

CAN ISRAEL BE BOTH 'JEWISH AND DEMOCRATIC'? THE ISRAELI NATION STATE LAW, JEWISH IDENTITY & THE ONGOING STRUGGLE FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

What does it mean to be Jewish, if this classifies you in law as a member of a collective that oppresses others?

Transcript of the online panel discussion hosted by Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) with Avraham Burg, Richard Silverstein & Miri Weingarten, chaired by Adam Sutcliffe on TUES, MARCH 9, 2021 6pm - 7:30pm GMT via Zoom

Adam Sutcliffe:

The best way to introduce the topic is to introduce our speakers starting with Avraham Burg who will speak first. Avraham Burg one of the leading I would say the leading progressive thinker, in Israel today.

He was born in Jerusalem in the 1950s he had an orthodox upbringing and he's the son of Joseph Burg, who was a leading politician and at one point the leader of the National Religious political party, playing a major role in Israel's political life in the second half of the 20th century.

Avraham himself has had a very prominent public and political career in Israel within the Labour Party, primarily. In the early part of his career, he was Speaker of the Knesset in the late 1990s, he retired from public life in 2004, and since then he's been a public intellectual and a writer, the number of significant books that were detailed in the mini biography circulated before the meeting.

So we'll hear from him first. and he will focus I think on why quite recently he has petitioned through the Israeli courts to be deregistered in official terms as a Jew, to be no longer registered as a Jew, by the Israeli State.

In response to Avraham's words, we will then here from Richard Silverstein who's joining us from Seattle. And thanks to Richard It was his idea to have this meeting in the first place.

Richard Silverstein is a journalist and blogger who reports on Israeli national security issues and Diaspora-Israel relations. He's been a very significant online journalist for a long time, and he has a blog called Tikkun Olam that you can read at your leisure. So we'll hear from Richard, and then to Miri Weingarten, who was raised in Israel, moved to London, about 12 years ago and is a social justice and human rights campaigner around Israel, Palestine issues and other issues. She's a solicitor currently acting for victims of the Grenfell Tower fire, and she's been associated with Independent Jewish voices for many years as well

So those are our three speakers.

And that is the topic. So with no further ado, over to you.

Avraham Burg:

Thank you very much. I don't thank you very much everybody who put this act together, Richard and the rest of you it's a real privilege. And I'm to tell you the truth I enjoyed very much introduction and it came to mind the way once Henry Kissinger was once introduced in such an over-flattering manner and he said 'if only my parents were here, my father would have loved it and my mother would even have believed you'. So thank you very much for this beautiful description which, well, I recorded it, I will use it one day. Okay having said that I was asked behind the curtains or behind the scenes prior to the or in the preparation stage to keep my remarks, short and brief . So here they are

short and brief the title of this evening is 'Can Israel be both Jewish and democratic?' and my answer is no.

Okay, you want some explanations and details of whatever. Okay, look into it. Okay.

When you say democratic let's assume we all live together and in a kind of a community – virtual or a real one - and we try to find out how do we function we come to the conclusion eventually that I have a will and you have a will and she has a will and all of you over there have a will, and we together create a collective virtual collective will and we are our will is the source of authority of ourselves we, the humans here and now, historically, politically, we are the source of authority of ourselves we decide for ourselves who are we, what are our priorities what is yes and what is no.

This is, I will call a democratic horizontal source of authority in which we are all equal and we have to negotiate in order to get to consent an agreement about everything we do and if we don't agree, we have a system for how to agree when we disagree.

Israel delegated and some will say neglected the responsibility or deposited the responsibility to decipher to define the Jewish element in the Jewish and democratic formula to the hands of individuals and institutions that for them the source of authority is not as the human beings horizontally, but it is the vertical one and only. No society, no state, no family, no company, no organization can function with two such colliding contradicting sources of authority, a vertical and horizontal theocratic and democratic Knesset and Bei HaKnesset Halakhot, or the legislation doesn't work this way. And if this is not enough.

This, what I will call Jewish democracy, or ethnic democracy in Israel and yes we are very happy, and we are very proud, and we celebrate it proudly that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East, it's a beautiful campaign.

And since I'm a very modest person I will say it's a bit too much, Israel is really the only half-democracy in the Middle East.

And this half democracy in the Middle East has the following problem. The legitimate Israel, the one within the Green Line, the one recognized by the International Law in the international institutions has 80% Jews and 20% non-Jews.

Among the 80% Jews, I would say, 80%, if not more, believe that we the Jews are the chosen people.

The further you go to the conservative pole, to the more religious one or the more observant one - and Israel is becoming more and more conservative more and more observant and more and more traditional - the more you realize that this chosen-ness is something to do with genetics with the Jewish cop, with the Yiddish cop with the brain with the superiority. So you have the white superiority in America, and you have Hungary for the Hungarians in Hungary, and you have hope for Germany Alternative for Germany In Germany, and you have a Jewish State in Israel.

And many people believe that this chosen-ness this is something of superiority.

And the overwhelming majority of the people of the right-wing governments in Israel are fully persuaded of it.

And then comes the question.

Can the notion, or the paradigm of chosen-ness can live together with a paradigm of democracy. Chosen-ness means one is superior to the other. Democracy says everybody's equal. Can equality and superiority go to sleep together? The answer is no.

When I say this. I will say all during the years since 48, we had a kind of a very, very gentle equilibrium.

You know it from your places is liberal democracy. What is liberal democracy. Democracy is generally speaking, the expression of the will of the majority, and the liberal is the system which protects the right of the one.

So between the one and the many, we had a kind of an equilibrium, and you can live together. Yes, in the West in many places, we are witnessing an era period of a very ugly divorce between liberal and democracy, and we see the rise of elite, the rise of illiberal elements and illiberal philosophies in Washington DC up until recently, in Hungary in Turkey in Eastern European Central European in Israel.

In Israel this equilibrium was similar but not exactly. When you read the Declaration of Independence, the Megillat Ha'atsmaut of the State of Israel on one hand you have yes the Jewish State, which is a kind of a top down, definition of the collective, top down definition of the nation.

And at the same time you have a bottom up responsibility of equality with no discrimination based on gender faith, belonging, identity, whatever it is.

So in between the bottom up, bottom up, rights of the one, and the top down definition of the collective, we had this equilibrium. With the years, and it's a very interesting, fascinating process the Jewish project took over the Israel. And Israel is more and more Jewish whatever Jewish is.

And between me and you and now tonight I would confess that I do not know even one definition which defines all the Jews have defined themselves as Jews. I don't know even of one.

Nonetheless, Israel is more and more Jewish and less and less Israeli, belongs more and more to the 80% and less and less to the entire population.

In a situation like this it was a de facto, not very pleasant but de jure, I still had the Declaration of Independence with this top down bottom up equilibrium or balance.

Two years ago, the legislator, the Knesset passed a basic law which is equivalent to or equal to a constitutional amendment which is a redefinition of the Nation State or the nation of the State.

And by this totally compromising or annihilates the 48 equilibrium and creates a new de jure reality.

Defining the Jewish collective in Israel in such a way, which is not balanced, is insensitive to the minorities and their rights and departs dramatically from the classical historical definition of historic Judaism.

When you take all of this in account: the compromise of the equilibrium, the new de jure reality, the ongoing process of the last couple of decades in which the Jewish in its most ultra-orthodox

...when you have all of this in mind, the compromise of the of the of the 48 equilibrium, the change of the de facto reality into the de jure new definition of a new Jewish collective which departs from the historical definition of the Jew and the Jewish collective, you might understand the state of mind and the political state of affairs, which led me to appeal to the court in Israel and say, 'Listen, I do not argue the right of the majority of the define themselves anyway they want.

It's okay, it's legitimate. It's a democratic process, but nobody conscientiously can impose on me, a definition or a belonging, which does not define me and force me to belong to a collective I do not

feel part of. And therefore I asked the population register, which is the Ministry of Interior, in Israel, to say if this is their new definition of a Jew, I'm an old you.

I'm a Jew like my father and grandfather and mother and grandmothers who you always believe to be a Jew wherever you are, is to be different but equal, equal bit different, this is right when I was in minority.

This is extra right when we are majority now and should be sensitive to the right of the minority or minorities to be equal, but different. 10 minutes Adam.

13:14 Adam S.:

Absolutely perfect, Avraham, thank you very much indeed. Fascinating. Let us move on now to Richard Silverstein in Seattle to hear what you think is significant, interesting in what Avraham is doing. Richard, over to you, about five to six minutes if you can manage it and we'll have time for further discussion.

Richard Silverstein:

Thank you, Adam and also thank you to Independent Jewish voices for hosting this event. I'm delighted with how everything turned out and all the people around the world that are joining us.

I started with this idea from an essay I wrote on my blog, which was called 'Conflating Judaism and Zionism: bad for the Jews.'

And so what I, for me, the problem that I'm seeing is that when I was growing up, my Jewish identity based on Hebrew school and based on going to university and studying Judaica, the model that was offered to most Diaspora Jews was a liberal Zionism.

And as Avraham said so well, liberal Zionism is based on the premise that Israel can be both the Jewish State and a democratic State.

And I think that most liberal Jews accepted that. It was sort of like you took it in with your mother's milk. It was it was a holy, you know, Trinity, as you will of Jewish belief. But the problem is that over time the two elements of this, Judaism and democracy, became untenable.

I think that the problem right now is that Judaism is a religion, obviously. Zionism, which is the underpinning of Israel is a political ideology. So you're trying to posit right now Israel as both a nation and a religion or as a religious identity. And that can't be done. Especially as Israel is moving farther and farther to the right, as Avrum also pointed out. You have now an Israel in which settlers who say in 1968 were a small minority, basically I've taken over all the levers of power of the state. So, what you have right now is basically a settler-state.

Yes, it's true that settlers and maybe only 20 or 30 20-25% of the population of Israel but that's really not the arbiter of where the measure of their power. All the Knesset the right-wing majority and the Knesset is oriented completely towards satisfying the settlers. And they, their interests are completely served by the Ministries. I'm not just talking about stealing Palestinian land or settlements or anything like that. I'm talking about every major decision that happens in Israel has a Judeo-supremacist underpinning.

So, we should also expand a little bit on what Arum said about white supremacy and what I'm calling Judeo-supremacy. They really, and Arum again expanded on this very well.

They Judeo-supremacy of the settler movement, and of the contemporary State of Israel is very much in alignment with white supremacy in the United States, with the, the sort of supremacy supremacist governments in Poland, and in Hungary and the other countries that are mentioned. So, what does a Diaspora Jew do in response to this. Basically, Diaspora Jewish leaders have sat back on their on their tushies, whatever you want to call them, and they've accepted this dichotomy, they've accepted it.

They do not question this liberal Zionist ethos that we've grown up with, even though it's no longer relevant. Our leaders in the diaspora - which are the Israel lobby, in the UK the Board of Deputies and here in the United States, the Conference of Presidents of major Jewish organizations - is captured by an old concept, and it refuses to acknowledge that the basis of this concept of liberal Zionism is dead.

It refuses to acknowledge that the two-state solution, which was also the underpinning of liberal Zionism is dead. It's impossible to have a two-state solution, but no one in the leadership of any of these Diaspora communities is willing to look this in the face and say what it is and what it has become. So, to my mind, we have to work in the diaspora, to create a separation between the diaspora and Israel.

And I don't mean this in the sense of a permanent separation. I mean it in the sense of we have to say when Israel is morally wrong. And we have to say, 'We're not going to be collaborative, collaborators with this moral injustice, we're going to set a different course, we're going to set a different vision and a different image, image of Israel.'

And to that extent, I mean, this goes into what BDS represents. So, I would favour a Jewish version of BDS, which is not just political which BDS is largely a political movement.

I think that we as Jews have to have a spiritual dimension to this, we have to have an ethical dimension to this we have to use our sources our biblical or prophetic sources to say that we are going to represent a different perspective, a different Jewish perspective on what this is. And we have to say that Israel is not - I don't even call Israel Jewish in this traditional sense that diaspora Jews recognize it - I call it pagan idolatry, is the worship of what I call stones and bones, the worship of bland, the worship of power, the worship of blood and racial purity.

These to me are not Jewish values, but these are the values that underpin the State of Israel. We have to redefine what it is to be Jewish and let Israel... Israel should be a state, and it should not have anything to do with religion.

Religion is poisoning this dialogue, and we have to eradicate it from our view of what Israel is and with that. I think I'll let everyone move on.

20:49 Adam, S.

Thank you Richard, very much. Let us move straight on then to Miri Weingarten here in London, as I am. Over to you. She's muted, so I think remember to unmute before you start to speak.

21:04 Miri Weingarten

Can you hear me. Good, thanks very much that was very interesting.

I suppose, since we're talking about identity I'll just preface by explaining where I come from. I grew up, I suppose in the same sort of community as Avrum Burg did, in the religious Zionist community in

Israel. I then left religion and so today if I were to be asked to put, you know, religion, I would, I would write 'none'. I don't couch, my Judaism in religious terms, nor in national terms, which of course then begs all of the questions that are being discussed.

The other thing I'd also like to say is that I'm missing... I suppose I'm missing the Palestinian voice in terms of what their definitions would be, in terms of the State of Israel and what Judaism means what design is means etc. and it's quite difficult to find Palestinians who will talk about Jewish identity and antisemitism, either because they don't feel comfortable doing so or because they're not allowed to. An exception is Dr. Raef Zreik, that I recently listened to and I, I find his insights on this issue very, very interesting.

I'll come back to that later, but Avrum's discussion raised two questions in my mind, one in relation to what that does, in Israel in the power relationship that is Israel and the second is what that does to Jews here in the UK and I know that a lot of the people here are from the US or from Israel but also from the UK.

And, and also what it does to Jews who have sort of moved, you know moved from another country to Israel or from Israel to another country.

In terms of what it does to the power relations in Israel. I'm wondering, it's just a question in my mind rather than a criticism, but if the de jure decision to say that this is the this is a Nation-State of the Jewish people you know renders Israel as an apartheid state and in terms of law and not just practices various practices, then is it at all possible for a white person in apartheid South Africa to renounce their whiteness?

Is it possible for somebody to come to a court or to an office in to say, I want to give it up, I don't want to be this?

And it's a difficult question because in a way, in Israel if you're Jewish you are cast as the oppressor. You have no space to be very much else and so if you're a person of conscience, you're forced into action, activism attempts, which so far have failed, to achieve justice and equality. A provocation to say you know 'then I don't want to be this Jewish definition', it makes sense in terms of the internal Jewish discourse, but it makes no difference to Palestinians, the power relation remains.

And I say this, not in a negative way. I face the problem myself when seeking solidarity when I was still living in Israel, Palestine. My solidarity with Palestinians had a huge elephant in the room, because the occupation was between us and continues to be. So that's one question that was in my mind. The second question that was in my mind relates to here.

And I suppose, I suppose I'm not exactly with the identity of a British Jew born here. So, I grew up, I was the child of design is dreams of my parents. I grew up as the majority, the person who has no or thinks they have no colour and privileges are at the expense of the oppressed. and I moved from there to here and here, I seek an identity of a minority. It doesn't quite work as a religion, as I said you know my religion is none. It doesn't work as an ethnicity as some people who will have been following this sort of discussion in the UK recently. Is Jewishness and ethnicity? you know there are black Jews are of Jews, Kurdish Jews. How does that work? What is the identity? And in that question, or gap there is, there is this hijacking of Jewish identity by Israel that's how I feel, I feel as if I have no escape.

And when Raef Zreik to come back to when he was speaking, he talked always about how identity, as well as antisemitism are dependent on context. He said in 1948 Europeans saw Jews, as in the back of a refugee fleeing, whereas Palestinian soldiers with the face of a settler coming.

He also says that antisemitism before 1948 is a different thing from antisemitism after 1948, and that is because now Jews have a State. But what if I don't want that.

What if I want to say well what do you mean, I have a State, I choose to live here. Why do you tell me that I must by definition be implicated by the actions of Israel if I've left if I decided to reverse, if you like, what my parents did? And that is, and that is the question that is difficult in particular and I won't go into the, the cesspit that is the discourse and the Labour and the left or around the issues of anti-semitism, but I think that this question arises more and more urgently as time goes on. It's echoed in what in what Richard was saying about this this wish to shrug it off and to reject.

But at the same time it's almost impossible to do so. You can't really leave it. I think I don't know how much time I still have. I had a couple of other things to say –

Adam S.: maybe it also final a minute or so, yeah.

I think that I like to think, with an optimism that may not be merited that here. solidarity is possible. So here maybe Jews as a minority, through the minority identity can make common cause with other minorities, even though they know, even though I know that a Jew born here just by virtue of birth can decide to pick up and leave if things get uncomfortable here. I know that that Jews would like to not see that Israel as a sort of insurance policy for them, but it is. Whereas a Palestinian for the very same reason, can't do that; has to live with anti-Arab racism, anti-Muslim racism, anti-Palestinian sentiment, but can't... has nowhere to go, as other refugees and other minority groups here who have nowhere to go.

But despite that, I think that here solidarity is possible, or I hope so. And I would like to find a language in which to do that, in particular, at this time this horrific time of discourse of triumphalist nationalism and racism. We must find solidarity, rather than competing with each other for victimhood. We must put our focus on the perpetrators, and the mechanisms of perpetration, which are actually the same everywhere.

28:12 Adam S.:

Thank you, Miri, very much indeed. And thanks to all three of you. You've given us a huge amount to think about. So I want to try to squeeze in two rounds of discussion between the three of you on the panel before we open up to questions.

And the question I'd like to throw out to you first, which connects what you've all been talking about is, in what way might we want to think about what Avraham is doing, is in a sense the opposite of what it superficially looks like it's doing. Behind the renunciation of Jewish status is in a way of reclaiming of Jewish status is this one of them is really trying to say? that the Israeli state is not the right entity to define Jewishness, and there's another way to think about Jewishness, which is in solidarity rather than in a role of oppressor? That is universalistic rather than particularistic that stands in some way for a set of values that the Israeli State today, does not represent?

What does it mean to do that? Are we trying to reclaim some essence within Judaism? Prophetic voices, an idea of a mission to others? Is it some cultural sense of Jewishness we want to reclaim? Or, is any such notion of reclaiming problematic, because it shades into a sort of exclusivity that we might not feel happy with? And related to that question, What chance do we have of reclaiming our Jewish authenticity and meaningfulness of our way, on the left, of thinking about what it means to be Jewish, when in Britain from the Board of Deputies, similar things in America Jewish progressives

are marginalized as self-hating Jews, a miniscule minority, as an irrelevance and as inauthentic, essentially, how can we push back against that?

So perhaps if we begin with you Avraham, keep the order the same and go back to you Avrum with that question.

30:10 Avraham Burg:

My point of view is that I'm here is an Israeli, and whatever I do is a struggle within Israel about Israel, I will not say for Israel, but about the premises in which I function. Okay, it's a struggle, which is sometimes very difficult, sometimes comes at some personal prices for me, for my family etc but it's based on hope.

Okay, it's not giving up, it's not leaving the place, it's not going any other place, it is simply trying to offer Israel and the Israelis a different paradigm to whatever we have today. And this different paradigm is actually based on vis a vis what we discussed here, based on three pillars of three foundations. The first one is - and I'm sorry if you will not feel comfortable about it - Israel is NOT the state of the Jewish people. Israel is the state of the Israelis!

Okay, no state never mind where is it, what kind is it, can belong to stakeholders - which are by the way the majority - and not the stockholders. Israel belongs to the Israelis! Jews and non-Jews alike whatever the Jew is here, religion, culture, history, nation, ethnical group, whatever it is, and the Israelis are Jews and non-Jews alike. Israel belongs to the Israelis! Not to the Jewish people. You like Israel? It's nice. You want to come, welcome to Israel!

It's like an Irishman or Irish-descent person in Boston, who likes the history of his family back on the island, but that's it.

The second one is, comes the question, Who is a Zionist? So if I want to smile I would say Is a Zionist one was born to a Zionist mother? Well, not sure Shas and Agudath Israel and whatever will give this Zionist halachic permission to define this way a Zionist, but I will say as follows:

You look at the elections today in Israel. So you have two camps in Israel you have Bibi and "Rak lo Bibi" (Bibi and anybody but Bibi), which means Netanyahu defines one hundred percent of the field: those who support him, and those who oppose him.

So, when they asked me Are you a Zionist? A non-Zionist a post-Zionist an anti-Zionist? I say, I don't want Zionism to define me. I have a different definition.

And the way I deal with it is as follows. Zionism was a necessary movement to transform as a scaffolding, the Jewish people from a diasporic structure to a sovereign structure. It was not easy, it was complicated. It was complicated. It had a lot of prices to pay, but by the end of the day, which is 15th of May 1948, the new structure was inaugurated. And we have a sovereign structure, we can remove the scaffolding. We do not need it anymore.

I, as an Israeli, have three names, my family name is I'm a human being like anybody else all over the world. My middle name is I'm an Israeli like the rest of the Israelis, equal to all. And my private name is, I'm a Jew, I'm a Druze, I'm a this, I'm a that, I'm a woman I'm tall, I'm short I'm whatever I am.

And between these three definitions I do not need a fourth one.

And when you say today in Israel, I'm a Zionist. I suspect, I Avraham Burg suspect that you use this terminology in order to discriminate against somebody: an Arab, an ultra-orthodox. It's a tool of exclusion, not of inclusion.

I do not need these definitions anymore, because Zionism succeeded fantastically for the Jews in 48 ended up in a tragedy for the Palestinians in 48, and from there and on started its way the very young, new nation, the Israeli nation.

Last but not least, Richard wondered what is exactly Jewish?

And I will say what is happening today in Israel is unique in Jewish history and should be undone.

We see, we are witnessing in our generation a fusion between five elements, never fused before into one.

The definition of the Israeli slash Jewish national or nationalistic is as follows: it is a fusion between power, sovereignty, territory, religion, and language.

There were times in which we spoke Hebrew, but we didn't have power. Other times we had power, but we didn't have the territories, some other times we had a territories, but we will not religion, religious, other times we were religious but we didn't have this or that, or even spoke Aramaic - listen to our Kaddish!

Never in our history were all of these five merged into one. And if you want to compromise one of them be it language be it territory be it sovereignty be it religion.

You are a Trojan horse you are a well poisoner, you are stabbing the back of the nation you are stam Avraham Burg.

So what I try to challenge is this Neo-Jew or Neo-Israeli Jew, and its new definition. In order to do this, I need one thing, as an Israeli.

I have conceptually to reintroduce elements of diaspora-ism into the national thinking. How you do it? What kind of diasporic thinking, philosophies, etc. are there to copy-paste or to adopt or to go through adaptations? That's a long intellectual debate but one thing is for sure.

The pure negation of diaspora, that Zionism based most of its identity on is actually a negation of three elements: a negation of diasporic life of yesterday and today, negation of tradition the way it used to be, and negation of any other history that occurred on the same piece of land.

And one thing to do in Israel, is to negate these negations.

Thank you very much Avrum. Richard.

38:00 Richard Sliverstein

I think when Avraham was just talking about in Hebrew is called "Zilzul Hagalut".

And I think that what we have to start saying is that this sort of hatred, this alienation, between Israel and the Diaspora, under a classical Zionist definition, which talks about the fading away, the withering away of the diaspora, in which hatred of Jews will overwhelm diaspora and cause all the Jews to come to Israel, we have to really nail that we have to kill that idea. I agree with what Avraham was just talking about. Diasporism, the diaspora has to become an equal partner in this relationship that Jews have around the world - Israeli Jews and diaspora Jews. I think also that we have a problem in the diaspora in that our traditional religion, our traditional religious life, our traditional life as Jews whether we're religious or not, has declined.

I think that if you look at studies, you're going to find that younger people are identifying less and less with the definitions of Judaism, that their parents and their grandparents had, and that is being

replaced by Zionism. Zionism has become a form of religion. If you look at the kinds of projects that Sheldon Adelson was sponsoring, Birthright and some of the other things he was doing, he has no interest in Judaism as a religion or as any form of diasporic identity. He believes that Israel has become the religion of the Jewish people. And that's why he wants to bring millions of diaspora youth to Israel because he believes that an identification with Israel is the only way that there will be continuity of the Jewish people.

And that's why I was talking earlier about why we have to figure out ways in which we can force our leaders, even if they don't want to understand that this kind of pagan idolatry of placing Israel on this religious altar is toxic and it's poisonous.

One other thing I wanted to get back to talking about in what Miri was saying. And that is, I think that what we're doing here isn't something that's on a separate track from dealing with the issue of the Palestinians, when we are dealing with the issue of the nature of the Israeli state. I think that when we are re-conceiving what it means to be Jewish, whether it be in Israel or in the diaspora. I think this re-conception is going to enable us to come back to the Palestinians to come back to the concept of what Israel should be as a state, and allow us to change the identity of Israel, so that it becomes a state for all of its citizens.

As the common notion of Azmi Bishar, I believe, put forward. Israel must be a state, not just for its Jewish citizens. Jewish citizens must not have superior rights. There must be total equality in Israel, and it means that Israel is a homeland for two peoples, not one, and it means that Judeo-supremacy has to be eradicated. And that in turn enables us to accept - or I don't know if that's the right word - all of the citizens of Israel as equal partners and not to privilege one over the other.

Thank you Richard. Miri do unmute.

41:16 Miri Weingarten

Yeah. Okay, thanks. Um, I mean I completely agree with Avrum that the solution to what is happening in Israel, Palestine must be local. It has to be rooted in the local people who live there. It has to be Jews of every stripe and Palestinians who decide, and who reach the equality to make that decision. And it's not possible from outside to do anything, I think, to make a real deep change. The fact that that that's not happening is a huge tragedy, and it may be that it will take another generation, but I do think it needs to be local. So this identity which Avrum calls Israeli I call human, because maybe Palestinians won't want the word Israeli, it doesn't really matter it, but it's the local equal identity of human being fair that will have to end this inequality that is there now.

And I also think that here, it's a completely different journey in a way if a woman is trying to escape the definition of Jewish in order to find a human identity, here, maybe we try to extract from the past or from the future, a Jewish identity, that is not hijacked by other by other types of discourses, and that is also human in the societies where we live. I see in the audience there are people from Belgium and there are people from the US and from the UK and in each of these places it'll be different in context. It's not the first time that there has been a rift among Jews, a deeply ideological rift, you know from the Hasidim and the Misnagdim, throughout all of the generations. There's always been a deep rift, but I would like it to be a real clear ideological rift as it were. So if there is a rift between Zionists, and non-Zionists, what is the alternative language that can unite people who feel otherwise and who believe otherwise. Is there an alternative discourse or is it simply, no, not Zionist? Or as opposed, you know, is it always the language of negation when racism is directed

against Jews or antisemitism? Is it always 'No! We're not X.' Is there a way of building a positive identity that escapes that? I admit that this has to do with the context in which I live today and perhaps different questions would have come up in the past, but I think that there is a need to stop just saying, 'This is bad', and to start saying what it is we do want. As I said before, I think I said before that solidarity, a language that's based on solidarity with other minorities, is a good start, because there is always a commonality in the way in which people seek to self-determine. Self-determination is individual but it's also common to other groups and if you respect others' wish for self-determination maybe also find your own. Sorry, it sounds a bit of a pompous thing but what I'm trying to say is that we sort of trapped by identity politics, and at the same time, we don't properly have an idea of what we want as an alternative.

Thank you very, very much indeed. I'd love to squeeze in another question from me, but I won't, because I really want to keep the time that we hope to dedicate for question and answer from our audience. So when I stopped speaking we will pause for two minutes, 120 seconds and I will time it to give everyone, especially on panellists, a chance to stretch, have a slug of water or something like that. It'll give you all a chance to perhaps read what's in the chat and formulate a question, and then we will resume and questions will be consolidated, so your question might not be asked in quite the form that you put it, and we will resume with responses from Richard and Miri to what you all have to say. So see you all in two minutes, not more.

47:52 Adam S.:

Hello, everybody. can you hear me? Yeah, few minutes have passed I think it's time to resume.

Lots of interesting questions have been raised. A number of them touch on history in various ways, asking whether Zionism was ever benign, whether the foundation status of the Nakba needs to be recognized before we can proceed.

So perhaps, pulling those issues together I could ask all of you, about, about the place of memory in how you see the way forward what needs to be recognized from the past maybe one way of relating this to the Jewish State's status today is Isn't it too late for us to redefine who is a Jew and whether we recognize ourselves in one definition or another?

Because we have to build peace for the future based on what has been done by Jews and in the name of Jews in the past, and our relationships to that, however we want to define ourselves in the present and future.

Maybe I could start with you, Miri and you know reverse the order from the initial speaking. Is that okay? Do unmute.

49:20 Miri W.:

Yes. Okay. I wasn't prepared for the question about memory, um,

Yeah, well I think, possibly, it's sort of the old maxim that if we don't look back and analyse things properly and honestly, then we are doomed to repeat them. I certainly think that growing up, there was this nationalization of memory, as I remember in Israel. A nationalization of the memory of persecution, through all the ages. And that sort of stopped people from having their own individual

memories of the same histories, and it was only after leaving Israel-Palestine that there was this possibility of identifying alternative histories.

So I am grateful for the possibility of doing that. There is also, at the same time, in Israel-Palestine and obliteration of Palestinian history, and somebody here mentioned Nakba and refugees and so on. And I would like to perhaps bring into the conversation in that sense that there will never be an answer to the questions that have been asked about Israel/Israel-Palestine, without refugees participating in the conversation.

And so it's not only about the future, it's also about the past that is in our present still. And, and so it's about enfranchisement as well. I think, in the framework of memory that's all I have to say I mean that had a couple of other comments, but I'll wait for later.

Sure Thank you, Richard.

Unfortunately, I missed a little bit. I came in towards the end of your statement Adam. But one thing I do want to point out about memory. And I hope this does tie into what I missed is that we haven't talked about the Holocaust very much. And I think that the Holocaust is an overwhelming memory, in terms of Israel and Zionism. I think that the Holocaust while it's of course, a tremendous tragedy in Jewish history perhaps one of the greatest ones it has subsumed everything else in Israel it's used as a weapon to dismiss and to diminish the power of critics of Israel, and it's used, sort of, to blind Israel to anything, Israeli leaders to anything that they don't want to hear.

We have to somehow say that is real needs to divorce itself from this past it doesn't need to totally deny its existence but it needs to create a separate identity, that is apart from tragedy because if you are going to make your identity defined by something like the Holocaust, you will not be able to create any identity, any healthy identity. You will not be able to reach out to Palestinians and understand the need to make them equal partners in your new state or your newly transformed state.

So I think that the Holocaust is the 800-pound elephant in the room that, in this case, unfortunately the Holocaust is too much talked about, and too much obsessed over, and we need to free ourselves from. Avrum, you've written a book called *The Holocaust is over*, so I know you have a lot of thoughts on this issue.

52:12 Avraham Burg:

It's a very augmented question and therefore, I mean I have a couple of multi-layer answers.

Let's begin with the memory machine. It's a very interesting machine.

What we tried to do is within whatever Israel of 48, we try to eradicate any left-over of any previous memory possible, of any other history but ours. When you go to Ir David (City of David) or you go to the archaeological digging there are 22 different archaeological layers of 22 different eras and periods, we expose only one: the Jewish presence over there.

When you go to Yafo, to Jaffa, up until 48, one of the most impressive Palestinian - first Turkish then Palestinian - beautiful cities, metropolitans. Now you have the Rehov Habesht, Rabi Nachman Mibraslav, Chabad - very well-known Hasidic Arabs - all the rabbis in the world, but we try to erase all the previous histories. So this is what happens in the 48 Israel. Then comes 67 Israel. Wherever we acquired let's put it like this in 67, and there it's a permanent reminder of the Palestinian presence. So we have one hemisphere, which is 48 Israel, which tries to forget it all and one

hemisphere, which is 67, which tries to remember it all. And it's impossible to remember and forget the Palestinians story at the same time.

Here comes, I will say the hypocrisy of the left and a few others, who say 'wow we have a beautiful formula: two-state solution. Why is it so beautiful? We give you 67 and you forget us 48.

It doesn't work this way! I mean, if you have an elephant, or a gorilla, in the room as just described, let's address it 48, 67, 29, 1882 whatever it is, but let's address it!

So how do you address it? When I come to my Palestinian and friend and he comes to me and she comes to me and say Avrum, you know, when you establish your State of Israel, in 48 you demolished 400-500 previous ancient Palestinian communities. The Nakba the tragedy. And I say, this is a trauma? Wait till you see mine! I had a Holocaust, mine is bigger! And for 70 some years we have the competition of traumas: mine is bigger, yours is bigger, mine is bigger, your own is bigger, and by this, what I do I invest a lot of efforts as an Israeli to deny the right of the other to suffer, and they invest a lot of energy to deny my right for my history.

And then for whatever future round, be it an Israeli Palestinian whatever it might be, it will start with psycho politics, before it comes to politics. Psycho politics is the recognition of the other, to have his or her emotional memory. I'm the one who stopped counting states. I do not count one state, two states, five states, I count rights. And my strategy is that I would like that every individual between the Jordan and the Mediterranean to have the rights for the right for the same rights.

Among the rights that every individual should and must have between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, is the right for a different memory.

And yes, there might be colliding, contradicting memories and narratives, and therefore the challenge is not how to ignore the past, and not how to live permanently in the past, but to say the past is the past, how do we create a better future? How do we correct the past without creating new evils and new wrongs?

And one of the ways to do it is the Berlin model. Why is Berlin such a beautiful city?

Why Berlin is such a beautiful city. Because when you walk the streets of Berlin, all of its histories are presented there: the wall, the horror, the terror, the greatness, the smallness whatever it is, every piece of its history is presented in the street, with no attempt to deny, or to eradicate or to erase any part of it.

Once you live permanently and daily and contemporarily in the past you a better democrat at the present.

And I believe this is what should be done. A shared memory space between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, which contains both the Jewish narrative and the Palestinian narrative and teaching both as much as they contradict each other. It's the only way to move onwards together.

58:30 Adam S.:

Thank you very much, if we could stay with this question of memory which is so rich and so complicated and connected also to a number of comments and questions in the chat about, in a nutshell, What about the Palestinians? If I could ask this and maybe this time we could start with Richard and then move to Miri, and then and then end with Avrum again.

Is there not a danger, with the weight of Jewish historical memory, with the amount of discussion on antisemitism, which is central to public discourse in the United Kingdom at the moment, also

elsewhere, but also with very issue that Avrum has raised about Jewish identity and who gets to define it, and how it should be defined, that we keep the conversation on ourselves, if we're Jewish, and that more and more it seems to me in the public sphere in much of the West, Jewish perspective, Jewish memories Jewish identities are to the fore. And we talk less and less about the situation in Gaza, about Palestinian refugees, and about visions for the future for Palestinians. So my question is, how can we pivot back to a focus on Palestinians, their perspectives, their needs and their futures.

And where do we want to centre that conversation. Now, our him in his autobiography *In days to come*, talks about a confederation vision of the future, a sort of Belgium solution as I like to think of it, two and two half-states like the Flemish and the Walloons in Belgium. Is that what we need to bring more to the fore? Do we need to focus more on immediate needs such as vaccines?

And how do we get to making that more of what we're thinking about and talking about in our societies? Richard.

1:00:17 Richard S.:

Well, excuse me. I think one of the most hopeful concepts that's come forward over the last few years is one called intersectionality. I think Miri may have referred to that.

I think that that notion that we as Jews need to reach out to all potential allies, whether it be the Black Lives Matter movement, whether it be the Palestinian diaspora. And we need to create a vision, a progressive vision that's, that's rooted in, it's rooted in morality, that's rooted in democracy and such values. We need to use the strength of the intersectionality to multiply the power of our analysis of what needs to happen in Israel.

That being said, I think that it's very important for us as Jews to do introspection and do self-criticism about our own identity. And that's what we've been talking about throughout this conversation. I don't think that... I think without this self-criticism of what Israel has become, of the toxic impact of Jewishness as it's defined in Zionism in Israel, without being able to separate ourselves from that toxicity, I don't think that we can come back and be the kinds of partners in that intersectional discourse that we need to be. So, to me, I think that there's two elements here that we have to work on, and that they're both equal to each other and they're both critically important.

Adam S:

Thank you, Miri.

11:02:11 Miri Weingarten:

Yes, so thanks for the question. I mean I agree, in a way. The discussion, it sort of gravitates towards an Ashkenazi Jewish discussion, all the time, doesn't it? And I remember, possibly my first political experience was after the assassination of Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin. And I remember expecting there to be some ground-breaking change as a result of it, and people reached out to each other to speak, but then it turned out that the people who are reaching out to each other to speak were Jews because there was this huge shock within the Jewish community as to the enmity between left to right, between religious and secular and somehow Palestinians disappeared completely from that discussion.

And so yes I think that really, it's to repeat really that the story of Israel-Palestine is not is no longer - if it was in the past - it's no longer a Jewish story.

It's a story of a place, a political place in which groups of people live. And, we should have equal rights. The discourse should deal with history to the extent that it continues the injustice, for which read refugees, but in a sense it needs, they need to find a new language. And the other thing that's being obliterated apart from the daily life of Palestinians, the daily realities of the vaccine apartheid, the daily continuing of this bombing of Gaza today. This stuff is being sort of pushed aside because of these discussions. But another thing that's being pushed aside is also the other Jewish identities here. I suppose I have to say here that there is a rise – I live next to Stanford Hill, where Jews are visible, visibly Jewish yes? They're not your left-wing liberal people of conscience looking for a different definition, but they're also they're not Zionists this is Satmar Hasidim, yes. And, yes, there is a rise in swastikas on synagogues, on bricks through windows and synagogues and rabbis being beaten up. So, and this is, this this comes from the right. This comes from the nationalist rise of white supremacy in Europe, and there is white supremacy in the United States that is antisemitic and there is a need, there is a need to deal with that because it's not going anywhere.

And in a sense, the horrific discussion around antisemitism the left is silencing the possibility of dealing with antisemitism in the right and in the mainstream, which is growing, and which is serving various types of interests. So, you know, in an economic downturn, this will be bound to come back, in terms of you know the bankers who rule the world and this discussion around Zionism and antisemitism is changing the subject it's wasting time, it's wasting effort, is wasting emotions and causing heartbreak and that is, ironically is leading people to forget both the Palestinians and Jews who suffer from antisemitism - real, tangible, day to day antisemitism from the right. And I'm worried about that, and that's one of the reasons why I would like to discuss alternative identities. So, for me those two silenced things need to come back to the fore.

I think there are some wonderful things that are happening here. you know so organizations like J Cole, that draw on other Jewish histories and sources in order to fight the new the resurgence of your old-school anti-semitism as well it's very, very important. and it then lends authority, moral authority to the fight against racism.

Thank you, everyone.

1:06:22 Avraham Burg:

Maybe the train is leaving the station, if not left it already.

I mean, my friend and myself, my colleague and myself tried for years to establish a real equal Arab-Jewish political partnership in order to offer the Israelis an opportunity at the ballot box to vote not according to national definitions of Jews and Arabs, but according to civil and civic politics, which is a state which is equal to all democracy, which is equal to all and then, be your identity whatever is your identity, it's none of my business as a state or as a political system.

But when we'd only have a party like this where when you listen to parties from Netanyahu and Mahmoud Abbas on one hand, to Meretz that 40% of its leading for a top five leaders local Palestinians, etc etc you say to myself, well maybe something is changing in the discourse, maybe we're moving towards a better recognition of better acceptance that was impossible, even to imagine, a couple of years ago. Therefore it leads me to the place in which you mentioned that I wrote about in my previous book. I wrote about that between us and the Palestinian we should consider a confederate or a confederative structure. The ground floor is, as I said before constitutional foundation of every one has, every person has the right for the same rights, the mezzanine floor is political entities, one is Jewish in which most of the problems of the Jewish nation

will be resolved, the other is Palestinian which most of the problems or the issues or the challenges of the policy no will be resolved and then a roof one, which is the Confederation of coordination in the joint act and shared spaces and should power etc.

Now, the more I dig into it and its part of my new book that I'm writing about is, I believe it should not begin with between Israel and Palestine, it should start differently within Israel. When I look at the corona, what covid-19 did, it exposed the hollow weakness of Jerusalem. Very central, very centrist, very muscled-up rhetorics, but so weak!

And each and every community celebrated covid independently. B'nai Brock celebrated it differently than the state of Tel Aviv, the state of Tel Aviv, different than the Canton of Um-el-Fakhem, both of them different than whatever it is and I say, isn't about time that we should think about adopting this Swiss model of Cantons on Israel of all of its communities within Israel.

That will be less central Jerusalem, much more powerful communities with negotiation and with mechanisms to arrive to consensus and agreements and how to agree to disagree between them, and once you have this, you can move on easily to beyond the green line to the Palestinian element and maybe other elements in the region. And I think that actually the corona exposed the already [ongoing] cantonization of Israel.

There, there is a potential for much more powerful local Palestinian expressions vis a vis cultural, political, and I will say almost to the level of autonomy, autonomies.

This leads me to the other question, which is the other side of the coin, the whole story of anti-semitism.

Well of course there is antisemitism in the world, yes of course the people who hate, of course there are manifestations of hate crimes etc.

But is it really what it used to be?

When the Prime Minister says, time and again we are at '38 vis a vis Iran vis a vis antisemitism. I said, What the heck? What are you talking about? Was that in 48 that we had the mightiest efforts in the region? Was it that we had 200 denied bombs?

Was there a Vatican decision of the Nostra aetate? We changed the paradigm and the dogma of the Catholic Church?! Was it a built-in refusal of any hate crime of each and every important to us government in the West? The answer is no, it's not '38. Unless you say, the State of Israel is a total failure. This is what actually Netanyahu was saying, and therefore didn't so the thing.

The answer is now, the world is a different world today. Whenever there is a hate crime. It's against Jews it's different. In the past, we almost had a monopoly over being hated.

Today we don't have a monopoly over there. Everybody hates everybody else! It's a free - it's a Milton Friedman of hatred. Okay, homophobia, xenophobia, Judo phobia Islamophobia. misogyny - you name it! Give me an identity, I'll give you a hatred.

And all of the sudden, the question is not whenever there is an expression of hate to jump to the head of the lines and no no, they hate us better.

It is something else to say how do we, all of us, create the world coalition against hatred, wherever it is Jews and non-Jews alike. And it is not all of them versus all of us. It is some of us and some of them, versus some of us and some of them, because some of us are racists, and some of us are hate criminals. And some of us are even peace criminals, settlers are peace criminals.

And therefore, when you put together the question of antisemitism on the table, remember one more thing. For years, I was persuaded like my mom, that the world is divided equally between Jews and the goyim who hate Jews - 50/50! And I realised recently by thinking by writing by talking, that the world is not my mom's division. There is a common denominator, almost a common syntax and language between Jews and anti-Semites: we both believe that the Jew is an exception.

I believe that I'm exceptional and therefore superior. He believes that I'm an exception and therefore, therefore I'm a piece of, you know what, but we both believe in Jewish exceptionalism, and I say no, the world is divided between those who believe the Jews are exceptional top or bottom, good or bad, and those who believe like me and like Miri and like many others here that the world is divided between the exceptionalists and the universalists, and we should create the coalition of the Universalists to defeat the unholy alignment of the exceptionalists.

1:12:20 Adam S.:

Thank you very much. I'd like now to ask you the three of you, two questions together about Israel, they're both taken straight from the chat. And they, they speak for themselves, and go well together because they come from different perspectives and for those pairs of questions if we could go straight back to you, Avrum and then Richard and then Miri. And then, if you do manage to be brief I hope there will be time for one final question from me, which will also be an invitation for a final word for each of you, and that will be Miri, then Richard and ending with Avrum, if that's okay. So the two questions are this. Number one:

What do you think it will take to get the majority of Jews to remove the rose-coloured glasses when looking at Israel?

And the other question: most if not all modern nation states discriminate on the basis of nationality. What is so egregiously, what is so particularly terrible then about the nation state law of Israel, compared to other states? Avrum would you be happy to start? I didn't understand the first question – it was too English for me!

How can we get most Jews, Zionist Jews to not idealize Israel, based on a false perception of Israel, how do we change their minds? Perhaps the second question is in that category.

1:15:42 Avraham Burg:

The first is easy. We Jews, and especially we Israelis, we listen very good and we understand very well once we are traumatized. As long as we're not heated by trauma, we are deaf. Okay. Only 73 led to the peace with Egypt, only the first Gulf War led to Madrid and to the International Convention, only the first Intifada led to Oslo. Only 400% of inflation of the 80s led to the openness of the market.

So as long as we're not traumatized – and I cannot tell you what the trauma will be which will break and crack the mirror, we shall continue to be blinded by the narcissistic image reflected in it.

So the challenge of people like myself and like you people is to be ready for the day after the cracks.

Adam S.:

And the Nation State law. What's wrong with the Nation State law?

Avraham Burg:

Let's say two things. The whole notion of nation, of nation state is a 19th century or 18th-19th century notion, which in many places is either finding an equilibrium between the nation and the population, between the one and the many, or getting weaker and weaker, weaker in the sense that part of its power is being drunk by multinationals, by World organizations, the World Bank, NATO, EU, you name it, but Brexit, okay, you name it, drunk up by supra-state structures, or emptied down by sub state elements be it civil society, national communities etc. The old nation-state the way we knew it at the 19th century and till the mid-20th century is not there anymore.

What Israel tries to do is a very embarrassing transformation from a state that was oriented toward the European parliamentarian, Western European parliamentarian structure, towards the East European political structure: Church-centred nationalistic symbols, and superiority of one ethnic group. This is the problem with the Nation State [law]. It moves us from British, French, German and Italian models into the Polish Hungarian, and Russian.

Adam:

That's very clear. Thank you, Richard.

Richard S.:

I think that we need to have - this is going along, I think, with what Avraham was talking about, developing into that a little bit - I think that Israeli Jews are incapable of making any sort of real transformation internally. I don't think that left to their own devices that anything significant will happen. I think it will take, as Avrum said a crisis, enormous pressure, probably from the outside. And that's why I was talking originally about the necessity of Jews in the diaspora really making their differences very clear and very strident and very assertive and withdrawing support and withdrawing approval of what Israel is and a demand that Israel become something different. I don't think only the Jewish diaspora will be able to accomplish that, but I think that we need to have international pressure coming from outside Israel that will sort of slap the Israeli Jews in the face and make them realize that they can't go on any longer. I don't know how this will happen, I don't know when this will happen, Miri was talking about it being a generation or more, that's very possible, not in our lifetimes. But I don't think internally there's any hope that this will happen. And if we want to talk about the Nation State law, it's really a confirmation that Israel is no longer in democracy, that it's, it's shed any pretence of being one, and that it's now a State of the Jews. It's a Judeo-supremacist state. And we have really, really declared, our hatred of the other, the non-Jews in Israel. We've suppressed their language, the Arabic language; we've suppressed their identity, such as it was allowed to be expressed before. It's really inscribed in stone this sort of ethno-State that that Israel has become.

Adam:

Thank you very much, Miri.

1:21:35 Miri Weingarten:

So, I suppose my answer to the first question is not with regards to Israelis, the question was about, you know, when will Zionist Jews take off the rose-tinted glasses. So, if I may respond in relation to Jews overseas, rather than Jews in Israel because Avrum and Richard have already spoken about those inside Israel. I think that the rose-tinted thing is, it's to a degree to deal with this issue of self-preservation and of seeing Israel as an insurance policy, even if it's not admitted being so. I think a lot of Jews in the world, even if they say they saw that politically they secretly are, and also never dream of going to Israel, they all secretly relieved that there is an Israel, that there's a safe haven

should anything go wrong again. And you know that that's not only selfish it's also the fruit of trauma. And, and I think that in a way that's already changing, because the way Israel behave, despite the triumphalism and its ability to get away from things with impunity, it's less certain that it leads to Jews feeling safer in Europe and in other countries in the world.

I think some Zionist Jews in Europe and in the United States are growing to see Israel as a bit more of a liability, certainly in the States. I think some of the Democratic willingness to be more critical towards Israel is not only to do with, you know,

They've reconnected with our conscience it's also to do with self-interest and understanding that that you know no Tanya was not popular.

He's popular with certain people so long as they remain in power, but you know now Trump's lost what's going to happen now. So, so, so I think, you know, there's that.

And then, there is also just education within the Jewish community to allow people to, you know, hold their own opinions and not to continue with this quite old-fashioned approach of, you know, my country right or wrong in relation to Israel from far away, from another country, that's that. In relation to discrimination in law, it's wrong everywhere.

So nationalism, legislating for nationalism, it's not specific to Israel, it's growing here, the immigration laws here get worse every Monday and Thursday, there is a there is a huge groundswell of nationalism, of resurgence of nationalism, alongside global power etc. That doesn't make it right. It's true that in Israel, it's linked to much more sort of immediacy of violence that you can see, because they're you know it's a very armed militarized conflict. There are checkpoints.

But there are invisible checkpoints here too, and there is a border policy that is murderous in Europe as well. And it's wrong, that's the only thing I can say in response to that.

Adam S.:

Thank you very much, Miri. Time for one final question, starting with Miri and Richard, then Avrum and a chance for your final word.

The question I'd like to ask is, in essence, Lenin's question what is to be done? or what can we do, and it's been well put by somebody in the chat in these terms, what can diaspora Jews of conscience - and I think that's probably how most of the people, not all, but most of the people in this zoom would describe themselves - What can diaspora Jews of conscience do to confront the problems that you the panel have identified.

Miri W.:

Well, I think, I think that just as just as some diaspora Jews wrongly feel that their safety depends on Israel. I think Israelis also feel that they have a lot of dependence on the support from the diaspora.

And I think then that gives that gives us produce leverage. And there is a possibility of making clear to Israel that they will not always be loyal to them. So if they if they choose to pass apartheid legislation, if they choose practices like vaccine apartheid, then they won't have the support of diaspora Jews. And so, you know, speaking the truth is, is probably one good thing. Another is to work very hard on trying to find ways of solidarity here, with other minorities, so that your identity is not just dependent, my identity is not just dependent on what I think or don't think about Israel, and about Zionism but I have other things to say, as a secular Jew who can't say you know religion is

what defines me, I need to find another positive definition that's based on Universalist values as a form of saying.

Thank you Miri. Richard.

Well, I think that there are specific things that we can do as Jews, or as human beings. And that is, we have to, I mean this is a this is a huge fight. This is a long-term fight that's going extend throughout our lives, and into the next generation. I think we need to oppose IRA the international Holocaust Remembrance (Association)

I can't remember what the A stands for, which is so toxic, especially in the UK but it's also being, they are attempting to import it to the US and use it as sort of a - what's the right word. It's kind of like you have to swear on the Bible and oath of allegiance to this kind of weird notion that criticism of Israel is the same as the anti-semitism, which is the definition is a perversion really a real anti-semitism.

We need to oppose that. We need to impose its application in our politics in our different countries that we live in. We need to support BDS in whatever way that we can.

And I think in the United States where I live, I think, supporting the democratic left, the group that's called the Squad in Congress. There's sort of a resurgence of a progressive vision, which is in opposition to the sort of corporatist elements of the party represented by Joe Biden and people who are in power in largely in power in DC. I think we have to support those candidates, when they run for office, and we have to support them when they're in office. I think having Palestinian Americans in Congress, I think having Somali Americans in Congress like Ilhan Omar, Rashida Talib and Alexander Alessio Cortez. This is the hope for the future. These are people who are not cowed by the Israel lobby. These are speaking, people are willing to speak truth to power.

And I think as Jews. When we speak out. We have an authenticity. We have a voice that is usually heard in the wrong way in terms of these political debates, and I think it's really important for us to speak out on social media to contribute to these candidates when they're running, or these organizations like Jewish Voice for Peace in America, and some of the ones that Miri mentioned in the UK, these need to be strengthened. These voices need to be strengthened. And we need to fight against the loudest voices in the room which are some of the elements that I was just mentioning.

Thank you Richard and finally, Avrum.

1:29:30 Avraham Burg:

You know they ask why the deliberations in the Knesset are so long. And the answer is because everything was already said, but not by everyone. So I would like to repeat what Miri and what both colleagues just said but to say it a bit differently. I will go from the practical to the very abstract. On the practical level, whomever you are, I mean, the progressive grouping, I mean I don't even know how to define it exactly and what are the borders etc stand against the permanent attempt to weaponize antisemitism in order to make it a shield, to prevent any criticism and deserved criticism against the unjustifiable policies of the State of Israel. There are some criticisms which are really nasty, which are really not good which are really coming from a very bad conscience, but some very legitimate and very healthy. Don't let the weaponization become part of you or become part of this weaponization [yourself].

The second is try to preserve and this is something... Try to stand against the following:

If you accept the notion of both the Board of Deputies and the Knesset, that Israel is the State of the Jewish people, it means the conflicts, the problems of Israel are becoming yours. So you become part of the frontline you become a combatant in a war you did not declare, and you have no impact on the decision-making, to alternate it into something else.

So if the Israeli embassy, the Board of the Deputies, Balfour House, you name it comes to you and tells you 'yes, but you have to stand with the State of Israel because it's the State of the Jewish people, demand to have the right to influence each policy. The whole essence of the democratic process is I vote for you, and you legislate over me. Non-democratic process is that I can impact your life and you cannot replace me. In a way diaspora Jews and the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, suffer from the same triumphalism and colonialism of the State of Israel, which imposes on them its policies, its conflicts, its problems, and gives neither you nor the Palestinians the right to change these policies. So if they want to impose policies and you, demand to have a voice in a vote around this table of decision making, whatever it means.

Last but not least, never stop to build and expand the domestic coalitions with the non-Jewish elements, that stand shoulder to shoulder with the same value system as you do.

This is so important for us not to become of the privileged class, not to become part of discriminating elements of society, but to be there with people, the same way we wanted others to be with us and they did not always live up to the challenge. Having said that, I will say, maybe the last sentence, the last sentence about this.

Since the end of the Second World War, Zionism has taken over all the other voices, all the other ideologies, all the other spiritualities and political organizations, it had alternative Jewish identities and alternative Jewish belongings silenced. Speak up!

Adam S.:

Thank you, Avrum. That is a very much heartfelt and important place to end. Thanks to all three of you for a discussion, which I think has been very, very intellectually stimulating, very, very wide ranging, and especially in that final round I think in political terms very energising also and valuable. Thanks to all three of you.

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