

THE ZIONIST
LITERARY
MAGAZINE



GREEN GOLEM

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Our Mission

Green Golem: The Zionist Literary Magazine is a not-for-profit publication and advocacy group, that seeks to support and promote artistic creators who support the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

Our mission is to be a space where Zionist and pro-Israel artists, authors, and creators can support each other's work, and encourage more artists, authors, and creators to identify as Zionist and pro-Israel.

Zionism has always been a diverse movement with many branches.

We use the Anti-Defamation League's definition, which we believe to be both sufficiently precise and broadly inclusive:

“Zionism is the movement for the self-determination and statehood for the Jewish people in their ancestral homeland, the land of Israel.”

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On the Cover: "Green Golem" by Joel Silverstein
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Founder’s Statement

My name is Alex Horn. I’m a Jewish writer and editor from South Jersey, just outside Philadelphia. Since the October 7th attacks, I’ve noticed that an increasing number of literary magazines have put out anti-Israel messages like “from the river to the sea”. These posts made me feel unwelcome submitting to those magazines.

This experience gave me the idea to start a specifically Zionist literary magazine: one which values both the Jewish community and the State of Israel, and which affirms the rights of all nations to self-determination and a life free of terror. And to get it done, I’ve assembled a team of all ages, religions, and nationalities.

We’re calling the project Green Golem: The Zionist Literary Magazine. The golem, a stone creature from Jewish mythology, is a symbol of Jewish innovation and self-defense. The color green represents Israel’s farmers and kibbutzniks; Israel’s green energy advancements; and the green uniforms of the IDF, who protect Israel today.

Green Golem will consider quality fiction, nonfiction, and poetry of any kind, but with special preference to works that include Jewish or Zionist elements; works that are set in the State of Israel; works by Jewish authors; works by Israeli authors of any faith; and works by U.S. and international authors who support Israel. Besides writing, we will also ask for submissions from painters, drawers, photographers, and other visual artists.

Our founding editorial board includes members of many religious and national backgrounds — Jewish; Muslim; Hindu; and Christian; Israeli; American; British; Canadian; Indian; Egyptian; and Bangladeshi. We are united by the shared knowledge that the Jewish people are indigenous to Eretz Yisrael.

In addition to works by Jewish Israelis and diaspora Jewish Zionists, we are eager to publish works by Muslims, Christians, Druze, atheists, and more. We welcome submissions from Arab Israelis, as well as from Palestinian authors and artists, including residents of Israel, the West Bank/Judea-Samaria, East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the diaspora.



FICTION

Miracle Worker

Micky Levy

(Based on a true story)

“For me, Tali. For me. Plea-se...” She’s a guilt specialist, my mother. And guilt is the price I pay for living 3000 miles away from her.

I’m thirty-three years old. By now, I should’ve been famous or given her grandchildren. She can name dozens, hundreds, of hopeful Israelis who took a flight to America and found fame and fortune within months. Weeks. Days! Only I, her daughter, am struggling after fifteen years. And the talent I have! And what a beauty I am! If I had a husband, I could blame my professional failure on a satisfying personal life. If I were booking roles in film and TV, I could blame my singlehood on a booming career. But I don’t have a husband, or even a boyfriend, and I don’t have a career. I can only blame myself.

I visit her once a year for two weeks, but usually, after a few days, I’m ready to return to my studio apartment in the Valley where her disappointed gaze can’t reach me. This visit is no different. On my third day in Israel, her inquiry begins. She eyes me for a long moment and finally says, “What’s that on your face, Tali?”

“What?”

“Is that a moustache?”

“I don’t have a moustache.”

“It’s staring right at me. Go look.”

“I don’t have a moustache!” I shriek and march to the bathroom. I flick on the light and scrutinize my nonexistent facial hair in the mirror. She approaches, panther-like. “Maybe that’s why you’re not in the movies.”

“Yes, it’s my giant moustache.”

“Are you at least seeing someone?” She asks, massaging my shoulders.

“I don’t want to talk about it.” I gently push her away and storm out. She stalks me to the living room.

“Don’t be mad, Tali. Don’t be mad... I’m trying to help you. I heard of someone, a special man. He’ll touch your head, and all your problems will disappear,” she says matter-of-factly and with a straight face.

“I don’t have problems. I like my life,” I tell her, but I wonder if that’s true. Most days, I’m lonely. And I’ve been



working at Pete’s House of Ribs for so long that the manager has offered to train me to be his replacement when he retires.

“His name is Rabbi Nissim. You might have heard of him,” she continues in a sweet voice, feigning oblivion to my obvious despair. “He’s a rising star in orthodox Israeli radio.”

“I don’t listen to Israeli radio.”

“Rabbi Nissim is renowned. Everybody knows him,” she insists.

She does this every time I visit. Her strategy is simple but effective: She mentions the miracle worker du jour casually, off-handedly, then she keeps talking about them, swearing on everything holy that they’ll reveal my future to me, identify what I’m doing wrong and exorcise the bad jujus from my energy until, under incredible duress, I agree to meet with them. The meetings are forgettable, often unpleasant and leave me depressed and decidedly unaltered. Like the time she took me to a psychic in Haifa with six cats and a mullet, who diagnosed me with an evil eye of the third-degree and concocted a costly spell that involved a foul-smelling, loose ointment into which, I’m sure, her cats had peed. Miracle workers du jour charge a hefty fee, but my mother, a believer in all-things-fantastic, never hesitates to pay it.

This time, I’m determined to resist. Mother is equally determined. “I just know Rabbi Nissim can fix you,” she says as if I were a leaky faucet. But I am not superstitious. I might be a fool, a failure, a bad actor, but I refuse to be a sucker. Again. “I’m not going to see him, and that’s final,” I tell her.



She escalates her attack. She mentions Rabbi Nissim every three to four hours, as if he were a Tylenol she must keep dispensing. “My hairdresser,” she says, “is well acquainted with a dentist assistant, whose sister went to see the Rabbi. Guess what happened? Two days later, this dental assistant, who’s not half as clever as you are, met the man of her dreams, and now, she’s married and owns Israel’s second-largest falafel chain, tfoo, tfoo, tfoo.”

When my mom relays an especially positive anecdote, about anything, she dry-spits three times to make sure she doesn’t jinx anyone.

“My pharmacist is friends with a florist whose cousin went to school with Rabbi Nissim. She says that even then, as a boy, the Rabbi was a prophet. When he was thirteen, he told her that she was going to break her arm, and three days later, she broke her foot!” My mother exclaims in triumph.

And when I’m desperately trying to sleep off my jetlag, “Listen! Listen! That’s him!” She cranks up the volume on her little radio. Thump! Thump! Her neighbors, a sweet elderly couple, bang on the wall in protest. She wheels to the thumps, yelling: “Be quiet! Rabbi Nissim is talking!”

Fed up with her shenanigans, I scream, “WILL YOU STOP? I’m not going to see him. Never, ever, ever!”

She turns to me, blinking back tears. Uh-oh. The big guns are out. I shouldn’t have yelled at her. “I’m sorry Mom. Oh, no, no... don’t cry.”

She snuffles. “I just want you to be happy. Is that so bad?” she asks in a small, broken voice, tears glistening down her cheeks. “For me, Tali. For me. Plea-se...”

Like I said, she’s a guilt specialist. I have no choice, but to surrender.

Normally, we meet with the miracle worker du jour after an enormous breakfast, but to see Rabbi Nissim, we take a taxi late one night after she makes me an enormous dinner. Apparently, the Rabbi only meets with people after he finishes recording his radio show.

At 9:30pm, we’re among the first to arrive at Beth-El Synagogue—a humble Sephardic temple. Three orthodox, pubescent girls mill by the entrance in long skirts, ponytails and shiny Mary-Janes. Mom—a General addressing her troops—asks them, “Is Rabbi Nissim expected here?”

“Yes!” they say in unison.

“My daughter is unmarried,” Mom says as if my singlehood is cancer.

The wholesome triplets consider me with pity. Like most Jewish orthodox girls, they’ll undoubtedly marry by the time they’re twenty. “God willing, the Rabbi will help her,” one of them says.

A pale young woman with braces appears behind us. “I’ve been to see the Rabbi three times. He changed my life, God bless him. He has changed my life,” she repeats, spellbound, then slinks out, into the darkness, like a ghost. Mom turns to me victoriously.

“They’re brainwashed,” I whisper to her. “It’s a cult.”

“For once in your life, think positive!” My mother, Queen of Negativity, says and takes a prayer book from one shelf. She situates herself on a bench by the door. I plop down next to her and whip out my phone.

“No phones!”

“What do you expect me to do here?” She reads her Bible, flagrantly ignoring me. I lower the phone with a sigh.

A flimsy partition divides the men’s section from the women’s. We, the women, are relegated to the back of the synagogue, far from the dais and holy ark, where Bible scrolls are nestled. The walls are unadorned except for a long list of names engraved in gold. Donors, I think. No, dead people. Members of this congregation, who perished on the battlefield or on a bus that was blown up. I think of the names engraved into the sidewalk on Hollywood Boulevard. It feels wrong to be familiar with names of movie stars but know nothing about these victims of war and terror.

We wait. We wait some more. We take turns going to the bathroom. Women trickle in. Young, elderly, in between. Orthodox and secular. Some wear a head-covering—scarves, hats or wigs—others wear lipstick and jeans. Some are in wheelchairs or use walkers, a handful carry babies. “We were here before you,” my mom says to each newcomer until the trickle turns into a torrent, and she can no longer ensure they keep track.

At 11pm, there’s still no sign of the Rabbi. The crowd has tripled. The synagogue is hot, loud and suffocating. The women fill the benches and spill into the center aisle and narrow hallway by the entrance where they sit on the marble floor.



Through the flimsy divider, I can see that the men's section is almost empty. I'm angry with these women, who choose a hard floor over a man's seat, and I'm angry with this Rabbi who's making us wait as if he were the Messiah. Sensing my dismay, Mom whips a banana from her bag and offers it to me.

"I don't want a banana. I want to go home and sleep."

"Be patient," she says and tries to stick the banana in my hand. I push the fruit in protest. Upset, she continues, "Maybe the Rabbi will get you out of that nuthouse, that Hollywood."

"I'm an actor. Actors live in Hollywood."

"You're a waitress."

"A maître-d'! And by the way, I'm on a management track."

"When will you stop kidding yourself?"

"It's called paying your dues. I'm following my dreams."

"Dreams! You can't pay rent on dreams. You can't have children on dreams. Have a banana."

"I DON'T WANT A BANANA!" I rise, ready to flee. But then, a round-faced woman, in modest brownish dress and matching beret, appears, breaming with purpose.

"Hello everyone, I'm Judith," she calls out.

My mother shoots me a glance. I sit back down. Judith continues, "The Rabbi thanks you for waiting. He just left the studio. He'll be here by midnight, God willing."

An excited murmur cuts the stale air. Judith proceeds to hand out Books of Psalm. As she does, the women tell her their stories: an elderly woman bemoans her paralyzing arthritis; a woman with dark circles under her eyes worries about her enlisted son; a weeping woman suspects her husband is unfaithful. Judith listens to the stories, offering soothing words. I lean against my mother's shoulder and close my eyes.

A Hassidic melody awakens me. I must be having a nightmare. But no. I see Judith answering her phone. Then she announces, "The Rabbi has arrived!"

Elvis is in the building. The women turn to the entrance. I follow their gaze, as Rabbi Nissim walks in. He has the full beard and peyos that characterize orthodox men, but he's astonishingly handsome: Tall, buff, brownish-reddish hair, straight nose, blue-blue-blue eyes. He struts to the stage and climbs up, commanding: "Psalm 121."

We open our books as he reads the song in a clear voice, swaying as he does. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: from whence shall my help come?..."

I grin in delight. "He's too good looking! It's distracting," my mother snaps, trying to kill my joy. I raise my phone to take a

picture of this vision of manhood. Mother smacks my hand down.

The Rabbi continues in a hypnotizing lilt, so charismatic, he could be playing with the Stones. He delves deeper and deeper into the Psalm, a conduit of light and energy, his swaying more frequent and pronounced. "Names!" He shouts in ecstasy.

A pale woman springs up, crying, "Yaakov, son of Efrim!"

"Yaakov, son of Efrim!" The Rabbi repeats and adds, "Bless him!"

A frail-looking matron, supported by two young women, rises, croaking, "Daniel, son of Meir!"

The Rabbi looks up, conversing with the Almighty: "Daniel, son of Meir! Bless him!"

One by one the women call out the names of loved ones, and the Rabbi repeats each name and pleads with God on their behalf. Occasionally, the women burst into tears as the Rabbi's blessing rises to the heavens.

It's impossible not to be moved. I wipe my moist eyes. My mother mouths: "I told you!"

Then, she rises and cries out, "Tali, daughter of Miriam!"

"Tali, daughter of Miriam! Bless her!" The Rabbi commands.

I don't know if it's his booming voice, the energy in the room, or if an otherworldly presence is among us, but a tingling sensation travels from my toes to the crown of my head. I feel cleansed, transported. Shaken. Did my mother get it right this time? Is Rabbi Nissim, the real thing—a miracle worker?

The Rabbi's ritual is magical, ancient, primitive. It goes on and on, minutes melting in the Rabbi's heat. Finally, he steps off the dais, exhausted but glowing. Judith brings him a glass of water. He walks away, toward the entrance, then disappears into one room.

"Wow." I turn to my mom. "Wow."

"You have to talk to him. Quick!" Mom charges to Judith. I trail reluctantly. "We were here first," she says. "My daughter flew from America to see Rabbi Nissim."

Judith studies me. "Did you come from America to see the Rabbi?"

"Well..." I mumble noncommittally.

"She lives in Hollywood, alone, like a homeless person! Thirty-three. Unmarried."

Judith acknowledges my dire condition with a nod. "The Rabbi needs a moment to collect himself. The work of the righteous is never done."



Mom and I wait outside the Rabbi's office. Right outside. Our noses almost touching his white door. The women line up behind us.

Judith approaches with a woman who's connected to a portable oxygen tank. My mom stares the woman down, ready to ramble. Judith tells her in a conciliatory tone, "A sick woman..." Mom, exercising unusual restraint, steps back. The ailing woman shuffles into the Rabbi's office and closes the door.

Two minutes later, the door opens. Apparently, the Rabbi works his magic quickly. Ailing woman emerges, wiping tears. "Oy, oy... What a man... A saint!"

Judith turns to me. "You're up."

I freeze. Do I really want to be a movie star? Am I ready to get married? What if Rabbi Nissim is about to change my life? What if he fixes me?

"What are you waiting for?" My mom nudges me into his office and says, "Tell him to touch your head!"

Judith closes the door behind me.

The corners of the room are dark. The Rabbi is seated in a pool of light, bent over a Bible, which is open on a small table in front of him. A massive collection of books, most with tattered spines, lines the walls.

"Come in, sit down," he says without looking up. I join him at the table. "Should I read you from the Torah?"

I stare at him, but he keeps his eyes on the holy book. Orthodox men are forbidden to gaze into the eyes of a woman who's not their wife, daughter or mother. I've always felt it was a sexist, discriminatory practice. I decide to level with the Rabbi. "I'm only here because of my mother."

"Oh?"

"I'm 33, unmarried and a struggling actor in Los Angeles. She thinks you can 'fix' me."

Rabbi Nissim's blue-blue-blue eyes meet mine. Why is he looking at me? I wonder if I hurt his feelings with my bad attitude.

"Do you live in Los Angeles?" he asks.

"I visit Israel once or twice a year," I tell him, trying to make my desertion of mother and motherland sound palatable.

"I used to live on Hayworth Street in West Hollywood."

"You're kidding."

"So... what was the last movie you saw?"

"You mean, like, in a movie theater?"

"Anywhere."

"Ah. Well, I watched an animated film on the plane."

"Disney?"

I nod.

"And Meg Ryan? How's she?"

"Huh?"

"When Harry Met Sally, You've Got Mail..." he says, indignant.

"Ah, she's fine, I guess."

"A Hollywood actress, and you don't know your last Meg Ryan movie?" he shouts, incredulous.

"She pretty much left the business."

"Left Hollywood? Meg...?" He studies me, devastated. A knock on the door interrupts us. He looks down, burying his gaze in his book. The door opens, and Judith pokes her head in. "We have a long line, Rabbi. You'll be here all night."

"Thank you, Judith. We're almost done." Judith retreats and closes the door. He looks up at me. "Quick. Tell me about this animated movie you watched."

"Ah, it's about a queen in an icy kingdom who has a complicated relationship with her sister... Aren't you supposed to bless me or something?"

"What's it called?"

"The movie? Frozen."

"Frozen... I saw the billboard, I think." He pauses, thoughtful. "Before I moved to the west coast and lived on Hayworth, I headlined a revival of Hair, the musical, in Chicago."

"You were an actor?"

"And what a tenor I had. They came to see me from the William Morris Agency. What movies have you been in?"

I dread that question. My credits are pathetic. I tell him,

"Apparently, you've been disconnected from any form of secular entertainment for, like, decades, but if you had Netflix, you would have recognized me from the cult classic, 'Sorority House Vampire V: In the Beginning.'"

"A prequel!"

"An independent. I play a sorority girl who turns into a vampire."

"I used to love vampire movies."

"We shot in Palmdale, in the desert. Nonunion. \$125 a day... Who am I kidding, Rabbi?"

My mother's right. I can barely call myself an actor."

"Mmmm... I take it you've never met Tim Robbins. Wonderful that Tim."

"My mother said you would help me!"



“I thought you didn’t need my help.”

“I’ve been taking acting classes for ten years. I drive a crappy car, have a ton of credit card debt and basically zero credits. Of course, I need your help!”

“Harry Potter was the last movie I saw. That was the year I found my faith. I left Hollywood. I left my girlfriend. Now, I have a wife and seven children... Do you know my show is the #1 talk radio show in the Orthodox market?”

“Which is huge, I’m sure.”

An urgent knock. He quickly looks at his book again. Judith storms in, face flushed, lips pursed. “We have a line, Rabbi! The women. The women are waiting. The women are waiting, and they’re sick!”

“I’ll be with them soon. Please. Leave us.”

Judith gives me the stink eye and steps out, closing the door.

The Rabbi meets my gaze again. “You know what I do? I listen to suffering people. Every day, I ask the Almighty, why did He put us on this earth to suffer?”

“What does He say?”

“I’m unworthy of His reply.” He looks at me, deeply sad.

“But you’re a holy man, a prophet...”

“I had it all: screentests for Paramount, William Morris ringing nonstop, and the reviews... A young Brando, they said. A huge talent, they called me.”

“I wouldn’t know. No one’s calling me, ‘a huge talent.’”

“You don’t believe me.”

“What?”

“You don’t believe I was good. That I could have been a star.”

I try to sound convincing. “Sure, I do.”

He frowns, shaking his head. Then he, well, he sings: “She asks me why, I’m just a hairy guy, I’m hairy noon and night, Hair that’s a fright, I’m hairy high and low, Don’t ask me why, Don’t know...” I gaze in amazement as he rises and reaches for my hand. He pulls me to him then spins me around, singing, “It’s not for lack of bread, Like the Grateful Dead, Darling!” He releases me. Dizzy, ecstatic and deeply concerned, I watch as he points to his full beard to illustrate the song’s lyrics... “Gimme head with hair, Long beautiful hair, Shining, gleaming, Streaming, flaxen, waxen...” Voice searing, he climbs on the chair. “Give me down to there hair, Shoulder length or longer, Here baby, there Mama, Everywhere Daddy Daddy!!” The chair teeters, about to give.

I run over, steady it. Three loud knocks. The door flies open! Judith sticks her head in and cries, “Oy Vey... Rabbi! You’re

forgetting yourself!” He freezes. Judith exits and slams the door.

He climbs down, defeated. “I am nothing,” he tells me.

“That’s not true... You’re the #1 talk show host on orthodox radio... You’re a miracle worker. When you said my name, when you asked God to bless me, I got chills...”

“You did?” He smiles, but his eyes are still sad.

I feel his yearning. “You really miss it, don’t you?”

“No, I’m happy. A happy man,” he says. “What about you? What do you want?”

“I want to, you know, do what I love.”

“Only you can make that happen.”

“I want, I want to know it’s okay that I left.”

“Okay with whom?”

“My mother, I guess. She wants me near her. She suffers when I’m away.”

“Maybe you suffer, too.”

A terrible thought occurs to me. “What if I don’t make it? What if all this suffering is for nothing?”

“Our dreams come from God. There’s nothing higher than pursuing them.”

“You didn’t.”

“My dreams changed. Sometimes, when God gives you what you want too quickly, too easily, you think you don’t want it anymore.”

Ah. It occurs to me that that’s worse than not getting what you want, but I just say, “I’m glad we met.” And then, “My mom said to ask you to touch my head.”

“Do you want me to?”

I shrug and walk to the door. He calls after me, “Not so fast, Sorority House. Show me your best vampire.”

I turn to him and expose my canines with a growl... We giggle.

I open the door and leave.

In the hall, Judith gives me a death stare and quickly escorts an elderly woman into the Rabbi’s office.

Mom whisks me away, giddy. “What an honor,” she gushes. “Who gets an extra special long meeting with the Rabbi? My daughter! My Tali! So? What did he say? Did he touch your head? Did he bless you?”

I wrap my arms around my impossible mother, grateful for her. “It was perfect, Mom,” I tell her. She blinks back tears of joy, as if a miracle had happened, as if all our prayers will be answered. And maybe they will.



Micky Levy is a writer and filmmaker. She was born in Israel to cinephile parents and grew up watching movies and writing poetry and short stories in Hebrew. After arriving in Los Angeles by herself at the age of 17, Micky caught the eye of Alison Eastwood and Warner Bros. with her script *RAILS & TIES*. The film starred Kevin Bacon and Marcia Gay Harden and played in Telluride and TIFF, among other festivals of note. Micky has completed several book adaptations, including *AMISH GRACE* for which she received a Humanitas Prize nomination. She wrote, produced and directed the award-winning shorts *PAGE'S GREAT AND GRAND ESCAPE* and *UNION*. She is a Film Independent Screenwriting Lab Fellow, a Tony Cox Showtime Top Ten finalist, and her script *SHE'S NOT GONE* is featured on Wscripted's Annual Cannes Screenplay List. *Miracle Worker* is her first short story in English. She is also working on a picture book and her first novel.

Illustration by Hana Tzipora (@that.intersectional.zionist)

Hana Tzipora (they/she) is a queer, neurodivergent, Jewish-American college student of Ashkenazi and Sephardi descent. They are a poet, artist, and singer-songwriter who plans to pursue a career in rabbinics. Originally from Maryland, Hana spent a gap year before college studying and volunteering in Israel, an experience that has heavily inspired much of her creative work since. She is an Art and Poetry Editor for "Green Golem: The Zionist Literary Magazine".





VISUAL ART



Green Golem

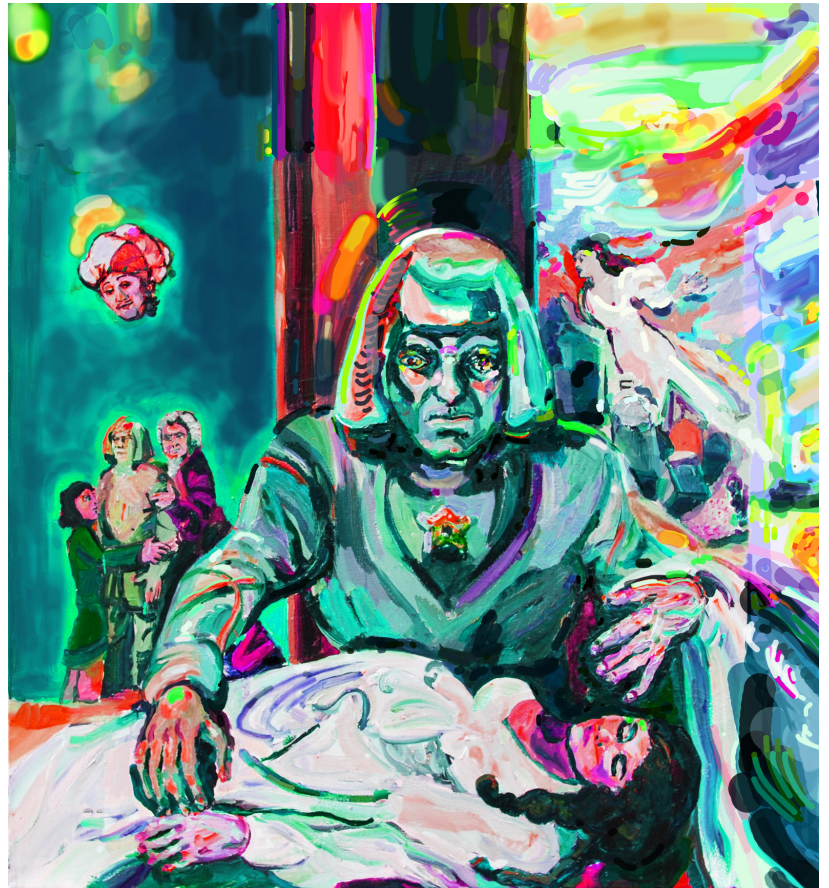
Joel Silverstein

Acrylic & Digital

Joel Silverstein is an internationally exhibited artist. He is a Founding Member and Executive Board Member of the Jewish Art Salon.

He has curated or advised sixteen art exhibitions, and his own work has been featured in the Dr. Bernard Heller Museum, the Amstelsirk Gallery, the Jerusalem Biennale, and many more.

Find his website at
joelsilversteinart.com



This piece's iconography is derived from multiple sources. Its visual prototype is taken directly from the German Expressionist cinematic masterpiece, "The Golem , How He Came into the World" (1920) by Paul Wegener. Wegener who acted, directed, and wrote the screenplay for the silent horror film, influenced many generations of artists and filmmakers, including James Whale's and Jack Pierce's's conception of Frankenstein for the 1931 movie. The visual motif of the Golem menacing the beautiful female protagonist mirrors mythic global tropes concerning monsters and beautiful maidens of all sorts, but also reflects the contemporaneous German audience's deeply seated fears of Jewish/German interbreeding and miscegenation. In just a few years from the time of the film, strong anti-marriage laws between these groups would be enacted by the Nazi regime.

The spectral floating head on the left side of the painting is from Rembrandt's painting "Jacob Blessing the Sons of Joseph" (1656). Jacob is the progenitor and name-sake of Israel, and hence of the Jewish people. The floating head is actually that of Joseph standing above the bed of his father. Rembrandt, a Dutch Protestant painter of the 1600's, envisioned the Hebraic Joseph — the Egyptian Vizier and favorite of Pharaoh — as a turbaned, romantic, and "Orientalized" figure: an image of Jews that persisted for several hundred years within European lore.

Martyrs of Nova

Charis Nwaozuzu

Digital

“Martyrs of Nova” is Charis Nwaozuzu’s re-interpretation of the piece by Ephraim Moses Lilien (1874-1925). She says the art reflects how the October 7th attack was conducted on some of the most vulnerable people in Israel’s community.

Charis Nwaozuzu is a Cherokee Jewish tattoo artist out of Oklahoma. She believes that storytelling through art is deeply rooted in both of her cultures, and is excited to be passing that tradition down to the next generation as well.

Find her art @cupcakethecreator





The Horned Boy Screams

Visual Art

Ransom Rev

Digital

“The humans of this great fantasy city were confident of the strength of their castle walls. The Horned Boy is a mysterious creature: perhaps he was once human, or perhaps not. Either way, he foretold a prophecy of doom against the humans of this city. The humans, of course, did not believe him, and they came out upon the castle walls to taunt the Horned Boy. Note the woman on the wall blowing a kiss to the Boy; she does this to mock him. And yet, when the Horned Boy screams, the force of his voice ruptures the ground and smashes the castle wall.”

Ransom Rev, previously known under the pen name Participation Frog, is an author and publisher of anthologies, including *The Longhouse*, published by Terror House Press in August of 2022.

Cry Over Spilled Milk

Efrat Baler-Moses

Mixed Media

Efrat Baler-Moses is an Israeli-born, New York-based multidisciplinary artist with a BFA in Sculpture and Painting from the Bezalel Academy of Art in Jerusalem. A recipient of the American-Israeli Culture Foundation grant. She was selected by Philip Leder, the curator, critic and founding editor of ARTFORUM, as one of the ten most promising artists of the 1980s in Israel. She has built a successful career as an educator, lecturer, and artist, participating in over 50 group shows and 6 solo exhibitions in the United States, Israel, and Germany and her works are held in many private collections.

efrat-art.com

 [@ef4art](https://www.instagram.com/ef4art)



“Cry Over Spilled Milk” is artwork by Efrat Baler-Moses (2023, mixed media on canvas, 46 x 40 x 2.5 inches)

This piece is part of a series that delves into the challenges of the human experience amidst upheaval. Inspired by the Hamas terror attack in Israel on October 7, 2023, the universal theme extends to mental anguish, PTSD, domestic abuse, and homicide.



POETRY



Benefactor

Maxim D. Shrayer

In memoriam Ilia Salita

Soundlessly you enter the most foreign of my dreams,
clutching under your left arm a cognac leather briefcase,
in which two choral synagogues would simultaneously fit.

You invite me to lecture before veterans of the great
patriotic war about any appropriate topic I didn't make up,
for instance: Botvinnik's chess, Oistrakh's agile fingers,

Golda Meir's endless cigarettes, Vasily Grossman's lovers,
Trumpeldor's last words, Moshe Kutuzov's glass eye,
Brodsky's salad-green Mercedes, Sergey Brin's birthplace.

I agree on the spot. The terms, very lucrative: business class,
conference at Yad Vashem, survivors' caustic whispers,
your baggy double-breasted suit, opening remarks about love.

We trade the usual pleasantries, wives and kids, the sun's
already setting over Moscow or Boston, Tel-Aviv or Berlin.
Well, it all makes sense, you say in that coarse falsetto,

nonfiction, fiction, now a screenplay, surely you should do it,
we'll support, but in the film Russian Jews must appear.
Perhaps, disappear? I make a joke. Wouldn't it be great to write

a script about a Jewish Oblomov? In your eyes of a Moscow wunderkind
endless streams of heavy trucks flow on the Leningrad Highway.
The chocolate liquor of our Brezhnevian youth... In America we've grown

different. And yet, each time we meet, a hanging bridge ties itself
to our past, where alternative laws of gravitation and attraction rule, where
we walk from the sciences building to the main tower of Moscow State.

December outdoors. Sheepskin coat, fur hat, a vile mohair scarf,
for some reason you're telling me, a poet's son, about poets who
fought the Germans—Slutsky, Levitansky, Samoilov, Mezhirov, Vinokurov—

haven't I seen them all in person, live at the Writers House?
But I wouldn't include the last one, donut with dogshit as he was
(I repeat what I once heard as a kid on the train from Vilnius to Moscow



in a drunken conversation of *littérateurs* who translated from Lithuanian into the language of the Empire, but that's probably too hard to interpret). Meanwhile you and I hurry to join a Jewish weightlifting club

under the direction of Robert Roman, son of a Latvian Rifleman. They accept you but reject me. They reject you when I try to introduce you to my Beatles-loving friends. They nominate you to join the school's Komsomol committee,

and me, the son of *refuseniks*, they try to throw out of the university. But now all of this has lost not only its meaning but also its form, the perfumed smoke of our student years has long since lifted.

We sit at a table in a Greek pastry shop, you have only twenty minutes before your next meeting. From your chest cavity you take out three tablets at once: for notetaking, for headaches, and one more,

which resembles the one Moses was given, and also a hungry pelican, and a watchman at an old Jewish cemetery. You look terribly tired, in your cloudy eyes of a mortally wounded gazelle I see cascading

reflections: everything we once considered alien but loved the way our people loved their rotgut, their Russian wives, their enemies. Did you finish the screenplay? you ask me, slowly. Isn't it about time?

I take a sip of my black coffee. I take a bite of my cheese Danish. What can I tell you? Thank you, benefactor mine, but unfortunately I cannot finish this script. Everything that we once shared, considered

our very own has become alien, and it no longer aches. You see, benefactor, first the war on the land where our grandparents were born, then another war on the land where we would like to find eternal rest.

What kind of a Jewish-Russian script can I compose today? What kind of a funeral wailing song? Please forgive me, I just couldn't let you down.

Maxim D. Shrayer (shrayer.com) is a bilingual author and a professor at Boston College. He was born in Moscow and emigrated in 1987. His recent books include *A Russian Immigrant: Three Novellas and Immigrant Baggage*, a memoir. Shrayer's new collection of poetry, *Kinship*, is forthcoming in April 2024.

Maxim wrote "Benefactor" to memorialize the passing of his former classmate, Ilia Salita, the late CEO of Genesis Philanthropy Group. Ilia and Maxim were the only two Jews admitted to their school within Moscow University in 1984. In the words of the poet: "The poem is an attempt to reflect, mournfully, on our lost Jewish-Soviet youth in light of two wars, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Hamas's attack on Israel."



So Says the Light

Jesse Aviv Wolfsthal

I look upon the face of something familiar
and I know what it is to be Hector's infant son,
afraid of his own father's face, concealed by
bloody bronze made fearsome and cruel.

When I leave the house in the morning
I grow quieter than I was the previous night.
Humming to a Hamsa that hangs above me
as I cook for my family,
kissing a Mezuzah that calms me as I enter my bedroom.

When I leave the house in the morning
I am quieter than I was last night,
quieter than I was while singing along to
Ofra Haza with my brother, dissolving into laughter.
Quieter than I was while barking
at my mother, tazvi oti, leave me alone.

I look around I try to feel patriotic.
I look around and I try to feel
connection to the country I grew up in.
(All my growing happened somewhere else.)
I feel an uneasy weight on my tongue
a dull reminder that I am speaking the wrong language.
I taste blood.

I look upon friends and teachers
and I know what it is to be Hector's infant son,
afraid of his own father's face, concealed by
bloody bronze made fearsome and cruel.
(War renders the familiar unrecognisable.)

I speak the language (the language
doesn't speak to me).
I am still afraid
of my neighbours' familiar faces.

This piece deftly mixes references to Jewish life with allusions to Homer's Iliad. Our editors were moved by Jesse's nuanced reflection of the Jewish diaspora experience.

Jesse Aviv Wolfsthal is a college student and poet living in England. He is an Ashkenazi Jew of Israeli & British nationality, born in England to Israeli parents. Jesse is currently studying English Literature, Ancient Civilisation, and Psychology, and aspires to enter the world of journalism.

Find his poetry on Instagram @jesseawpoetry and his personal and hasbara @jesseaviiv.



Two Same Roads

Govind Vashistha

Two roads diverged in the yellow wood,
and I refuse to walk on any.
Said to be the paths of evil and good
but both have doomed plenty.

To hoist their flags of victoryhood,
they sold their souls for a penny.
Walking was never a should,
but it was too late to run, or to crawl, already.

I'd stop the war if I could,
but do we like peace and steady?
Ones against it, who stood,
remain now slaughtered on heaps heavy.

Triumphant, heads beneath foot,
the cries of the innocent sink deafly.
When the winners smudge soot in their eyes,
they can't meet the gaze of the losers many.

No two roads diverge in the yellow wood,
it's the same one: same as any.
Can't choose; won't choose; I'll walk them all,
two or one or twenty.

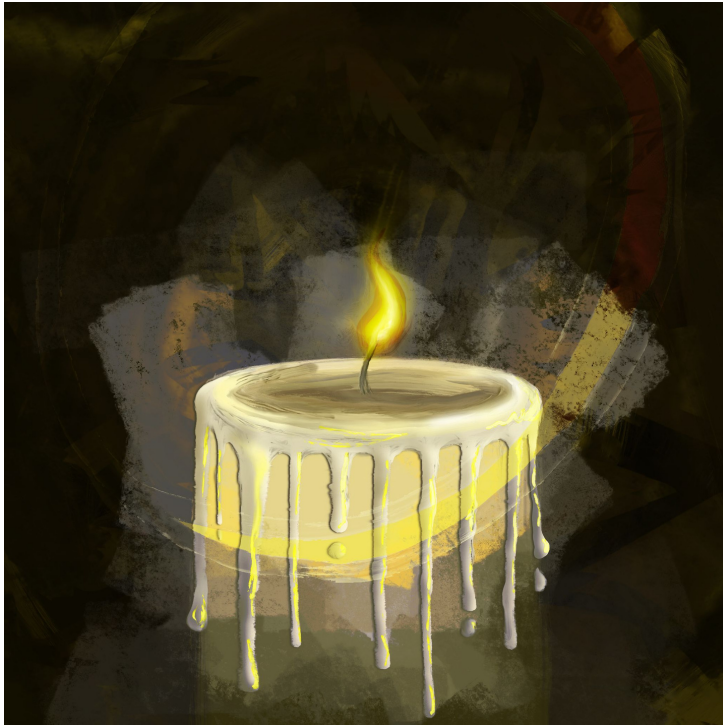
Govind Vashistha is a writer and editor from India. He works as an editorial assistant for Alex Horn and Prakhar Gupta.





Memories: A Poem for International Holocaust Remembrance Day

Hana Tzipora



I have memories
that are not mine.
Half-invented histories
all blurry ‘round the edges,
As I try to fill in questions
no one is left to answer.

Hana Tzipora is a third-generation descendant of a Holocaust survivor. Her grandfather left Germany for the USA in the 1930s. He died in 2012.

Hana (they/she) is a queer, neurodivergent, Jewish-American college student of Ashkenazi and Sephardi descent. They are a poet, artist, and singer-songwriter who plans to pursue a career in rabbinics. Originally from Maryland, Hana spent a gap year before college studying and volunteering in Israel, an experience that has heavily inspired much of her creative work since. She is an Art and Poetry Editor for “Green Golem: The Zionist Literary Magazine.”

Find Hana at [@that.intersectional.zionist](https://twitter.com/that.intersectional.zionist)

The Minor Chords

Jill Blum

In the evening
my son's sweet voice echoed
in the background
as it does on nights
when his father gets to
snuggle him to sleep

Tonight it stopped me dead
as i heard the minor chords
of the kaddish over the candles
his kindergarten voice recalling
the joy of Chanukah just past

I leapt to hear the voices of my ancestors
felt my grandmother's hand on my *keppe*
saw my grandfather's eyes welling with pride
as his lineage continues; despite his necessary
assimilation for survival

I rushed to his bedside
where he showed me
the well-loved stuffie he was singing for
and i teared up knowing he is the
only heir to the legacy of so many who hoped
our family would one day return to the old city
in Jerusalem



Jill Blum is an award-winning graphic designer from the United States. She studied Corporate Communications and Publication Design at the University of Baltimore, where she graduated cum laude. She has worked for the Baltimore Jewish Times, Stanley Black & Decker, and the University System of Maryland. Jill has worked in a wide range of design and leadership capacities, ranging from production artist to Creative Director.



A New Home

Harsh Gattani

Those who die for their motherland;
they are supposed to get a new home in heaven's land.

the soldiers who fight for the white and the blue;
get killed the same, whether Muslim or Druze or Jew

the family who lost their loved ones;
how can they know they're with the Above one?

they can raid your lands and take your pride
But a knife can't cut out what's inside

I do not know what's right; I cannot count the cost
But if you stand with Hamas, you're already lost

Harsh is a young Hindu poet and artist from India.



He's Dead, So I Got His Name

Alex Horn

He's dead, so I got his name.
If he'd only lived, I wouldn't be me.

I got his name. I have his name. I bear his
Hebrew, *Avraham Moshe*, don't use it, don't need it,
don't speak it, at all.

No Hebrew, no Yiddish; *Dotbraki* instead.
a Saturday spent on a boat with a Quaker;
when I was small, and the Quaker was smaller,
and the raft just barely large enough
to keep the water off our little legs.
My Saturdays in the sunlight; with crab-legs;
cheeseburgers; Lincoln Logs; my
common humanity:
that's what I need; what I needed; what made me need
what I need.

Don't need what the prophets told me to ask for.
Don't even need Alexander, what my mother gave me,
don't need it, I'm Alex, just Alex, always been Alex, Alex,
Alex the American, my friends are tan and brown, white
and black, and not one in ten of them a Jew,
my brothers, my brothers, I ate shrimp-and-pork at their
tables but
where are my brothers? I have no brothers. Would they
care what I ate?
Or just *if* I ate? *Those* are my brothers:
those who care if my stomach is full.

But an empty-handed man calls me brother, tracks me
down
on Columbia's campus, the antisemite's playground,
because we are here too;
he can't feed me; he'd feed me, of course, but not
what I need.

Though he doesn't ask what I eat.
But he's Jewish, he's proud, he's Chabadnik, he's
better than me??? morally??? maybe???
he asks me my name, and I tell him Alex
and he says no
what's your *name*
So I say Avraham Moshe
then I walk away
And he follows me, anyway.
My father's father was Avraham Moshe.
Abraham Morris.
He taught history, and then
he was.
He died when my dad had but hairs on his head, not a
single
young-stache to pluck in the shower.
Abraham died, and Abraham's son grew up and made
Abraham.
Abraham Moses.
Not an original name, for a Jew.
But I like it fine.

A name I couldn't have had, if he'd lived to see it.
Not a universe out there, where we might have met.
Sounds like a rule of our people,
if I ever heard one.

Alex Horn is a writer from the United States of America. He studied English Literature and Creative Writing at Columbia University. His first novel, "Ever Sunset", a romantic and tragic science-fiction odyssey, is being released by Nymeria Publishing in early 2025. Find Alex's work at www.alexhornwriting.com



Protestors on the College Green

Lena Renee Anzarut

they read history books, ink
still bleeding
and like to pretend
that they would have been righteous,
that they would not have turned away,
would not have lit a torch,
would not have carried a pitchfork,
like they aren't still carrying pitchforks, even now
like their words don't echo,
don't have teeth,
don't hide knives.

they march through streets paved
with headstones,
and live in houses built from ash,
and like to pretend
that they don't tread on our bones,
that their neighborhood isn't a graveyard,
that their hands are clean,
that they don't live with ghosts,
that they don't sound like killers.

I hide my Magen David
under my shirt when I pass,
and think of blood staining the streets of Seville,
of hushed prayer and closed curtains and unlit candles,
of mezuzahs concealed under the feet of Virgin Marys
and trials and confessions
and flames licking,
I think of smoke clogging the streets of Aleppo,
of ghosts in Minsk and Bialystok and Warsaw,
of smashed shop windows and broken glass
and bullets and rubble,
and synagogues burning.

I hide my Magen David
when I pass
and think of the unending cost of exile,
drowning in the pages
of this history book, words
bleeding together,
chapters scrawled into skin,
ink etched into bone,
and I can't pretend
that I'm not haunted by Seville and Aleppo
and Minsk and Bialystok and Warsaw.
I can't pretend that I haven't read this book before.
I can't pretend that I don't know how it ends.

Lena Renee Anzarut is a Jewish postgraduate student, currently pursuing a PhD in Anthropology, with a focus on Historical Archaeology. She is deeply interested in history and the ways in which history reverberates through the present. She spends her free time writing poetry and sewing 18th century reenactment clothing.



— NON-FICTION —



The Black-and-White Paradigm: The Progressive Lie of Jewish Whiteness

Corey Walker

Progressives, people who are typically quick to align themselves with oppressed and subjugated groups, seem to have turned against one of the most marginalized demographics in history: Jewish people. Their refusal to condemn—and in some cases their insistence on endorsing—Hamas’ brutal October 7th attacks on Israel have left many Jews wondering whether they still have a seat at the table of intersectional justice.

Yet the left-wing response to the October 7th attacks isn’t surprising to anyone remotely involved with progressive social circles.

To have credibility in leftist milieus, one must possess a “marginalized” identity. Within the leftist identitarian framework, so-called black and brown people are the most victimized, and ergo have the most moral authority.

This neat racial binary, largely modeled on the American racial experience, informs the progressive view of the Israel-Palestine conflict. If Israel is the modern equivalent to Selma, Alabama in 1962, then Palestinians are the morally-justified protagonists, resisting a system that victimizes them. Israeli Jews, on the other hand, must be “whites” perpetrating an evil and cruel system of racial discrimination and segregation.

These tidy racial narratives, in which moral authority can be linearly measured by melanin levels, are readily apparent when observing how progressive circles discuss the conflict.

In 2019, left-wing professor and cable news commentator Marc Lamont Hill denied the existence of Mizrahi Jews. Hill argued that Mizrahi Jews were merely an “identity category” and that they were simply detached from their “Palestinian” roots.

Prominent left-wing political commentator Briahna Joy Gray denied on Twitter that Israeli Jews have any Middle Eastern heritage. The former Bernie Sanders press secretary argued that Israelis could just return to “Europe” in the event that progressive solutions for the Israel-Palestine conflict result in the destruction of the Jewish state.

The progressive narrative of Mizrahi Jews being “stolen” from their ancestral Palestinian homeland exists to discredit the existence of Israel. To the radical left, Mizrahi Jews and Palestinians lived together in relative harmony until Zionism severed their bonds and fooled them into siding with the oppressive white Jews. Under this analysis, Mizrahi Jews are also victims of Zionism that must be liberated along with Palestinians.

Such a paradigm, of course, ignores the crucial role that Mizrahi Jews played in the founding and sustaining of the state of Israel. It is not only ahistorical, but condescending and racist, to suggest that Mizrahi Jews were somehow hoodwinked into standing alongside “white oppressors”. The argument also ignores the fact that at the time Israel was founded, even pale-skinned Ashkenazi Jews from Europe were widely considered to be not white, but rather of Middle Eastern origin: as demonstrated by the racial politics of the Nazis, and by propaganda posters throughout Europe telling Ashkenazim to “go back to Palestine”. There are many Ashkenazi Jews with brown skin – just like there are many Arab Muslims with white skin. Ashkenazi Jews and Mizrahi Jews came together to create the state of Israel, and to help give safe refuge to Jews around the world, including the African Ethiopian Jews of Beta Israel. This is not to deny the existence of racism in Israel: racism exists in every country, and given Israel’s diversity, it is certainly no exception to the reality of racial strife. But anyone telling you “Jews are the white people, Palestinians are the brown/black people” is simply lying to you.



Given the numerous flaws of such a literally black-and-white framework, one might wonder why the anti-Israel crowd clings to it so fiercely. But when one considers the broader context of so-called “intersectionality” and anti-Western “revolutionary liberation”, the answer becomes clear. Pro-Palestine activists have worked hard to portray their movement as part of a broader international struggle against racial oppression.

To admit that Jews too are non-white victims of racism would invoke too much cognitive dissonance to bear. It would bring much of the anti-Zionist worldview crumbling down.

Palestinian academic Edward Said suggested in his 1979 work *The Question of Palestine* that the Palestinian cause should seek to align “their struggle in the same framework that includes Vietnam, Algeria, Cuba, and black Africa,” in an “universal political struggle against colonialism and imperialism.”

Said argues that the strategy to paint Palestinians as victims of European colonialism, “transformed retrospectively and actually from an implacably silent master into an analogue of white settlers in Africa.”

Palestinian activists collaborated and shared advice with Ferguson protesters following the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown. The Black Lives Matter movement issued official support for the Palestinian cause and dismissed Israel as a product of settler colonialism.

In a 2021 interview with *Vice*, Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar compared the Palestinian experience with the killing of George Floyd, in a statement clearly curated for the ears of Western liberals.

“I want to take this opportunity to remember the racist murder of George Floyd ... The same type of racism that killed

George Floyd is being used by [Israel] against the Palestinians,” Sinwar said.

In the midst of the 2020 George Floyd protests, the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights tweeted, “Israeli military trains US police in racist and repressive policing tactics, which systematically targets Black and Brown bodies,” drawing a link

between African American and Palestinian grievances against criminal justice forces.

“Protests against racist state violence in the US, under the Black Lives Matter slogan, have pushed organizers to draw parallels in the anti-racist, anti-colonial struggles that connect us all, from the US to Palestine,” a BDS spokesperson told *The Guardian*.

Whether the discussion of the Israel-Palestine conflict in such binary racial terms will pay dividends for the pro-Palestine movement remains to be seen. Thus far, results are mixed. Roughly half of African Americans report not feeling connected to the plight of Palestinians and more view Israelis favorably than they do Palestinians, according to data by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. However, 44% of black adults say that America is “too supportive” of Israel, compared to 30% of white adults, according to a December 2023 AP-NORC poll.

Of course, the notion that Jews are simply white interlopers in historical Palestine, displacing the “native” Arab population is flat-out wrong. Modern genetic analysis of the Ashkenazi population proves so-called “white” Jews are genetically linked to the Middle East. Ashkenazi Jews, Mizrahi Jews, and Sephardi Jews share more DNA with each other than they do with any other group — and all three kinds of Jews share more DNA with groups like Palestinian Muslims and Syriac Christians than they do with most European populations. And of course, beyond even the genetic record, the historical, cultural, and linguistic heritage of the Jewish people is inextricably linked to the land of Israel.

Moreover, the anti-Zionist accusation of Israel as a white, settler-colonial state sidesteps the uncomfortable fact that a plurality of Israelis are of Mizrahi Middle Eastern descent. Arab countries such as Iraq, Egypt, and Syria purged these Jews from their territories in a wave of violent pogroms, leading to mass Mizrahi migration into modern Israel.

Yet to anti-Zionist progressives, these uncomfortable truths are irrelevant. Their anti-Israel project is a smaller part of a broader scathing critique against the West in general. It is no secret that much of leftist anguish surrounding Israel is rooted in the view that the Jewish state is a project of “Western imperialists.”



Such an assertion is extremely factually dubious. To give just one of many counters, the Israeli War of Independence was fought largely without Western support, against Arab armies such as the Jordanians who had in fact been trained and armed by the British.

However, in countering such historical inaccuracies, we should not cede the underlying ideological point. Western influence and Western values are not intrinsically bad — and those who seek to make such a case inevitably end up lending their support to some of the worst abusers of human rights in the world.

The most vocal leftist opponents against Israel are often dead silent on oppression of LGBT people throughout the Middle East, and are vocal supporters of murderous Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. They gush over Yemen despite the Houthis' embrace of slavery, which has kept many thousands of people, including many black people, in perpetual bondage. They are indifferent about Palestinian oppression and murder at the hands of groups like Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Palestinian Authority. In short, leftists do not seem to care about evil unless they can project that evil onto a perceived Western influence.

The racialized backlash against Israel is just the tip of the spear for a far more ambitious goal: the complete dissolution of the West. If Israel must be destroyed, then so must America, Canada, and Europe. Only then can the “oppressed” be “liberated”.

We must oppose this disgusting ideology on all fronts. Israel is not a country full of white people; nor are countries inherently evil if they actually are full of white people. We should judge people by their actions, not their skin color. And Israel, Europe, and the United States remain among the best guarantors of human rights in the world.

Corey Walker is a writer based in Washington D.C. His work has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Reason*, and *Daily Caller*. He is originally from Chicago, and attended the University of Michigan.





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