



Settler Attack on Duma, 2024. Photo by Abdullah the Palestinian via Wikimedia Commons

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Paradoxical Importance of a Terrible Time

Paul Scham

It is by now utterly clichéd to remark that things are terrible. We know that leaders from Trump to Bibi to Putin and not a few others are pursuing policies that are bringing disasters on both intended and accidental victims. Moreover, ideologies and policies that have served us as Jews and as Americans for decades or generations are demonstrating their inability to serve as guides in the current conditions.

This can be PPI's moment – in that we have for all of our 35 years of existence, questioned and pushed against seemingly established verities. With many American Jews now struggling for a more realistic understanding of Israel, without rejecting it completely, our stance is more comprehensible to many.

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Most Jews feel a connection to Israel. This can be experienced as religious, ethnic, family, heritage or otherwise. But anyone with any connection to Judaism must recognize that it is built around an ethnicity with a documented three-millennia connection to the “Land of Israel.”

I use quotation marks because the **Land of Israel** is in much of Jewish tradition an abstraction, as opposed to the **State of Israel**, which is real and must be evaluated in real-world terms. And, in those terms, it is running amok under its current government. But it is still the “Jewish state.” And if it is that, then it has a relationship to Jews around the world. But what *that* relationship should be is not determined at all by our tradition. In fact our tradition is built around exile (diaspora, galut). That was the contribution of Yohanan ben Zakkai and the other rabbis of Yavneh after the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E. We are still figuring out our relationship to a country that calls itself “the Jewish State.”

Most Jews supported the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and basked in the glorious victory of the Six Day War in 1967. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, such a victory seemed providential, even miraculous. And we understood it as a defensive war. That the entire Arab world was threatening Israel was what we understood. Israel had no choice.

Gradually, over the decades that followed, we learned about Palestinians, and how 700,000 had been dispossessed in 1948. Settlements proliferated. The Oslo peace process failed. Israel seemed uninterested in sharing the Land with a Palestinian state. We began to hear of poisonous, messianic, Jewish supremacist ideologies. October 7, 2023 happened and we were all shocked and angered. But then the war in Gaza began and went on and on and on, with Palestinian

casualty figures now over 70,000 and credible [claims of genocide that we had to take seriously](#), whether or not we choose to use the G-word.

As a baby boomer, I lived through most of this (not Israel’s establishment!) and became gripped enough by Israel to abandon my career in law and eventually become a [professor of Israel Studies](#), now retired, specializing in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and also a peace activist in Israel and Washington D.C., where I now live. Since 2017 I have been President of Partners for Progressive Israel, formerly aligned with Meretz, the most leftwing of the “Zionist” parties, and now independent.

PPI recognizes and shares the historic Jewish connection with the land of Israel but like most American Jews today, advocates a different conception of Israel, which should be supportive of the Palestinian demands for a state living in peace with Israel. We also support the ideas for a “Confederation,” between Palestine and Israel, such as those advanced by [A Land for All](#).

[An important statement](#) from the heart of the liberal rabbinic leadership was recently published by Rabbi Irwin Kula, President Emeritus of CLAL, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. Rabbi Kula states what should be obvious but what was transgressed for many years by many, if not most, American Jews and Jewish organizations: [The State of Israel is] “the realization of Jewish political agency and sovereignty - with no special right to exist other than that... it cannot serve as a vicarious Jewish identity.”

Much of the American Israel establishment has been furiously fighting back against the idea that Jews have a responsibility to oppose wrong-headed Israeli policies, such as government support of the

settler terrorism now going on in the West Bank. PPI is dedicated to fighting to “normalize” Israel. It is special for us, but has no right to transgress democratic norms in pursuit of Jewish sovereignty or superiority, which is the underlying policy of the current Netanyahu government.

There is an important shift going on among American Jews with regard to Israel that is bending towards the positions PPI has maintained for years. We support Israel, but that support also means insistence on equality before the law and an end to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the subjugation of their populations. Israel is no longer threatened by its neighbors; rather, since the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, peace with all of them has been on offer – at the price of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. A Palestinian state is the only means to guarantee Israel’s safety

I hope you will support PPI in its fight for the normalization of Israel and of our relationship with it. It will be a long struggle but it is necessary and unavoidable.

Paul

Paul

Paul Scham is president of [Partners for Progressive Israel](#). He recently retired as a Professor of Israel Studies at the University of Maryland.



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What Makes *Partners for Progressive Israel* Great?

INSIGHTS 1

By Iky Salinas

Many of you whom I have spoken with will recall that I have asked you this question. During my first month as Partners for Progressive Israel's Executive Director, I have had the pleasure of getting to know this community more deeply. Through conversations with our board members, activists, donors, longtime supporters, and others, I have gained a much deeper understanding of the many answers to this question.

While many organizations take pride in the clarity of their positions and the consensus they cultivate within their communities, I have come to believe that PPI shines for almost the exact opposite reason. Within Partners for Progressive Israel, we have a wide array of ideas and ideologies. Within our community, there are very different views of Israel, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the broader Middle East. Our community includes people who identify as Zionists, non-Zionists, post-Zionists, and even anti-Zionists.

Partners does not shine because we share a common understanding of these terms. **Rather, we shine because we look past the need for agreement on these terms in order to build a community around shared values.** What brings us together is not agreement on every question, but many of the values that lead us to wrestle with these questions in the first place: a commitment to social justice and human rights, a desire for peace and a shared society, and a belief in a future in which all people who live between the river and the sea can live with dignity and security. PPI's strength lies in its ability to hold these differences alongside the values that bring

us together. At a time of tremendous polarization, both within the Jewish community and in American society more broadly, the ability to work across differences is essential.

It is this ability to look beyond dichotomous positions, to hold multiple truths at once, and to constructively engage with complexity that makes PPI such an incredible organization, and one that deserves to grow. During my time as Executive Director, I intend to create spaces where we can move beyond the binary of Zionism versus anti-Zionism and instead engage seriously with the complexities of Israel and Palestine.

Our task is not to eliminate disagreement, but to build and grow a community capable of engaging with it constructively. In a time when many conversations about Israel and Palestine are defined by polarization, I believe PPI can offer something different: a community rooted in progressive values, capable of engaging complexity and disagreement, and contributing to a broader American conversation about Israel and Palestine grounded in mutual respect. I believe this is what PPI has always done at its best, and it is what I hope we can continue to build together.

Iky Salinas is the Executive Director of PPI and is a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts Boston, where he is researching Impact Measurement in the Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Field.



Tech2Peace: Building a Young Cohort for Peace through Cross-Border High-Tech Collaboration

By Esti Shohat Rozenfeld and Adnan Jaber



The young generation is not the future of peace. They are the present infrastructure, and ignoring that is a political choice.

In 2015, the UN Security Council adopted **Resolution 2250**, recognizing young people as essential partners in peace and security. Ten years later, we are still struggling to treat that recognition as more than words. **Over the past two years, waves of protest have emerged across the world calling for an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.** Young people are at the forefront, organizing, mobilizing, and demanding change. The scale of this movement reflects a deep gap between young people's desire to take an active, meaningful role in ending the conflict and their near-total absence from the tables where decisions about its future are made. When institutional channels remain closed, the street becomes the primary remaining space for political participation.

UN Security Council Resolution 2250 sought to confront this gap directly. For the first time, an international framework named what had long been missing from peace efforts: **young people as change-and decision-makers**, not spectators. At its core, the resolution makes a simple but demanding claim:

sustainable peace is impossible without the meaningful participation of youth in decisions that shape their lives, their communities, and their futures. It explicitly recognizes that today's generation of youth is the largest the world has ever known and that, in many conflict-affected societies, young people constitute the majority of the population.

Founded in 2018 by Israeli and Palestinian educators and facilitators, the [Tech2Peace NGO](#) was created from the belief that young people should not inherit an ongoing conflict, but, instead, help shape a different future together. While the organization was not founded as a direct response to Resolution 2250, its approach reflects the same principles: meaningful participation, shared leadership, and long-term investment in young people as partners in peacebuilding.

Resolution 2250 is built around five interconnected pillars: participation, protection, prevention, partnership, and disengagement and reintegration. Together, they acknowledge a reality peace processes too often ignore: young people are not only affected by agreements signed in negotiation rooms, they are the ones who will be asked to live them, defend them, and carry them forward long after the signatures dry. The resolution recognizes that youth must be actively engaged in shaping lasting peace because they are the ones expected to convert peace agreements into lived reality. Responsibility, in this framework, cannot be imposed from above. It must be shared. Without real partnership, there is no ownership. And without ownership, there is no peace that lasts.

This is where Tech2Peace comes in. Tech2Peace is an Israeli-Palestinian organization that brings together young Israelis and Palestinians for long-term, intensive

programs combining advanced technology training with sustained dialogue. Today, Tech2Peace is the only organization that focuses on bringing Israeli and Palestinian young adults into a sustained, cross-border, shared-society, peacebuilding framework based on joint learning, leadership, and professional collaboration. Our mission is to build a shared society by preparing a generation of young leaders who are equipped to work together across the two sides of this conflict.

Tech2Peace's work begins with intensive seminars where young Israelis and Palestinians combine facilitated dialogue with technology training in fields such as software development, artificial intelligence, and entrepreneurship. But the seminars are only the starting point. Participants become part of a long-term alumni community that continues through leadership programs, mentorship, regional gatherings, hackathons, and joint initiatives, creating ongoing opportunities to collaborate across political and geographic divides.

We do this by integrating dialogue, technology, and entrepreneurship, treating each not as an end in itself but as a tool for building trust, shared problem-solving, and real interdependence. In practice, this means our programs are built around the core principles articulated in Resolution 2250: **meaningful participation** in decision-making, **protection** through resilience and community, **prevention** through access to opportunity, **partnership** through shared leadership, and **disengagement** from violence through **reintegration** into professional and civic life. **Young people at Tech2Peace are expected to carry responsibility, make choices, and live with the outcomes of working together.**

In Hebrew, we say *Aleinu* (עלינו). In Arabic, *Aleina* (علينا), meaning **it's up to us**. They sound almost identical. Responsibility, spoken in two languages. And yet, for many young people, responsibility has long been something assigned rather than shared. Peace processes are negotiated by others, celebrated by others, and later explained to those expected to

live with their consequences. Over time, this distance does something dangerous. It does not create apathy. It creates disengagement. When young people are not treated as partners, they stop believing that participation is even possible.

Peace will not be sustained by asking young people to wait their turn. It will not be secured by managing them as beneficiaries, or by training them to inherit decisions already made. It will only be sustained when we are willing to share power, risk, and responsibility with them now. The question is not whether young people are ready. It is whether we are ready to treat them as the partners they already are.



Tech2Peace staff retreat - January 2026 - Photo by Tech2Peace

Esti Shohat Rozenfeld
is the CEO of
Tech2Peace.



Adnan Jaber is
a member of the
Tech2Peace board of
directors.



To learn more about Tech2Peace and its programs, visit their English-language [website](#), or follow them on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

By Joseph Hillyard



Israel-Palestine Peace and Solidarity Summit, Credit Gili Getz

Comparing history to today's realities reveals the cracks in the assumptions that the dominant peacebuilding approach holds. Known as "liberal peacebuilding," global entities like the UN, international NGOs, and states connect peace with democracy, institutions, and top-down processes meant to bring peace to conflict areas. But deeper analysis of many of these post conflict spaces shows that the damage was never repaired; rather, it was covered with a fresh coat of paint. Regarding Israel and Palestine, relying on the same approach risks reproducing the same flaws and failure points. This is where the recent [Israel Palestine Peace and Solidarity Summit](#) offers a different perspective on an old conflict.

Last summer, I had the privilege of participating in a program looking at the Irish and African diasporas in relation to one another. Traveling to Belfast as part of the program, I was struck by how deeply segregated the city remains. Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods were clearly marked, separated by a wall that once served as a military checkpoint. While fear of IRA bombings or violent incursions by the British army no longer stalks the people of Northern Ireland, the foundations for a shared society remain elusive.

As a progressive Black and Jewish American with family in Israel, I've been having an extended internal battle between two competing emotions: deep affection for the progressive values that I was raised with alongside



Israel-Palestine Peace and Solidarity Summit, Credit Gili Getz

growing cynicism that they retain any real meaning in our demoralizing political climate. That's why the Peace and Solidarity Summit offered such a refreshing take, working past the cynicism and binary of pro-Israel vs pro-Palestine that we in America are so stuck in.

What made the summit different was not simply that Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans were brought together. That's old hat. Rather, throughout the summit, whether it was a workshop on working across ideological divides, learning about the activism of Palestinian citizens of Israel, or informal discussions with fellow participants, there was an atmosphere of openness and a willingness to challenge existing approaches that I have found sorely lacking in other activist spaces. As Northern Ireland demonstrates, pursuing "peace" without addressing underlying inequalities threatens to reproduce the conflict in one form or another. In keeping with this, summit participants were encouraged to consider how this lesson could be applied to Israel and Palestine.

Where the summit excelled was in elevating the voices of individuals and local communities already working to create change. In a workshop with Mahmoud Zreini from [Ajyal](#), we heard about efforts to empower Palestinian citizens of Israel, encouraging them to vote while also leading grassroots initiatives to address the challenges facing Arab communities today. In another workshop, representatives from the [Protect the Harvest](#)

coalition described their work of "co- resistance," bringing activists and allies to the West Bank to provide a [badly-needed](#) protective presence for local Palestinians during the olive harvest season.



Israel-Palestine Peace and Solidarity Summit, Credit Gili Getz

These examples may seem small compared with the scale of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. But that is precisely why they matter. Peacebuilding cannot only happen at the level of governments and international institutions. It must also happen in the communities where inequality and mistrust are experienced every day.

This is the fundamental difference I see between the summit's approach and traditional liberal peacebuilding. Liberal peacebuilding often assumes that peace can be established through stronger institutions, democratic governance, and political agreements. These things matter, but institutions alone cannot repair relationships or address the inequalities that allow conflict to reproduce itself. Belfast demonstrates that the absence of widespread violence does not automatically produce a genuinely shared society.

The pragmatism presented during the summit reminded me of John Hume, one of the architects of the Good Friday Agreement and a leader of the nonviolent wing of the Irish Republican movement. In his Nobel Prize lecture, he spoke of the need to move beyond political violence and toward a future built around a shared sense of purpose. Just as Hume called for an end to sectarian bloodshed, efforts such as Protect the



Israel-Palestine Peace and Solidarity Summit, Credit Gili Getz

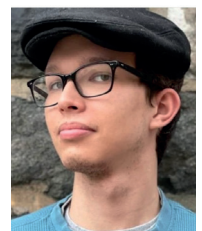
Harvest build upon generations of activism, realizing the potential of diverse coalitions rooted in the humanity of Palestinians and Israelis, without losing sight of unequal power dynamics.

It is this same commitment that motivated journalist [Oded Lifshitz](#), an alumnus of Hashomer Hatzair, to spend decades fighting for Israeli Palestinian peace until he was kidnapped by Hamas. His daughter Sharone [wrote](#) after her father's body was returned from Gaza: "Both my parents were peace activists all their lives... We know that hate and revenge cannot bring even a momentary relief from the pain." The same belief now motivates a new generation of activists such as [Mohsen Mahdawi](#), a Palestinian peace activist who has argued that a just and lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis requires diplomacy and restorative justice.

I am under no illusions that peace is around the corner, or that the upcoming elections in the US and Israel will provide the political changes that are essential if both societies are to move forward. But the Peace and Solidarity Summit reminded me that political change

does not have to begin with governments, a lesson that is particularly apposite nowadays. Instead, it can begin with people and communities already working to create something different. **A lasting peace will require political solutions, but it will also require justice, relationships, and the voices of those most directly affected by the conflict. The summit offered a reminder that these local efforts are not separate from the work of peacebuilding. They are an essential part of it.**

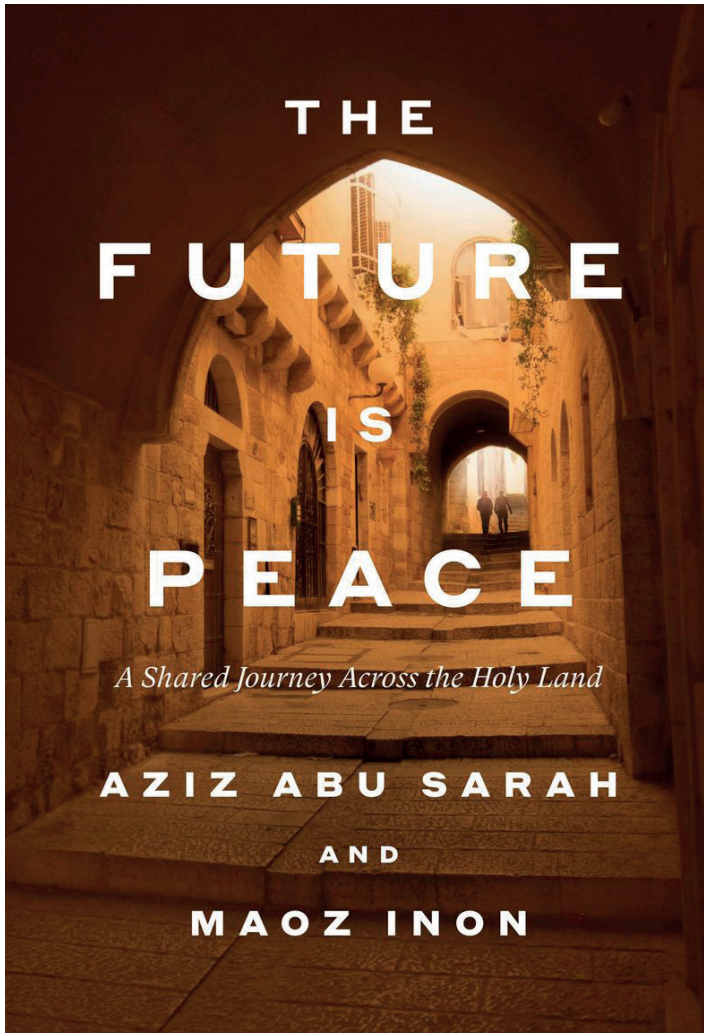
Joseph Hillyard is a writer and cultural critic whose work has been featured in publications such as Liberal Currents, Haaretz and The Forward. He is a proud Native New Yorker, hailing from Washington Heights in Upper Manhattan where he grew up in a progressive minded Black and Jewish family. He graduated with honors from NYU Tisch with a BFA in Dramatic Writing.



Aziz Abu Sarah and Maoz Inon,
*The Future is Peace: A Shared Journey
Across the Holy Land*

BOOK REVIEW

By Peter Eisenstadt



and their bodies were burnt beyond recognition. Aziz's older brother, Tayseer, was arrested during the First Intifada for rock throwing, then beaten and tortured in Israeli prisons. He was slowly murdered, in what amounted to death on the installment plan. After several years he was released, only to die of untreated internal injuries several months later. The two men came together after October 7. Aziz is a tour guide, and Maoz was an operator of hostels in East Jerusalem. As a Jew, he overcame much skepticism to establish a hostel in the largely Palestinian Israeli city of Nazareth. Both have extensive histories in joint Jewish-Palestinian organizations. The histories are accurate; the stories are often chilling. Both men look to confederation as the most optimum future for Israeli Jews and Palestinians.

The format of the book is a travelogue, a week's tour. There are many great stories, many sad stories, told by the authors and their interlocutors. The book opens in Netiv HaAshara, the moshav in which Maoz's parents were slaughtered, near the border with Gaza. Gaza is unvisitable, barely inhabitable, and looms over the book as the ultimate debacle and desecration in the Hundred Years War between Jews and Palestinians. The tour takes us to the ancient alleys of Jaffa and the broad boulevards of Tel Aviv. It then moves to East Jerusalem, where Aziz grew up, after his family abandoned their home in Bethany, in the West Bank, to obtain Palestinian residency rights in Jerusalem, and where his brother was caught up in the teenage rock throwing of the First Intifada, paying with his life. Maoz and Aziz then go to the West Bank itself, visiting beleaguered Palestinian communities in Area

This is a wonderful, powerful, and moving book, co-written by an Israeli Jew and a Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem. Most of the book consists of alternating sections, written either by Aziz or Maoz (as they refer to themselves in the book.) Both men come to the book with sad tales to tell. Like many recent books on the Middle East, the authors establish their authority to write on their subject in part by relating their tragic personal histories. Maoz's parents, Yakovi and Bilha Inon, were murdered by Hamas on October 7, and their house

C, under direct Israeli control, and the Palestinian city of Bethlehem in Area A.

The tour includes Nazareth and other places in the Galilee, and with accounts of a Palestinian visit to Yad Vashem, the legacy of Deir Yassin, and the story of Hind Rajab, the five-year old girl murdered by the IDF in Gaza (the subject of an excellent film.) The book ends with Maoz and Aziz, as peace activists, meeting Pope Francis in 2024 shortly before his death. Towards the end of the book Maoz asks its central question, “We are all suffering, all steeped in trauma and loss. How can we transcend the suffering? How can Israelis forgive October 7? How can Palestinians forgive the Nakba or the brutality of the massacre in Gaza?”

Searching for solutions to unanswerable questions through traveling in the Holy Land is a venerable genre. Perhaps no area of the world has been more travelogued, with an estimated 3,500 works written even before the 20th century, including Mark Twain’s “The Innocents Abroad” (1867), his best-selling book during his lifetime, and Herman Melville’s “Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land” (1876), his largely unread poem of 18,000 lines of iambic tetrameter: “Our New World’s worldly wit so shrewd/ Lacks the Semitic reverent mood.” To speak of this part of the world, as do Aziz and Maoz, as the “Holy Land”, is venerable and old-fashioned as well, speaking to the surprisingly Christian framework for this book written by a Jew and Muslim. Several times the authors invoke the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they will be called the Children of God.” The authors often refer to themselves as peacemakers. Although I suppose if there ever is a single state or a confederation, rather than arguing over whether to call it Israel-Palestine or Palestine-

Israel, the designation “Holy Land” has a nice ring to it. (Or my alternative neutral name, Riversea.)

But the most old-fashioned part of the title for me is the word “peace,” mentioned in the book over 300 times. Really? When I think of a better future for Jews and Palestinians, the word peace rarely comes to mind. Perhaps there will be a “rapprochement,” an “amelioration,” an “understanding,” but not “peace.” A future Tolstoy’s novel about Israel and Palestine might be called “War and More War”. Peace is a vague term, with many meanings, of course. There is the victor’s peace, “peace with honor,” the loser’s peace “peace at any price,” St. Paul’s peace that “passeth understanding,” the peacemakers blessed by Jesus, and the “peacemaker”, the popular name for the Colt .45 six-shooter beloved by sheriffs and outlaws in Hollywood westerns. And then there is the peace that according to F.W. Robinson, an Anglican divine writing in 1851 (thank you, Oxford English Dictionary, for the citation) “that is the opposite of passion, labor, and effort. Peace is that state in which there are no desires madly demanding an impossible gratification.” I am not sure what sort of desires the Rev. Robinson was writing about—one can hazard a guess—but peace between Israel and Palestine will require hard effort, difficult labor, passion. It is the epitome of a desire that will be seemingly impossible to gratify.

I am not sure if Maoz and Aziz really like the word peace either. Aziz writes sarcastically about that “magical word peace,” stating that it “doesn’t eradicate the ongoing structural inequalities” that Palestinians “face every day.” He later scorns people for whom “the word peace brings to mind tie-dyed T-shirts, flowers, and white doves.” Both men insist that being peace activists is like fighting a battle in a war. It is an old paradox, dating back to at least William James’s invocation of social activism

as the “moral equivalent of war.” Pacifists often likened their work to the life and death vows and commitments of a soldier, as in the title of the influential 1939 book by the Indian-American Krishnalal Shridharani, “War Without Violence: A Study of Gandhi’s Methods and Its Accomplishments”. For Gandhi, any cause worth fighting for had to be worth dying for. As the authors of *The Future of Peace* note, Jewish and Palestinian activists have been killed, thrown in prison and tortured, rejected and ostracized by friends and family, and sometimes have taken their own lives “carrying humiliation, and struggling not to sink into the darkness of trauma that threatens to pull you down.” Peacemaking has nothing to do with peacefulness.

But “*The Future is Peace*” has convinced me that, for all my reservations and qualms, now is the time we must talk about peace. One reason is precisely that peace, in its ambiguities is also so encompassing. It can’t be found in a diplomatic demarche. It is a psychological state and a moral conviction to forego and forswear revenge and hate, and to meet with the enemy without rancor or fear. Perhaps banging swords into plowshares is the easy part. What’s really difficult is, as the Book of Micah hopes, is the ultimate goal of creating a society in which “every person shall sit under his grapevine or fig tree, and no one will feel afraid.” And to achieve peace one must begin to do all of this, all at once.

“*The Future is Peace*” begins, as have so many efforts in the past, on the micro-level, building trust and cooperation between Israeli Jews and Palestinians through common efforts, directed to shared objectives. And the ultimate objective is not just to recognize the trauma of others, but to acknowledge your own complicity in maintaining it.

This dynamic is always tricky. Israeli Jews have more

power. Palestinians have more moral credibility. And both want what the other has. “*The Future is Peace*” does not minimize the challenge. Jews and Palestinians must find ways to work together while always recognizing that their destinies are both shared and separate, and in some ways pull in opposite directions. Only by working together closely, by integrating, can Israeli Jews and Palestinians create institutions that can truly be separate and truly be equal. (One small example is “*The Future is Peace*” itself, a co-written book that adopts a “two-voice” approach, with each writing their own sections, along with a few jointly written “confederated” sections.)

In the US, in the South in the 1950s, to ward off civil rights efforts, segregationist governments embarked on what they called “equalization,” providing some additional funds for Black educational institutions without changing the fundamental structures of Jim Crow. A parallel fear is behind the Palestinian fear of “normalization.” As Aziz writes “if our work ignores the reality of occupation, avoids difficult conversations about power, justice, and freedom, and creates a false image of equality when none exists—then that is normalization. But if we build partnerships that directly confront injustice, that put the ending of the occupation at the center, that give equal voice to both Palestinians and Israelis committed to change—then this is not normalization, it’s co-resistance.”

Israeli Jews have to recognize that they do not have veto power over possible change. Palestinians have to recognize that they have no alternative but working with Israelis. Palestinians fear that changes will cease once the all-too easily satisfied consciences of Israeli Jews are salved. Jews will fear that the more they concede to Palestinians, the more they will demand. As Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit has recently written in *Ha’aretz*, “Ideals may tell us something

important about what we would like to be. But compromises tell us who we are.” This is what English poet Andrew Marvell long ago called “the Inglorious Arts of Peace.”

Over the years I have read, and no doubt you have read, many books like “The Future is Peace”. Good books by decent people, often by an Israeli Jew collaborating with a Palestinian, calling for a better future. This book moved me in a way that few books in this laudable genre have, less perhaps because of its content than its utter timeliness. In the fall of 2026. Another of the paradoxes of the current situation is that the more dire the situation becomes and the more hopeless it seems, the more radical solutions seem possible and necessary. We do not need, as happened in 1948 between Israel and its Arab neighbors, an armistice, a pause in the violence. We need a lasting and durable peace, strong enough to withstand the gale force winds that will endeavor to blow it apart. And we need peace precisely because much of what we once believed in now seems dubious. To be a self-respecting Zionist committed to the best aspects of the “Zionist idea” is, for many, to call yourself a post-Zionist, or some other destination beyond Zionism. A younger generation of peace activists, impatient with decades of inaction, are yapping at our heels, often with very strong arguments. I am reminded of what the great African American religious thinker, Howard Thurman, born in 1899, wrote in 1971, with angry Black radicals accusing their elders, like Thurman, of standpattism in the era of Black Power, often with an epithet that was wielded too easily at the time, “Uncle Tom”:

As the older generation, we have suddenly become aware of our youth, as if for the first time. We are angered by their anger, even though we secretly marvel at the courage of their anger... We are shocked by their failure to respond to our values, even as we are humiliated by our own sense of failure and inadequacy. Nothing seems to hold. Nothing seems

adequate to the crisis that is upon us. In our extremity we are tempted to take refuge in old shibboleths that we ourselves have long abandoned. We find ourselves using words that have been forsaken by meaning. ... Now, it often seems to us, the younger generation turn and rend us because we have sought to nourish them with the sense of our failure.

The generational crisis in left-Zionism and left-Jewish politics in the United States is of course not identical to the generational crisis in Black politics ca. 1970, but there are similarities. And despite the reality that there are young fogies and old revolutionaries, the dispute has a generational divide. Older activists know that for all of our good intentions, in terms of our ultimate objectives we have been failures, abject failures, for decades. And everyone knows it; friends, foes, and would-be allies alike. What is exciting about pursuing peace is precisely its open-endedness. No one knows where it will lead, except that it will take us to places we have never been to before. The root causes of the Israel-Palestine conflict must be directly confronted and addressed. Pursuing peace is a many-dimensional thing, with its exacting pragmatism and unbounded utopianism, its need for both street corner agitators and secret conclaves of high ranking negotiators. Israelis and Palestinians must learn how to find inner peace amid outer turmoil or how to accept outer peace while dealing with inner turmoil. This is really the only issue of the day. Peace is built on the political and ideological foundations that we bear and bring to the table, but with the hope that we will be able to transcend them.

Peter Eisenstadt is the author and editor of many books, most recently, “Integration at Second Base: Jackie Robinson and the Quest for Black Citizenship”, just published by University of Virginia Press. He serves on the board of Partners for Progressive Israel.



By Abby Allen



This summer, Partners for Progressive Israel was honored to support Abby Allen as our Theodore Bikel Peace and Justice Intern. Abby spent a month in Israel learning, organizing, and building relationships through [Achvat Amim: Solidarity of Nations](#). [The Theodore Bikel Fund for Peace and Justice](#) was established in 2015 in loving memory of Theo, Partners for Progressive Israel's longtime Board chair, to support young activists doing human rights and social justice work in Israel. We are delighted to support Abby's work and to share her reflection on her time in Israel.

Eight of us sit around a table in the village of Umm al-Khair's library, lights off, quietly chanting Eicha, the traditional text read on

Tisha b'av. Eicha is the text that mourns and recounts the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. I am trying to hold the complexity of what it means to do Judaism in a place where Judaism has been weaponized to create constant violence and devastation. We sit in the library dedicated to Awdah Hathaleen, who was murdered last July by Israeli settler Yinon Levi, standing on the basketball court holding his son. We will attend Awdah's memorial a week later, and it will be stormed by the Israeli military in an attempt to shut it down.

But tonight we chant:

איכה יושבה בדרך העיר רבתי עם

How does a city sit alone, that was full of people?

We know that in the morning, settlers will be escorted



by the Israeli Military through the village of Tuwani to chant those same words. Tuwani, where days earlier settlers from the illegal outpost of Havat Ma'on set the village on fire, including the Al-Taqwa Mosque, spray painting Stars of David across the walls.

This is the summer before my fourth year of rabbinical school. I hold this complexity because these experiences and these questions will continue to haunt me after I leave the land. Holidays, rituals, and symbols that I find meaningful are being weaponized against Palestinian communities. I hold this complexity because Tisha b'av has served as a meaningful moment to mourn the brokenness of our world. A day to let myself feel deep grief in order to prepare for the High Holidays. A day to think about what role I want to play in putting some of the broken pieces together. This summer was a reminder of the difficult task of holding these uncomfortable contradictions.

We took a tour of the abandoned Palestinian village of Liftah, which Jerusalem's Central Bus Station overlooks. Although there are ruins of homes and a

mosque, there is no signage on our path to indicate what we are looking at. Walking into the valley where Liftah stands alone, I saw groups of schoolchildren on field trips. These kids come to hike; we saw them swimming in what used to be the village's water source. We were told that some communities use this water pool as a *mikveh*, a Jewish ritual bath. Unlike many of the destroyed villages and communities from 1948, the remains of Liftah still stand. Liftah is the catastrophe that we can still confront if we choose to open our eyes. For the majority of Palestinian communities, the state of Israel has systematically erased any remains of what was, building new neighborhoods on top of cleared-out rubble. In the Mamilla neighborhood in Jerusalem, Independence Park was built over part of the historic Islamic Ma'aman Allah Cemetery. When building the Museum of Tolerance, over the same cemetery, they uprooted thousands of graves. So there is a unique opportunity in Liftah to see this history; to imagine what was and reckon with the present. And to not is to turn away from what is right in front of you.

This summer we went to the village of Umm al-Khair two days a week to run a summer camp for the children of the village whose path to school has been blocked with razor wire put up by residents of the settlement of Carmel. We came on Wednesdays from Jerusalem, and each week, I feel uneasy knowing that while I have felt safe and comfortable, there has been ongoing violence. One week, we came to camp after the Israeli army destroyed one of the homes in the village, which I later learned belonged to one of the kids we saw regularly. She came to camp ready to jump rope. Here, the rights to education, safe drinking water, and shelter are gone. Settler attacks are commonplace. As we ran the camp, we were surrounded by Israeli flags that the settlers have placed within the village and on homes. This catastrophe is ongoing. And each day kids show up to camp ready to play and learn. The kindness of the community radiates. The older kids sit in the library ready to learn English before we have even set up. The little kids sit and color and become obsessed with our broken Arabic version of duck duck goose. They are patient with us since we don't speak Arabic. They are sweet, wild, loyal, and stubborn.



This is the place that holds multiplicity. The violence they experience is so deep, and yet there is so much laughter; singing; late-night barbecues; and nightly soccer games. It is *sumud*, steadfastness, resilience, and resistance.

איכה יושבה בדד העיר רבתי עם

How does a city sit alone that was full of people?

There is a constant state-sanctioned effort to have these villages sit alone and empty. To forcibly remove the residents to ensure Israeli expansion. There is an effort for us outside to forget and ignore the fullness and the light that is embedded in the communities. I am inspired by the capacity, in the communities we visited, to hold complexity. For Umm al-Khair to invite us into partnership, to welcome us to do Jewish ritual even when they see the same words weaponized for violence. Being on the ground this summer, I have a renewed hope that the Jewish community follows this lead and holds multiplicity. That we listen and witness what is happening to the Palestinian people and to understand that the fight for Palestinian liberation does not negate our own traditions and community. Our world is brighter when everyone has a right to thrive on their land.

*This summer **Abby Allen** received Partners' Theodore Bikel Peace and Justice Internship. Abby is a fourth-year rabbinic student at the Jewish Theological Seminary.*



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