment of relative calm—when security seemed assured, economies thrived, and checkpoints were coming down. Today, such optimism seems unwarranted, if not absurd, as all polls and surveys indicate that belief in the mere possibility of peace amongst Israelis is at an all-time low. One might then ask: which proposition is less believable, a peaceful coexistence between the Jews and Palestinians, or an omniscient God who has promised your family redemption through all the hardships of past generations?

And here lies the paradox. Humanistic Judaism is deeply inspiring in its affirmation of human responsibility, creativity, and moral power. Yet in moments of despair, when sense and reconciliation fail, the transcendent may still hold its allure. Perhaps, as the Psalms suggest, it remains worth praying to our God, who is demanding, mysterious, yet somehow promises hope for peace and redemption.

***Leaving Bacon Behind: A How-To Guide to Jewish Conversion by Melvin S. Marsh***




*Leaving Bacon Behind: A How-To Guide to Jewish Conversion* by Melvin S. Marsh is part memoir, part manual for those considering or undertaking conversion to Judaism. Marsh intertwines his own 16-year struggle through rabbis, rejections, and eventual acceptance with clear, practical explanations of the steps every convert must navigate. The book covers the essentials—finding a rabbi, choosing a denomination, pursuing Jewish education, participating in rituals such as the mikvah and beit din, and finally living as part of the Jewish community.

What makes this guide stand out is its focus on the "nuts and bolts" of conversion that are often left out of more personal narratives. Marsh addresses questions like how to pick a Hebrew name, what the conversion ceremony actually entails, how to celebrate holidays without a local Jewish community, and what challenges arise for those who are LGBT, disabled, or in interfaith relationships. Alongside the how-to details, he offers his own story of feeling spiritually Jewish from a young age, growing up surrounded by Jewish peers in South Florida, and struggling through years of rejection before his Reform conversion.

Ultimately, the book is both a resource and a source of solidarity. Marsh aims to reassure readers that while conversion can feel lonely and discouraging, they are not alone; many others have walked this path. By combining his personal journey with detailed, inclusive guidance, he provides prospective Jews by Choice with both practical tools and emotional support for navigating one of the most profound transformations of identity.