

**October 2023 Facebook Journal:
A Trip To Israel Before and During War**

TEN DAYS IN ISRAEL

OCTOBER 5 – 15, 2023

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39 postings that generated 2,359 responses plus 778 comments and shares.

October 3, 2023

Well, friends and family, I'm about to fly to Israel on Wednesday, and will be staying for 10 days. It's a theatre working trip, holing up with two plays and their creators, and scouting some more, meeting other writers, and connecting with dear friends. I'm renting a cheap car and staying in Ramat HaSharon, but also Haifa, and Sasa and even spending two nights in a Baaka Jerusalem hotel as we workshop a new draft of a very impressive chamber musical about the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin as told from the family's collision with the family of Rabin assassin, Yigal Amir; it's newly titled NOVEMBER 4 by composer Danny Paller, co-written with NYTimes journalist Myra Noveck. Also working with Motti Lerner on radically refining the A.I. translation of his brand new, never-read-aloud-before play, BALFOUR, about street protests in front of Prime Minister Netanyahu's home, which VFP will be workshopping November 14-15 in DC (see our web page in comment). It dawns on me that I should also be preparing for the December 4-5 reading of [Hanna Eady's](#) ALMOND BLOSSOM AT DEIR YASSIN by, like, actually going to the site where the Kfar Shaul Mental Health Center now stands, and is the setting for Hanna's powerful present-day memory play.

And on my final night, it's Opening/First Performance of Motti's new play about the Yom Kippur War and Golda, now entitled THE FIRST LADY, and it should be 800 times more ferocious than the clinical but highly competent and compelling Helen Mirren film with the eponymous title (GOLDA). May wander up north to catch an interesting performance at the Khashabe theater, and likely others too. And catch family (not all, I fear, but some) and friends (not all, I fear, but a bunch). And protest on two successive Saturday nights in the street. The weather will be 84 degrees the entire time, so I'm planning to swim at least 3 times – That's a promise to myself, and compensation for all the driving.



And I'll go to a Palestinian and also a Druze* village up north (Biram and Hurfish) with a friend showing me his grandmother's village. I'm excited to be connecting with so many people of different backgrounds and I think I'll have a lot to share about the meaning of this trip. I'm sad to be missing the premiere of my good friend [Lee Perlman](#)'s show, PRISONER OF ZION, enjoying a very short run in the Incubator Series at the Akko Festival of Alternative Israeli Theatre, which I'll miss by a day! But Lee's play may inform the question that will hang over the trip, and it's really the question at the heart of the 3rd play we'll be workshopping at VFP in January (8-9), Alexa Derman's ZIONISTA RISING, a laugh-out-loud award-winning comedy about rebranding Zionism for a new generation of torn American Jewish progressives!

The hovering question is about Zionism itself, in a land becoming almost unrecognizable to itself from the metastasizing political culture grown more and more toxic and dysfunctional by the day. "Whither Zionism at all?" is I believe the essential question of Lee's 2-character play. I'll be asking that question all trip long, and later, all Middle East Festival-long. Goes without saying that tickets for VFP's own Voices From a Changing Middle East Festival Playing Reading Series go LIVE in another week. I would say "go on sale in another week" but, in fact, all tickets for the in-person readings at Spooky Action Theatre at the UNMC are free (donations accepted) and seating capacity is limited.

Very happy to be going back - which may seem odd given the very bad rap and rep Israel is gaining for itself by virtue of the Government Coup against the standing of the judicial system. But I do feel the calling all the same; spiritual strains drawing me up to Jerusalem, in spite of all the egregiousness of everything. Reports to come! Tomorrow we begin casting in DC for the Israel-Palestine-American-Zionista readings! Onward With Eyes Open (and bathing suit in the trunk)!

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October 6, 2023

Photo and video posting with descriptions to come later, as it's spotty connectivity up here in the north - First 28 hours in Israel/Palestine, beginning in Ramat Hasharon with Motti Lerner (my base for the trip and, in so many way, the foundation builder of my theater work in Israel), and then a drive up north through Haifa to Hurfeish, Biram (and/or Baram), and Jish (Gush Chalav) with excellent theater and film actor, George Iskandar as day trip organizer, as his grandmother was born in Biram, and he enlisted extremely knowledgeable friends, Amjad (an actor with George's new company who lives in Hurfeish) and Tzvika (filmmaker who's co-creating an animated history of the conquest of Biram and the dispersal of its Palestinian villagers) to guide us. Amazing late lunch in Jish. Ended our afternoon atop Mount Adir overlooking Lebanon. Spending the night at Kibbutz Sasa where I've been welcomed as if I'm returning home since 1976 by our family babysitter Lynn (who started babysitting for us in 1965)! Already a trip of multiple layers of history and wonderful friendships old, middle aged, and brand new!



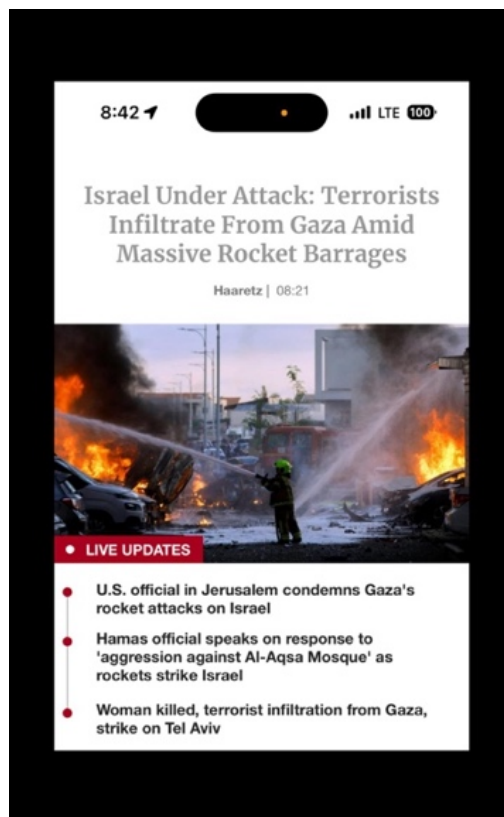
*Amjad, Ari, George, and Tzvika atop Har Adir overlooking Lebanon.
2 Jews, 2 Palestinians, arm in arm in arm, 13 hours before war...*

October 7, 2023 - 8:42 am

This can't be good...

Details unfolding [written at 8 am Saturday morning in Israel]. 5000 rockets from Gaza in 20 minutes, declares Hamas [IDF says 2000]. Firefights within kibbutzim with terrorists; dozens kidnapped?! Infiltrators driving around in stolen Israeli police cars. This update about tonight's plans: "Israeli protest group Kaplan Force cancels Tel Aviv demonstration after wave of rockets batter Israel. The Israeli protest organization Kaplan Force canceled its scheduled Saturday night demonstration in Tel Aviv in light of the hail of rocket fire on cities across Israel."

The country is on war alert. Safe up here in the north.



October 7, 2023

The retaliation campaign begins. A tall building in Gaza (looking to be about 10 stories tall) is taken down to the ground by an Israeli missile. It collapses from the bottom where the missile struck, a precision flattening. The television shows it, but no commentary yet. It's twilight now, and will be dark in a matter of minutes. What will come in the night?

Breaking update - as now multiple Gaza buildings smoulder: Hamas threatens Tel Aviv with an equivalent retaliation!

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Lots of breaking news after the 7 O'Clock hour. 4 terrorists holding a family hostage for some 12 hours now on Kibbutz Be'eri, as untold dozens of kidnapped residents and soldiers are now in Gaza - the number is certainly higher than 35. The commentators questions now turn to politics: With Yair Lapid of the opposition pledging the left's support of the IDF in its fight against Hamas, Yesh Atid and other parties are prepared to join in a National Unity Government

if Netanyahu takes power away from Gantz and Smotrich. Will a new government come to pass? And a second major question: What is the strategy of Israel's response in Gaza? If it's now an escalated retaliation, this time to obliterate Hamas, what will that trigger in the north? An extreme response from Israel, the analyst warns, will escalate responses on other fronts.

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October 7, 2023

Updates from the war - now 10 hours old. At least 40 Israelis dead and 780 injured and any number of citizens, soldiers and police officers taken hostage, many brought back into Gaza, others being held in a Kibbutz dining hall; untold hostages at the S'derot police station under siege, the army encircling. Widespread looting of Southern Israeli village stores with Gazans streaming in and back into Gaza. A sense of celebration in Gaza, while within in Israel, among some Palestinian Israelis (and even among some I know on Facebook; comments on their feeds read: "Days of championship, glory and dignity, eternal days" - "Tell them that the liberation war started from Gaza with the help of its men and youth, and it will continue, God willing, until we all pray in Jerusalem liberated. This is God's promise and it was an effective promise. Greetings from Gaza"). Gruesome torture of the kidnapped circulates on social media; then taken down when an Israeli woman writes, "That's my father!"

The 2-hour drive from Kibbutz Sasa to the Coast is easy - the roads are less full than usual for a Shabbat. No sirens. Only one military convoy; 8 armored personnel carriers on the coastal road and one mini-road block funneling traffic to 1 lane with 6 police, two with weapons drawn, profiling drivers as we pass at a controlled speed. Listening to news on the car radio the entire way (my Hebrew understands 70%). The IDF has taken control of information communication about the kidnappings; no news on that front; it stays a constant the entire drive; but the TV coverage when I get to Motti's is more free-wheeling; they're broadcasting Arabic footage from Gaza alongside coverage of Israeli party-goers near Kfar Aza - over 2000 young people (a trance party in nature, outdoor, lots of reveling in the sensual pleasures) suddenly caught in terrorist cross-fire at 6:30 am - injured everywhere - 20-somethings dive for cover in the orchards and hide for hours. The TV interviews dazed girls coming out from the fields, their cellphones dead, the batteries had run down, they could hear the firefighting from the fields for hours.

What's unprecedented here is not really the intelligence failure - that's just reminiscent of the Yom Kippur War of Oct 6, 1973. But as [Tamar Mayer](#) points out to me in a comment, it's really 1948 with house-to-house battles inside kibbutzim and settlements and blood spilled to this level within Israel proper in such a coordinated terror wave. It's going to be a brutal and massive retaliation by the Israelis - some are saying "it's going to be a massacre." And yet here, it's quiet. We've turned off the television for 15 minutes until the 5 pm news comes on. Motti's Golda play - now in tech rehearsals at Habimah, soon to open in a week (will I still be here? will I be able to get out? will there be flights?) dramatizes the intelligence failures and strategic missteps of Golda Meir and her cabinet ministers in the run-up to the "surprise" Yom Kippur War. The resonance of that play when it opens now - marking not just an anniversary, but a very real

indictment of the present government's fatally flawed and corrupted focus - will be unmistakable. Will tech rehearsals continue during war? That's part of this theater-producer's education this week, as I think about all those Ukrainian playwrights we've been reading and presenting the past two years, as they make theater under siege, with bombs falling all around them in Kiev. The war continues now. And theater chronicles and humanizes headlines. But can it foster empathy amongst those whose hearts are hardened? This war will harden everyone's hearts, on both sides. That can't be good - as I wrote first thing this morning upon reading the first headline. 5:00 pm News:

Updated figures. Over 100 Israelis dead. 900 injured. A new post no doubt imminent with all the breaking news.

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October 7, 2023

UPDATE/REFLECTION at end of post:

What Hamas rockets being intercepted over Tel Aviv and Jaffa looks like. I share this after a third trip to the bomb shelter in the last 15 minutes. Here's what I just wrote to the family:

>> hi everyone - safe with Motti and Tammi, but spending my first time ever in a bomb shelter (Noam's bedroom) as the siren has gone off twice (Motti also has the App on his phone alerting him 2 seconds before the siren is heard across the area). You hear the quiet booms of Iron Dome intercepts in the distance, but "so many!" Tammi says - It's a very heavy response by Hamas to the missiles launched by Israel this afternoon in retaliation. BBC reports 198 Palestinians dead from the 10 and 12 story building that were felled - who knows what's accurate? But now it's quiet again and we're walking out of Noam's bedroom (which is now the yoga room, kind of like Isabel's office in NC) and going back into the living room to watch more news reports. I'll keep you updated. Thinking of Miri and Mark's relatives and good friends in the South who were frighteningly close to the violence.>>

UPDATE (with new photo of fires from one of many missile strikes added): Missiles have hit Tel Aviv, Bat Yam, and Givataim. And there are reports of a missile strike in Hadera, 34 km NORTH of where we are now (north even of Netanya!), which is quite a penetration. Some of Hamas' long range missiles are getting through Iron Dome defenses. A missile strikes the top floor of an apartment building in Rishon L'Tzion. Small fires breaking out in many places. These are not harmless strikes.

>> An American friend writes on email: "Yeah, the news here, presumably more reliable, is that the Iron Dome was massively over-matched by the number of rockets fired. So many, many got through." I share this analysis with Motti. He thinks about it, and then says, "the damage here was very light. Much of the damage is from debris from intercepted rockets falling. Very very limited casualties/injuries. Less than 20 got through. Out of 3,000 missiles." The percentage and numbers speaks for themselves.



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October 7, 2023

Many terrible specific incidents that make up this first day of war that's now seen 250 Israeli dead and over 1,500 injured [and climbing]. 200 of the 600 Palestinian terrorists have been killed. At the Sderot Police station, still under siege, 16 hours later, 20 police officers are dead inside. Families are still being held hostage in a kibbutz dining hall. And, perhaps the most vivid incident: 2,000 ravers come to Kibbutz Re'im to dance, smoke and sex their way through the night into sunrise are attacked by the terrorists and take flight into the fields. Dozens are shot to death. Others kidnapped. Here's a 4-part video clip (90 second each) describing the gathering and the terrible unfolding of the early morning incursion. Asking translation help from any of my Israeli speaking friends to comment on the individual videos key quotes to give a most vivid complement to the video.

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"We are safe.
We are not okay.
No one is okay."

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October 7, 2023

Our young president standing with Israel, looking wide-eyed, spry, sounding strong. Well, not quite, really at all. But saying important things to the People of Israel, the commentators all agree. "He's giving Israel a free hand in responding harshly." "And putting the US Military as critical back-up if the war should expand to others fronts, including involvement from Iran." "And don't forget the Saudi Arabia-Israel Peace Agreement. Biden's banking on it for his re-election." Biden's had Israel's back for as long as he's been in Congress. He comes by his statement of support honestly.

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October 7, 2023

What the Israeli Left (or far Left) is saying tonight. Something along the lines of what filmmaker Udi Aloni shared as well on social media: "This is not a war!!

It's a rebellion of the hopeless whose end is foreseen. Gaza ghetto rebellion that shouts to the indifferent world: We are here. The post does not justify or condemn. It is a description of fact."

Haggai Matar in his article below for +972 writes:

"The attack this morning also has more recent contexts. One of them is the looming horizon of a normalization deal between Saudi Arabia and Israel. For years, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been making the case that peace can be achieved without talking to Palestinians or making any concessions. The Abraham Accords have stripped Palestinians of one of their last bargaining chips and support bases: the solidarity of Arab governments, despite that solidarity having long been questionable. The high likelihood of losing perhaps the most important of those Arab states may well have helped push Hamas to the edge.

Meanwhile, commentators have been warning for weeks that recent escalations in the occupied West Bank are leading to dangerous paths. Throughout the past year, more Palestinians and Israelis have been killed than in any other year since the Second Intifada of the early 2000s. The Israeli army is routinely raiding into Palestinian cities and refugee camps. The far-right government is giving settlers an entirely free hand to set up new illegal outposts and launch pogroms on Palestinian towns and villages, with soldiers accompanying the settlers and killing or maiming Palestinians trying to defend their homes. Amid the high holidays, Jewish extremists are challenging the "status quo" around the Temple Mount/Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, backed by politicians who share their ideology.

In Gaza, meanwhile, the ongoing siege is continuously destroying the lives of over two million Palestinians, many of whom are living in extreme poverty, with little access to clean water and about four hours of electricity a day. This siege has no official endgame; even an Israeli State Comptroller report found that the government has never discussed

long-term solutions to ending the blockade, nor seriously considered any alternatives to recurring rounds of war and death. It is literally the only option this government, and its predecessors, have on the table.

The only answers that consecutive Israeli governments have offered to the problem of Palestinian attacks from Gaza have been in the form of band aids: if they come from the ground, we will build a wall; if they come through tunnels, we will build an underground barrier; if they fire rockets, we'll set up interceptors; if they are killing some of ours, we will kill many more of them. And so it goes on and on.

All this is not to justify the killing of civilians — that is absolutely wrong. Rather, it is meant to remind us that there is a reason to everything that is happening today, and that — as in all previous rounds — there is no military solution to Israel's problem with Gaza, nor to the resistance that naturally emerges as a response to violent apartheid.

In recent months, hundreds of thousands of Israelis have been marching for “democracy and equality” across the country, with many even saying they would refuse military service because of this government's authoritarian trends. What those protestors and reserve soldiers need to understand — especially today, as many of them announced they will halt their protests and join the war with Gaza — is that Palestinians have been struggling for those same demands and more for decades, facing an Israel that to them is already, and has always been, completely authoritarian.

As I write these words, I am sitting at home in Tel Aviv, trying to figure out how to protect my family in a house with no shelter or safe room, following with growing panic the reports and rumors of horrible events taking place in the Israeli towns near Gaza which are under attack. I see people, some of them my friends, calling on social media to attack Gaza more fiercely than ever before. Some Israelis are saying that now is the time to eradicate Gaza entirely — essentially calling for genocide. Through all the explosions, the dread and the bloodshed, speaking about peaceful solutions seems like madness to them.

Yet I remember that everything that I am feeling now, which every Israeli must be sharing, has been the life experience of millions of Palestinians for far too long. The only solution, as it has always been, is to bring an end of apartheid, occupation, and siege, and promote a future based on justice and equality for all of us. It is not in spite of the horror that we have to change course — it is exactly because of it."

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October 8, 2023

Posting less today. After driving from the north yesterday on (the very good) advice of dear friends Lynn and Jon, I watched events with Motti and Tammi here in Ramat HaShalom on Israeli television and shared out here knowing that American media might be a few steps

behind and missing many revealing details. Now worldwide journalism is catching up, as are the opinion pieces, along with the war of social media memes. And the temper tantrums on line The context battles. The posting of flags and sharing the faces of the kidnapped, the missing and the dead. I don't want to get sucked into a social media hole while I'm here. United Airlines isn't flying out and I'm not (yet) looking to fly home early. I came here to work on a few plays and that's what I'm continuing to do today with Motti (we're half way through red line edits of his play about street protests and the battle of tactics between organizers old and young) on BALFOUR, and I'm now confirming a drive to participate in a private reading of Danny Paller's musical tonight. I'm going to be discreet about my whereabouts. I'm going to conserve some energy. I'm going to conserve my outrage, and even my grief and shock and frustration and analysis and stay in the world of dramaturgy, and script refinement; these plays, of course, deal with the brutal realities of war and need for justice and peace.

In Motti's play, a hugely diverse group of protesters and police tangle on the streets of Jerusalem in front of the Prime Minister's home. The protesters want to uplift their society. He doesn't talk about living in peace with Palestinians. He talks about living with DIGNITY within Israel proper. To make this land worth fighting for. A land of justice and basic freedoms.

Here's just one speech from one of the protest organizers; one half of the couple that form our double-protagonists weaving through the play. Here's Uri (a social worker, born in Sderot; son of a family that immigrated from Morocco. Co-founder of the protest bulletin, "The Revolution."

"The struggle for bread and work is of utmost importance. Hunger is a dangerous time bomb. I know it firsthand. I was born in Sderot, and there I grew up; deep below the poverty line. When I was in the army, I stayed on base during weekends so my parents wouldn't have to feed another mouth. But the demand for bread and work is just part of the struggle. Poverty robs many young people of the right to study, the right to develop, the right to love, the right to happiness. And we are here to fight for these rights as well, which together are the right to live with dignity. We will stand here, in front of this fortress, every Saturday until all those below the poverty line join us and fight for it. No government will be able to crush us. And remember: if the state does not grant its citizens the right to live with dignity, then citizens are not obligated to obey its laws. Usually, when I say this, some undercover agent jumps out and stops me for incitement. Tonight, I won't give them that pleasure. Whoever wants to know more about the right to live with dignity is welcome to read our bulletin.

(Shows a copy)

We will prove to the whole world that citizens can fight for their rights even against a stubborn government like this one..."

After terror attacks, Israelis return to their work, to their habits, as an act of defying the terror; of not succumbing to it. We're at war now. It's a new playbook. But the impulse to carry onward, forward, remains.

UPDATE: Tech Rehearsals for Motti's play on Golda the Yom Kippur War will continue tomorrow. Life and work continues. As it does. In this land.

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October 9, 2023

A musical reading in Jerusalem around the table (5 feet from the safe room) of NOVEMBER 4 (concept and story: Danny Paller and Myra Noveck • Music and lyrics: Danny Paller) about the enormous tragedy, and colossal intelligence failure that led to Yigal Amir's assassination of Prime Minister Yitchak Rabin, posted alongside a listing of missile launch intercepts from Gaza as posted by the National Emergency Portal of the Homefront Command entrusted with civil defense in emergencies. The play was moving and a huge step forward for the creative team (I'll post separately about it in the morning) but the juxtaposition to the dozens of missiles launched at the end of Day 2 of the war and now continuing into Day 3 is striking. The barrage keeps coming, its trajectory scattershot across the southern and central parts of the state, but somewhere aimed, wouldn't you know, at Jerusalem around 11:30 pm, all brought down by Iron Dome but, I could hear that same empty thud I heard the night before with Motti and Tammi in Ramat HaSharon. Playwright friend [James Inverne](#) was closer to the sounds in Mod'in, as he wrote: "The windows are shaking as barrages of rockets fly into a nearby town. I can see Iron Dome interceptions in the distance."



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October 10, 2023

A happy picture from a harder day.



Beyond the sirens; beyond the 12 pm visit to the hotel safe room in the basement, and a 5 pm siren that interrupts an outdoor script meeting by the juice stand as we lay under a picnic table for 5 minutes before resuming; beyond the 6 hours texting with United Airlines after Lufthansa canceled my flight on Oct 15; beyond the hassles of calling AmEx's Rental Loss and Damage Insurance Policy to get my name and cc on a personalized policy document for the Hertz TLV office; all of these hassles that bleed hours, trigger annoyance, and low-grade anxiety; all these inconveniences PALE POWERFULLY in contrast to the harrowing events of Saturday; and then the images; and then the battle-lines; and the demands from oneself - and certainly others - for moral clarity, political sharpness, and decisiveness; the war is brutal in all ways, including how it detonates differences between friends, within families; even the humbled and heartbroken are excoriated for their treason; for failing to wave the flag.

In the hotel breakfast area, an Italian-Jewish barista studying to be a tour guide - a New Israeli for two years - gets in a spat with the hotel bell clerk; a Palestinian-Israeli who can't believe what she's saying to the guests! She tells him to butt-out; that he didn't hear the full conversation; he says "You don't know what you are talking about! We don't all hate you! We don't all want to kill you! You just got here!" She tells the young orthodox backpacker, "He's an idiot," and just as quickly, the fighting stops; bell clerk goes back to the front desk; barista begins putting the Israeli Cornflakes back into its cardboard box, and strikes the rest of the breakfast set-up. I try to figure out what they were actually talking about, but don't really want to ask, but don't wanna talk to nobody all day. So I ask her what happened, and she tells me her story, and she's thin and pretty and, as she keeps talking about warnings she's received "not to open certain emails or links on social media" - "Because they might have viruses," I ask. "Because of what they might say," she says; how they could "lower morale; and we need to keep our morale up! To support our soldiers!" I start to wind the conversation way down, buss my own dirty dishes, and say goodbye as she sits to talk with an Italian friend who must be 80 and he's got double crutches and very bad eczema on his legs. I think it's okay to have subdued morale, and to be kind of shattered about what's happened, and to not be blood thirsty with vengeance, or revving up the ole Instagram account to rally the shock troops and bark

Resistance, and counter with depravity and indictments of barbarism. The war becomes internalized and it shakes every one of us badly.

So we'll take a smile when we see a friend from DC! [Jane Petkofsky](#) does a double-take as we spot each from opposite ends of the courtyard and she says "I thought that looked like an older version of Ari Roth, but then it was you! And you don't look as old close up!" And we laughed. Even as I wondered what it meant to see myself from far away. It was really nice connecting with just a few people today. A 4-hour, 2-part script meeting over pita, humus and falafel at Abu Sitri's near the old train station. And *The Play Really Is The Thing*, because it makes meaning of an event that really changed so much; how an assassin's bullet killed the best last chance for peace and the Oslo Accords – for all its problems and limitations – is certainly an AGREEMENT that could have pulled us from the brink of we're now diving into – "The Gates of Hell!" is how one mother described Gaza, both for its inhabitants, and the young soldiers being sent into clean it out, or raze it, or find the kidnapped in tunnels. How do you fight your enemy in a tunnel? With captives taken as shields? Taken as worse than shields; as trophies to be brutalized, defiled, and burned alive in one case of an elderly victim. What can you say? Who do you stand with? As a Jew in the land of Israel? You stand with your people, and you mourn for them, as you mourn for your neighbors and your enemies too; and you stand with the Muslim publisher you never met who writes, "If we tolerate extremism, it will erode the rock of security and ultimately destroy all US efforts to stabilize the Middle East." That was Ahmed Charai of the Jerusalem Strategic Tribune [see link below].

There are inspirational healers to be found all over the place. There's an inspirational healer and bridge builder now kidnapped and being held in Gaza where she's done education and outreach work for years. There is cruelty everywhere, and there is grace and hope and humanity almost everywhere as well. My heart is heavy and my head aches and my body's been stuck sitting with my devices, but I must treasure this safety; this connection; this modern miracle of communication, and movement, and flight re-bookings.... that prove successful! After all those hours patiently waiting and being really annoyed. There's hope. And a way home. Only one day late. Laila Tov. Hopefully no sirens tonight.

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October 11, 2023

Tale of the Right Wing Barista, Part 2 - Notes for a post, pecked out on phone, from a Paz gas station between appointments with the occasional bomb thud in the distance - The Breakfast Chronicles: Israeli Radio plays comfort hits from my Jewish adolescence: "Yehiyeh Tov" (It Will Be Good - see link*) sung by David Broza (whose voice sounds a lot lower now than it did in 1977 - also please see by 10:50 pm post from later this evening) followed by Arik Einstein singing "Ani v'ata" (You and I Will Change The World - see link**) with the famous electric

guitar riff we never quite incorporated in our OSRUI camp renditions. It's music to ease the stress and, it turns out, not to be coming the radio, but from Barista's YouTube account; "Big Brother knows what I'm thinking and feeling," she says, and this is the one time she doesn't mind giving into it. The mood is LESS talkative in the cafe this morning. No fights.

"How are you doing?" I ask.

"Keeping our heads up. Ours spirits up."

I ask if there's any yogurt to go with the granola.

"We have no drivers. We have trucks but no drivers."

She tells of a 7 year old working the cash register at her local shop because dad is at the front; Mom is working from home; the 7 year old is asking customers: "Ashrai? Credit card?"

"I tell him 'you're doing a very good job.' Which he is."

That's the extent of our conversation.

Until she comes to the table and says she can go to the store and buy yogurt for the guests; she's been authorized to.

I tell her "no need"

I'm often buying yogurt and then letting it languish in the fridge for weeks. She goes. I eat.

Check my phone.

It's a sobering morning

More terrible news

I confirm my drive to Ben Sherman Youth Village; meet with the executive director, [Ilana Tischler](#), in an hour. My mother spent the end of the war (WWII) with her sister there as orphans from 1945-47 (separate post to come)

I'm seeing [Sinai Peter](#) at habima theatre.

Others don't want to meet today

The party for me in Herzliya tomorrow night: canceled

The show tonight at Habima where I was to see Norman Issa perform (NEIGHBORS FROM UP): also cancelled

It's a relief

So much work to do for DC!

The Good News: Ed Gero says yes to do the lead in Hanna Eady's workshop in December (ALMOND BLOSSOM AT DEIR YASSIN; separate post to come with link below***)

The Bad News - potential casting director interviewed back on October 4 says no to help cast the season. Nice. Hard to get help these days. I've approached more than a few.

Gotta get out casting calls myself for Motti's play soon.

Need help!

"It will all get done," I must remind myself.

And it will.

Love the sweet bread here

The eggs much less so.

Barista comes back with a box of 16 yogurts

Asks me if I want 2

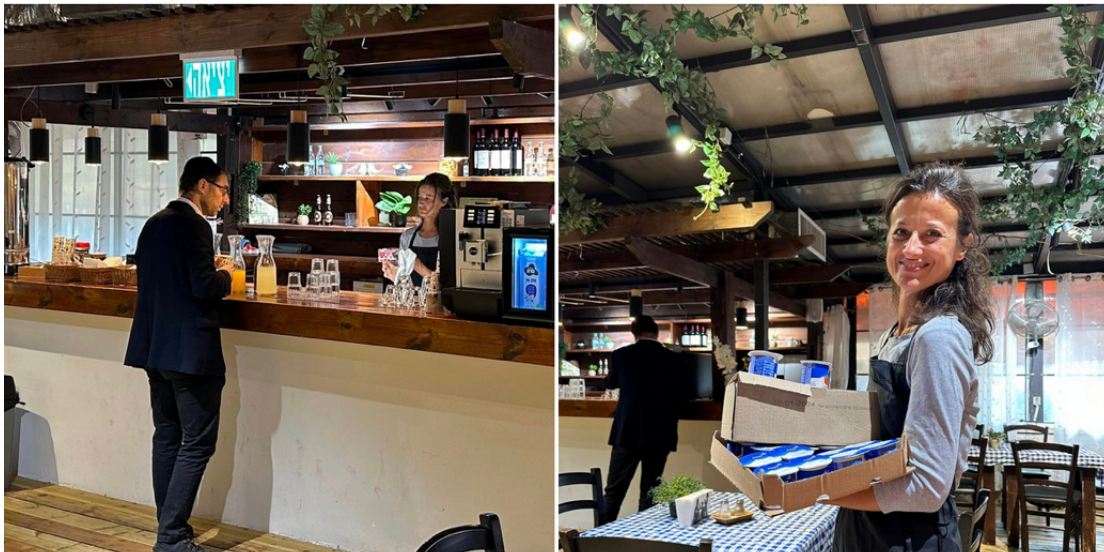
I tell her one is "maspik"

One is enough

I finish it all

I say goodbye to The Little House in Bakah.

Recommended!



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October 11, 2023

[Ari Roth](#) is with [Gitta Fajerstein](#) at [Ben Shemen Youth Village](#)

A moving afternoon in Ben Shemen. Was given the mid-level donor, VIP tour because I'm part of a family that grew up in Ben Shemen.



I wrote about it in my most recent play – Here's an excerpt:

"My mother isn't a minister. She's a psychologist! And immigrant... Born in Germany, raised in hiding, who came to Palestine on Youth Aliyah before Miri [Rekev] was ever born! She fled the wreckage of Europe, and made it by Boat from Italy, with her sister to an Orphanage in the Forest on The Road To Jerusalem.

(Projection: Newsreel footage of Palestine, becoming Israel)

'44 to '47. The Goal: Avoid War, and all that came with; in this case, the Fight for Independence and the attendant Naqba – or Calamity – whereas Miri was Platoon Commander in the Gadna – essentially IDF Prep School – training teenagers to do what Mom and her sister had been avoiding as refugees – returning to Belgium when it was safe to go home – But Home Is What She Wanted Israel To Be! The place that nurtured with pioneering, and folk-song – Chalutzit – The Ideology of Labor, that gave her an Identity Stamp – living in the youth village of Ben Shemen, overlooking the town of Lod – or Lydda in Arabic – which I would learn much more about..."

And we'll leave it at that. [keep reading the history of Ben Shemen below*]

Both the Roth and Fajerstein families have their names on a wall and in a playground in the forest, contributing just a bit in recognition and support for all that Ben Shemen provided, and continues to, as a home for hundreds of young people coming from all over the country, as they came from all over the world, on Youth Aliyah, or in many other manners, as the programs and offerings of the organization were described in vivid detail today by [Ilana Tischler](#). Below I'll

share her Executive Director's Welcome, along with a partial history of the village copied from their website (<https://en.ben-shemen.org.il/copy-of->).

Proud that the Roth family has supported the renovating of a suite of five music and recording rooms, used by some 80 students a day, operating more than 8 hours a day. Got the tour of all their art facilities today too, and they are wonderful! We'll be back as a family - and as artists - for much more!



Here's Ilana:

Welcome To the Ben Shemen Youth Village

<https://en.ben-shemen.org.il/copy-of-%D7%90%D7%95%D7%93...>

Ben Shemen Youth Village is home to about 400 children and youth ages 6-18. The Village is a unique social community, whose goal is to raise, develop, empower, and love people, society and the environment. The educational staff at the Village accompanies the students on their path to success in modern society utilizing knowledge, social skills, innovation and achievements.

During their stay in the village, we try to raise our students as if they are "hothouse flowers;" watering them with Ben Shemen stories from the past, enriching their lives through formal and informal education and exposing them to what is happening in Israel and around the world. Their stay in the village expands the general education of the village students, prepares them for living in society, cultivates spiritual values, morals and culture and above all, provides education for good citizenship and love of country.

I see great importance in excellence and capitalizing on social and academic endeavors, innovation, development of curiosity and motivation to learn, while addressing the diversity, uniqueness and character of each student. "Great people who dream big

dreams and turn dreams into reality. Great people who engage in small deeds and make them big ..." (Moshe Zvi Neria).

Together we weave dreams and make them come true.

To be a "Ben Shemenist" is a privilege, acquired during one's stay and education in the village. It is a privilege to be educated about the teachings of the village's founder Dr. Siegfried Lehman, whose educational concept included an affinity for the land and heritage of Israel and an aspiration for a society based on equality and sharing.

Each of the students is a person within a common collective driven by responsibility, nurturing, education, society, volunteering and contributing to the community. I see my work as a "mission", to provide a value-based and civic education and am thankful for this privilege.

- Dr. [Ilana Tischler](#)

Our Values:

The village documents written by Dr. Lehman upon the establishment of the Village contain a number of leading entries:

- The connection to the land - "is the connection of belonging, but it is created only by work, effort, preparing the land, planting and raising animals. The relationship to the land is created through doing and creating" The land must be accepted and loved as it is, on a landscape that also includes the Arab village the fruit of the creation of both the West and the East "(From Vision and Heritage, Aya Lehman)
- The connection to the people - this connection contains both the old and the new. Its innovation is the Zionist solution, which seeks to cure the degeneration of the people caused by generations of suffering in exile. The love and connection to the Jewish people is but a part of a broad, all-encompassing, and world-embracing love.
- The connection to humanity - is expressed in faith, without appeal, in the peace and love of the human race. The new existence in the Land of Israel, the merging of physical and spiritual work, the construction of new social cells, and above all, a renewable and creative society.
- The connection to eternity - the perfection of the image requires that an adult as a young person have an attitude towards that of the eternal beyond the rational. Observing nature raises problems and questions that have no rational solutions, there is a place to introduce teens to issues that we adults have no answers to. New patterns of respect for the old tradition must be created on the side.

*** History of the Village**

The Ben Shemen Youth Village was established in 1927 on the lands of the Hadid factory. The Village was founded by Dr. Siegfried Lehman, with the goal of instilling in children and youth the values of Zionism, farming and respect for people.

The Village buildings were designed by the Israeli architect Fritz Kornberg. With the establishment of the Executive Committee, Wilfried Israel served as president of the Ben Shemen Youth Village from the 1920s until his death in 1943. Alongside him, the village was supported by Dr. Albert Einstein, Martin Buber and others.

The first to arrive in the village were children from the orphanage in Kaunas, which was run by Dr. Siegfried Lehman. In time, students from Israel and other parts of the world joined the village. In 1932, the youth village received the first group of youth aliyah, a group of 12 boys and girls who came to Israel with the help of Recha Freier (the founder of Youth Aliyah). This group marked the beginning of a large aliyah movement, which in the end numbered hundreds of thousands of children and youth from all over the Diaspora.

During World War II, the village received a significant number of refugee children from Europe who had fled the horrors of the Holocaust. These children were later integrated into the defense systems and Zionist settlement effort and were an excellent example of the success of the youth village and the educational staff in instilling values despite budget shortfalls and existential threats. The most famous graduate of the village from this period is the late Shimon (Persky) Peres.

During the Great Arab Revolt, shots were often fired at the village. Thanks to the good relationship that existed between the village manager Dr. Siegfried Lehman and the Arab residents of the area, the village was protected most of the time.

In 1940, British police conducted a search for weapons in the Village, and the Village director and teaching staff were arrested. Their trial, the "Ben Shemen trial" caused a great stir.

Until the establishment of the State, the village was surrounded by Arab localities. According to the UN partition plan from 1947, the Village was to be included in the territory of the Arab state. The Ben Shemen Youth Village was under siege immediately after the partition decision was made on November 29, 1947. Most teachers and students were evacuated to the Kfar Vitkin. The village could only be reached by convoy.

One of the convoys that left Ben Shemen on December 14, 1947, was attacked near the Beit Nabala camp, by soldiers of the Jordanian Legion and 13 of its men were killed. This convoy was called the "Ben Shemen Convoy."

After this incident, the British agreed to give military escort to Ben Shemen convoys until they

left the country and after their departure, the only supply route was by plane. The Arabs in the area sniped at the runways and one of the pilots, Zvi Zibel, was awarded the

Israeli Hero Medal for his courage in maintaining contact with Ben Shemen. The defense of Ben Shemen was placed on a company from the 54th Battalion of the Golani Brigade.

On March 14, 1948, Company A of the 51st Givati Battalion under the command of Eliyahu Chen Zion (his daughter-in-law, Hila Chen Zion, currently manages the treatment unit at the Ben Shemen Youth Village) arrived by convoy, to assume defense of the Village throughout the siege until ended following the Dani Operation. The Dani operation was the IDF's main operation during ten days of battles as part of the War of Independence.

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October 11, 2023

Scenes from a cafe meeting in Givataim, interrupted, with [Amir Peter](#), whose wife "is 9 months pregnant and expecting any day" or week, as [Sinai Peter](#) described, asking if we could move our meeting to the suburb of Tel Aviv, next door to Amir's home. Of course we can. We have a wonderful talk. Share ideas for new projects, both Sinai's, Amir's, and mine; ours. And also this: As seen on video. Actually two interruptions. (And a 3rd on the drive back to Motti's - more missiles - promptly featured on CNN five minutes later, when I walked in the front door.



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October 11, 2023

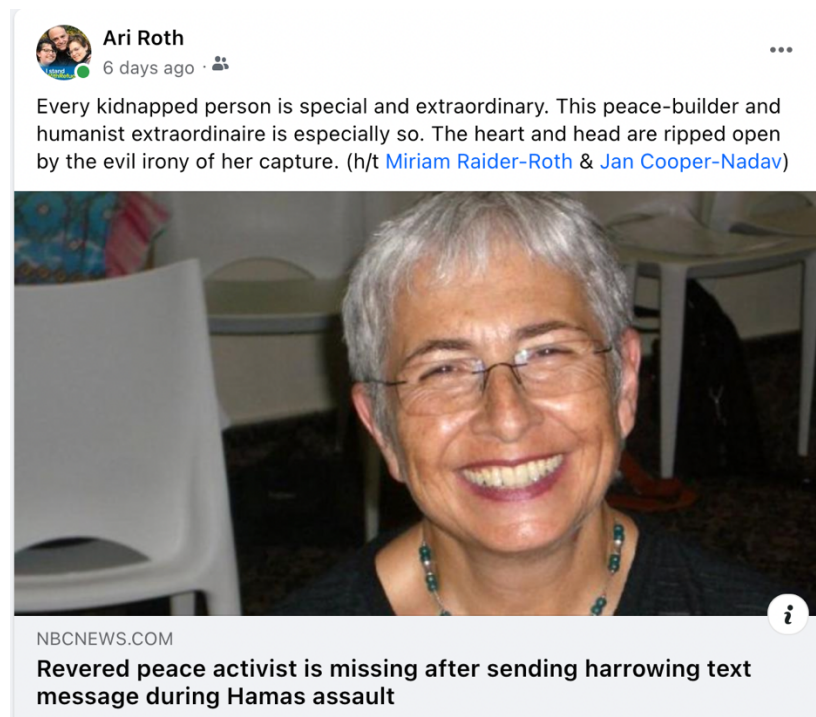
I wrote a little bit glibly this morning about the Jerusalem hotel cafe playing Comfort Music, including one of the most iconic songs from the 70s in Israel; David Broza's "Yehiyeh Tov" (It Will All Be Good). The song was perhaps too beloved, I thought. But hardly. And look at how

present, and current David Broza is this week, showing up everywhere people are hurting in the South. And supporting young soldiers preparing for war. Here's a recent note from David on his page:

"Residents of the south and the dear soldiers: Today I will be performing in collaboration with Tech4Ed and Nobook for an online show, For a few minutes of quiet and calm from this simple situation. The concert is free, and especially for residents of the south. A Zoom link will be sent in the silent group before the event."

And below, without a text introduction, is Broza performing at an army base, outside.

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https://www.nbcnews.com/news/revered-peace-activist-missing-sending-harrowing-text-message-hamas-as-rcna119475?fbclid=IwAR0JKB4pQnX8ONLluu71ej7vCAomHbv41HDZZ39J1_ADOjmwOc3HJFX5vvE

*

October 11, 2023

** Breaking News: President Biden is to speak at 9 pm (Israel time, with full TV coverage here) and Hamas has just announced (in advance - as humane warning, and/or for more publicity) that they will launch a Massive Missile Strike on Tel Aviv at exactly the same time - 9 pm - in 7 minutes. Will send updates (from the safe room, if necessary)

9:17 pm now, still no Biden, and still no sirens. Everyone's late!

9:24 pm - He begins (no missiles)

It's his strongest speech ever. I'm full of tears. His moral leadership now is global in dimension.

And for what it's worth, he just won re-election with this speech (imho). Because he is strong and has unwavering moral clarity. And he's just warned Israel to conduct a campaign in Gaza that observes Codes of Warfare. As he positions America to stand by Israel. And resupply it. And differentiate between Palestinian People and Abhorrent Hamas. He is wise and steadfast. And he invoked the concept of Democracy as being incredibly important. For all. There. In Israel especially. And here. And that will be the story of our American elections.

Who will be preserve our democracy?

*

October 11, 2023

Final posting of the evening – A poem about watching the worst from afar... I'm lucky enough to call this poet, John Burghardt, a friend. He writes to me: "I'm sweating this one out, like everyone else who loves you. Please be careful." He calls it:

A Poem From Our Side of the TV Screen

The footage of the battle in the sky --
as rockets stripe the dark like lightning bugs
past bomb bursts like medallions on Persian rugs --
repeats, some sort of loop, reminds me. I
was trembling, "Breaking News," in Uvalde,
a SWAT column advances till the footage tugs
us back to the black Tahoe where a skinhead ranger shrugs
into his Kevlar. Then two mothers try
to push past a policeman when a light-
bar flashes; the same firetruck repeatedly arrives.
The news cycle has epicycles, "Night
has fallen now in Gaza..." Breaking News Wolf Blitzer strives
to sound surprised by though he's said it twice already, tight
ening the circle inside which we huddle with our lives.

- John Burghardt

*

October 12, 2023

Quieter day. One long good meeting in Tel Aviv about a recent Akko Fringe Festival hit (with a subversive, totally apt theme): Lee Perlman's PRISONER OF ZION, co-written and directed by Nadav Bossem (photos below and extremely insightful review in 2nd comment - Festival show blurb here: <https://www.accofestival.co.il/index.php?dir=site...>). Took tons of notes. If I had energy and space, I'd write 1000 words more about what I learned today about this deeply personal play, which Nadav subtitled "Death of a Salesman [for Zionism]," which is wickedly funny, and apt - when a "Professional Jew" [and i used to be one myself] stops pushing so hard to reconcile contradictions, hypocrisies, or impossibly conflicting narratives). But today's personal headline for me: No sirens sending us into safe rooms.

Script and casting work with Motti. Reconfirmed flight home with United for Monday. All plays that I had tickets to attend are cancelled this week. Restaurants near Tel Aviv University where I was seeing friends tomorrow closed. Rearranging for home visits. People are glued to the news which is full of mourning and rage. Some are leaving the country. Some are just beginning to go out in public. The country is both utterly mobilized and stunned. There's an emergency government in place but who knows what it means. The north is on lockdown; there may have been infiltrators; there definitely were drones; but has a second front opened? And soon maybe a third. Or is a prisoner swap being negotiated already? I don't know. Who knows anything? We're all doing our work, but how has that work been derailed - or impacted - by events of the last days? We're letting that course through the bloodstream. Meanwhile... appreciating everyone's engagement, concern, and pain.

Review of 'Prisoner of Zion' – Zman Yisrael online newspaper

Dr. Ido Dagan, October 3, 2023

"First Impressions from the Acco Festival - The Betrayal of Zionism"

When interviewed a few days ago in one of the local newspapers, Lizo Ohayun, the CEO of the Acco International Fringe Theatre Festival, noted that the signs of the 'Kaplan Protest' have yet to appear in this year's festival repertoire.

In fact, beneath the surface, emerged a small and interesting show, precisely against the background of that protest, without the sly spokespersons of one or other ministers seeking to leverage it to create a scandal. Lee Perlman, a veteran immigrant from the U.S. "hozer beshe'elah", leaves the fold and un-aligns himself from Zionist ideology, in the play "Prisoner of Zion" which he co-created with Nadav Bossem, a prominent figure in the Israeli theatre fringe scene.

After a forty year love affair with Zionism, which he represented in a number of positions with an international profile, in The Abraham Initiatives, The Jewish Federations of North America and The America-Israel Cultural Foundation, and more, Perlman is leaving us and the “Israeli Declaration of Independence Family”, a kind of imaginary WhatsApp group, so much so that at the Saturday evening “Kaplan” demonstrations in Tel Aviv, he can’t even hold the Israeli flag like everyone else, the same flag, which from his perspective, that has betrayed him.

The 2018 ‘Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People’ Law was the Archimedean point from which Perlman and many like him began to re-evaluate, in a skeptical and sour light, everything they had believed in, to date. The ‘Nation-State’ Law, he claims, is the band-aid for Zionism’s true intentions – Jewish supremacy.

At first, we tour a sort of improvised museum of Perlman’s life history: photos with Bill Clinton, Shimon Peres, Golda Meir; a visit to the synagogue in Manhattan where he was an enthusiastic Zionist activist; drawers opening with pictures and records from his secret activities in the former Soviet Union, beyond the Iron Curtain.

We sit in a circle reminiscent of the style of the activities that Perlman experienced in New York in the Hashomer Hatzair Socialist Zionist youth movement and are even invited to taste the cake he brought with an edible Israeli flag decorating it.

There are several subterranean symbolic systems at play here– the erotic approach to Zionism and the state, the ambivalent story with the Israeli flag, the aesthetics and rituals of the youth movement.

“You’re asking me for permission to get divorced from Zionism,” director Bossem tells Perlman, in a kind of intervention they’re staging in front of our eyes, and Perlman replies: “Now that the love is over, I don’t know where to turn to.” This is a feeling that many share. Me included.

Bossem’s directing of the performance and his sarcastic presence place everything in a different light, and Perlman’s sensitivity, who with heartbreak, observes his life story disintegrating before his very eyes. This all justifies the claim that this is the harbinger of more performances to come to describe what our parents’ generation is going through. And what will happen to us?

“Prisoner of Zion”, Written and Performed by Lee Perlman and Nadav Bossem, October 1 & 2, part of the 2023 Acco International Fringe Theatre Festival Greenhouse Project.

<https://www.zman.co.il/425958/>

*

October 12

Sent to me by my brother in law, written by one of Israel's preeminent philosophers, Yuval Noah Harari, a leader in the current social protest movement:

"No matter what one thinks of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the way populism corroded the Israeli state should serve as a warning to other democracies all over the world.

Israel can still save itself from catastrophe. It still enjoys a decisive military edge over Hamas, as well as over its many other enemies. The long memory of Jewish suffering is now galvanizing the nation. The IDF and other state organs are recovering from their initial shock. Civil society is mobilizing like never before, filling many gaps left by governmental dysfunction. Citizens stand in long queues to donate blood, welcome refugees from the war zone into their homes and donate food, clothes and other necessities.

In this hour of need, we also call upon our friends throughout the world to stand by us. There is much to criticize about Israel's past behavior. The past cannot be changed, but hopefully once victory over Hamas is secured, Israelis will not only hold our current government to account, but will also abandon populist conspiracies and messianic fantasies — and make an honest effort to realize Israel's founding ideals of democracy at home and peace abroad."

[Opinion \(Washington Post\)_](#)

[The Hamas horror is also a lesson on the price of populism](#)

By Yuval Noah Harari

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October 12

Grateful to have received this article from someone close who knows how spot on every word of Michelle Goldberg's analysis is. I'm running to a get-together in TA with old friends but the urgency of this article is fully in me in distraught, but empowering ways.

"Many progressive Jews have been profoundly shaken by the way some on the left are treating the terrorist mass murder of civilians as noble acts of anticolonial resistance. These are Jews who share the left's abhorrence of the occupation of Gaza and of the enormities inflicted on it, which are only going to get worse if and when Israel invades. But the way keyboard radicals have condoned war crimes against Israelis has left many progressive Jews alienated from political communities they thought were their own....

...It is not just disgusting but self-defeating for vocal segments of the left to disavow those universal ideas about human rights, declaring instead that to those who are oppressed, even the most extreme violence is permitted. Their views are the mirror image of those who claim that, given what Israel has endured, the scale of its retaliation cannot be questioned.

"At the strategic level, it would be much more helpful if there was a large group of American leftists who had the moral credibility to say, 'We are horrified by the murder of innocent people

by Hamas and we want the United States to put maximum pressure on Israel to not to commit atrocities in Gaza,” said Leifer.

There are, of course, leaders making exactly that argument. “Right now, the international community must focus on reducing humanitarian suffering and protecting innocent people on both sides of this conflict,” read a statement by Bernie Sanders. “The targeting of civilians is a war crime, no matter who does it.” That message is undermined when a loud part of the left insists that when it comes to Israelis, there is no such thing as civilians.

On Thursday, Students for Justice in Palestine, a network of pro-Palestinian campus groups, is holding Day of Resistance demonstrations across the United States and Canada. A planning document the group posted online refers to all of Israel as a “settler colony” and says, “Settlers are not ‘civilians’ in the sense of international law, because they are military assets used to ensure continued control over stolen Palestinian land.”

Perhaps such hideous dogmatism shouldn’t be surprising. The left has always attracted certain people who relish the struggle against oppression primarily for the way it licenses their own cruelty; they are one reason movements on the left so reliably produce embittered apostates. Plenty of leftists have long fetishized revolutionary violence in poor countries, perhaps as a way of coping with their own ineffectuality....

...It’s too early to know how the left’s widespread failure of solidarity will change our politics, but I suspect some sort of fracture is coming. Part of me thinks this could be a moment like after the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary, which, coupled with revelations about the evils of Stalinism, led many left intellectuals to break with communism. Though perhaps that’s too grandiose an analogy for an amorphous campus-bred left-wing tendency that communicates in hashtags and sound bites. On social media, some scholars and activists are repeating the line “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” suggesting that the homicidal spree we just saw in Israel is not a departure from their ideology but the embodiment of it. I suspect they will come to regret it if people take them at their word."

[NYTimes Opinion](#)

Michelle Goldberg

[The Massacre in Israel and the Need for a Decent Left](#)

*

October 13

Past 1 am here - haven't gone to bed before midnight once since arriving; what else is new? A productive yet difficult day, like so many. We wake up to news, scroll through it, watch it, try to catch up to it; overtaken by it; turn away from it. But it's always there. And you'll notice, I've avoided the worst of it; the deepest grief of it; posting photos of lost loved ones; missing Jews;

heroic Jews; haunted Jews are we all. But then Palestinians... and those who care for them; mourn for them; criticize and are appalled by the words and actions of their leaders and acolytes; so many ruthless actors in this - and yet... Palestinians are now dying/have been dying/will be dying and no one can be blind to this terribleness.

There is no battlefield anymore between Arabs and Jews. The Sinai Peninsula is not where this war is being waged. There is only fighting inside each other's homes. Revenge is not a policy. It's not a politics. And it's not a military strategy. It is a paroxysm of grief and rage, and no one person has a monopoly on such vindictiveness. We've seen it play out, over and over. And I wasn't even going to write about this vortex (!) in each of our own minds. This widening gyre. That NYTimes homepage (below) of so many different articles - "Columbia University closes its campus to the public ahead of protests against the Israeli bombardment of Gaza" - that got to me. Michelle Goldberg's piece got to me. But that's not why I started writing this!

The war is effecting writers, is what I wanted to note. It's scaring the shit out of some. "What are the consequences of ideas I had yesterday that might be toxic to some and therefore lethal for me today?" A playwright contemplates pulling their play because of the reaction it might receive. A playwright/ educator leaves the country because students have turned on them, even while classes have been cancelled this week. The playwright I'm working with here in this house has been through many wars - He's writing about the '73 Yom Kippur War that killed over 2600 Israelis in 19 days - Last Saturday we lost 1200 in one day - and today we're finishing our 4th day of red-line edits and rewrites on his new street protest play.

"How can we stage a play about street protests in the midst of war?" I ask. "Don't we have to acknowledge that when war starts, these protests stop? And what does that say about these Kaplan protests? What do we learn from that?" He's incredulous. "When the war ends, the protests will resume! We won't stop fighting for a better country; a more just; more democratic; more open society. When war begins, these protesters are the first to fight to defend their country."

"Shouldn't we say that? In the play?" I ask. "No!" He thunders back. But I'll note it for my marketing blurb. And he goes off to rewrite and comes back with new monologues. And so it goes. And so he could mentor a whole regiment of younger playwrights, on writing their way through war to continue the drive to make the world more just; to not be afraid; and to maintain an open heart. The art demands that of us.

And there were two productive Zooms today. And there was reading matter to bring me down tonight too - but that has much more to do with Washington Theater cheer-leading, as a phrase from that Michelle Goldberg oped I shared earlier - "hideous dogmatism" - comes to mind - or sticks in the craw - as I think about what we did to each other - or more pointedly, what was done in the name of righteousness - all that swirls about in my late night mind in another vortex, and that is very unproductive.

So I am happy that a first actor, and now maybe a second, and now maybe a third are responding to my casting invitation to be in Motti's play. It just takes a while these days to hear

back, or maybe always, especially with a 7 hour time difference - and especially when I made a typo in the rehearsal schedule - dingdong+dumbdumb - I correct it and get more good news.

And dinner in Tel Aviv - there was that too tonight - with wonderful old friends, Karen and Howie/Hadas. How wonderful to talk about everything from 1970 to the present so seamlessly and easily. A wonderful evening, wine, miso soup with seaweed and tofu galore, chicken pargyot (only in Israel it seems do they call it that) - and then there's bad news through my iPhone - an Oh, No, Shit - a piece of destabilizing info - and 90 minutes later, the fire's out, my plans are back in place, albeit with an adjustment, but not out a lot of money. But don't hold your breath. I hope these are smooth final days here, as I get ready to spend shabbat up in Haifa with Sinai and Timna.

I think I've written enough about a difficult productive day and how things moved forward in the midst of the worst of war - and war coverage - so wrenching - for someone somewhere - Even the best coverage is the worst.

I'm posting below a camp photo from OSRUI 1972, Tzofim (Scouts), second session (Bet). I'm on somebody's shoulders next to my first camp crush - and she's still a Facebook friend to this day! And still amazing. And we talked about her at dinner - for 10 seconds - and we talked about our grandchildren - they have 6 - 5 more than my 1 - but how wonderful it was to appreciate this new place - friendship that renews and gets better than it was. There's hope in that. Deepen a friendship that only went yay far. That's a pretty constructive/ productive thing to do with our time. Go deep and share big. Take care. Laila tov.

*

October 13

Time for some good news (since other wonderful artists are beginning to post theirs, here's mine): For a first time, I'm the recipient of two important grants of recognition, affirmation, and financial support from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities. The first is an FY24 PROJECTS, EVENTS, OR FESTIVALS grant to support the work of this year's "Voices From a Changing Middle East Festival Reading Series: Past • Present • Future" – And the second is an FY24 ARTS AND HUMANITIES FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM GRANT to support my overall work as a playwright.



After receiving an Individual Artist's grant several times before, last year I was rejected, and it really stung (especially when I found out who was on the committee). But I learned in the

debriefing phone call with an excellent DCCAH staffer why my application last year came up short - It was too project focused and leaned too much on what others were saying/praising about that specific project, and not enough on my own Artistic Statement and what the larger artistic vision was, not encumbered by a specific project. I looked at other artist's statements across disciplines; there are so many brilliant Artistic Statements out there, and I realized, I had never written one before! So many years writing mission statements on behalf of an entity, but never one of my own! So that was helpful. To actually hear what they were looking for.

And another DCCAH staffer was helpful this year when I abandoned my PEF (Festival) application at the final hour, as i realized I didn't have at least two of the requested 20 document submissions completed as the deadline struck midnight. It would take me at least another day or two to get signatures from the partnering institutions and submit a substantiated budget with matching funds. But because the application was more than 80% submitted, they gave me grace and a short extension, and I completed the application as soon as i could. But I still did not think it would come through because it was rushed, and over my head, and I'd gotten rejected last year, and who knew what direction the Commission wanted to go in?

So this notification, received here in Israel, is very, very meaningful. And I still have lots of hoops to go through to make sure my documents are fully in order (the W-9 signature is smudged, and my names - Aaron/Ari - don't fully align; and I'll have to note any variance between the submitted budget and what I actually end of spending; and.... you get the point - they don't fully allow you to celebrate!), but I hope I'll be able to fulfill the promise. And am grateful. For both.

*

October 13

My lunch with [Noam Semel](#), recently retired CEO of Habimah Theatre; former General Secretary/Exec Director of the Cameri Theatre of Tel Aviv; brand new grandfather at 76 (!) and brand new author of a memoir ("Stage Door") of his life in the theatre, married to the prolific writer/librettist, Naava Semel, who passed 6 years ago, and mastermind of the vast international repertoire and touring schedule of the Cameri. Noam brought the Cameri to Signature Theatre in VA to stage their swivel chair HAMLET for the first DC-Wide Shakespeare Festival, and in 2011 worked with me to bring Ghassan Kanafani's RETURN TO HAIFA (performed in Hebrew and Arabic, to Theatre J for a 3 week, 17-performance run (in the book Noam says it ran a month, for more than 20 performance - always more than a touch of exaggeration, but, as my late father-in-law used to say, "If it works, don't touch it"). So many stories of that tour recounted in the book - an entire chapter dedicated to that production! Controversy after Controversy. David Shipler wrote about many in his "Freedom of Speech: Mightier Than the Sword."

Today, on the way to lunch (his treat), we noticed how a leading restaurant in town had been commandeered to become a food distribution and packing site for dislocated families from the South and North. With truck drivers and deliveries down, this gathering and distribution initiative is put together by a mobilized army of volunteers - and you see that spirit throughout - restaurants giving themselves over to feed the those in need. Noam was moved by it all. Noam is moved to help me too, he says. Has many ideas! He wants to re-install me! I try to tell him how the landscape has changed. There's been a cultural intifada. "You're the only one giving a platform for Arabs and Jews - for Israelis and Palestinians - In The World! I'm going to help you find money!" I'm open to it, i tell him! And I'm moved by his irrepressible spirit as well. And that was my lunch with Noam Semel. Priceless

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“If your moral compass is attuned to the suffering of only one side, your compass is broken, and so is your humanity.”

-Nicholas Kristof

*

October 14

Reading this now (below). I am part of the Jewish Left, in all its many gradations - and there are a great many - with more pronounced differences between and amongst brother and sister organizations than ever. And there are unity partners as well - coalitions across identities that are equally important that I stand with as well. Not all - but many. So many to stand with; to stand for. I think a key is: To not be intimidated by the fury, the rage, the threats, the canceling, the enmity, and the will to exact revenge in the name of resistance or justice. Lots to read - Lots of rallies to attend or monitor. I'm waking up in Haifa. 2 more days here. After 3 re-books. I'll get out. But I won't be far. More reflecting shortly.

[“We Cannot Cross Until We Carry Each Other”](#)

The editor-in-chief of *Jewish Currents* on recommitting to our movements in this moment.

*

October 14

A wonderful night with friends old and renewed... At the home of Sinai, Timna, and daughter Noga Peter. We talk about the David Grossman article (see another post from today) - particularly this stark vision, nestled deep inside the essay - not its lead - which mourns the

Israelis killed and maimed but puts the blame on the corrupt and degrading government of Israel, and EVEN MORE - MUCH MORE on Hamas - but this powerful takeaway sets the agenda for the future:

"If I may hazard a guess: Israel after the war will be much more rightwing, militant, and racist. The war forced on it will have cemented the most extreme, hateful stereotypes and prejudices that frame — and will continue to frame all the more robustly — Israeli identity. And that identity will from now on also embody the trauma of October 2023, as well as the polarization, the internal rift."

And so we hear tales of what's going on in universities right now in Israel; the suspending - and possible expelling - of Arab students for private posts made on their Facebook pages over the weekend of war - and then the threatened suspension of a group of 25 Israeli professors who rallied to write the chancellor of the university to tell him not to suspend the students yet, because the university didn't go through any process of adjudication; the Chancellor doubled down on his threats to suspend the faculty, and the students remain suspended!

We talk identity politics in university and the arts. "You've all heard the phrase, 'Don't judge a book by its cover'" I say... "L'Hefech! [Just the opposite]! Judge the book by its cover! Who the author is, matters more than what is being said!" "Really!?" they exclaim. We talk about who's running what institution these days. What does representation look like here? It's a long list of achievements and also stasis.

And we talk about visioning a more positive future from Grossman's bleak version. It's a thought exercise, really. What if there is a restoration of competence? That the military comes to see that there is no way to achieve victory on the urban battle field but makes the case that political agreements -- with humanitarian considerations -- are the only way for long-term survival. What if the Palestinian Authority is empowered in Gaza (borrowing from [Dan Raviv's](#) essay posted earlier in the week)? What if joint initiatives are the only ventures that offer a way forward and they are negotiated, supported and protected in post-traumatic, post-vengeful good faith? It's a thought-exercise, after all. We let it unspool for a few more minutes. But there are texts that interrupt. The men stay out on the porch around the table talking; the women talk about loved ones inside. We return for an amazing frozen yogurt with a dozen fixings dessert. Pose for pictures. I go to bed before midnight because I'm wiped.

A third flight home is cancelled in the middle of the night. I'm rebooked on a 4th by 9 am. And signed up with the State Department's Evacuation Program through the Embassy. Enough said. I'm making it home.



*

October 14

Important!

In Haifa and Jaffa, joint Jewish and Arab patrols seek to prevent violence on both sides. In the south, Bedouin residents risk their lives to search for victims of Hamas terror. In the shadow of war, Arab-Jewish solidarity initiatives emerge.

“On Sunday, the second day of the war, we saw that there was enormous chaos and realized we must do something,” said Sleman Shlebe, a Bedouin resident of the northern Negev, who in a short time recruited some 600 volunteers, mostly from the Azazmeh tribe, who arrived with their ATVs and created emergency teams to search for missing Israelis.

“We had heard about people missing from both the Arab and Jewish communities, and knew that thanks to our exceptional familiarity with the south we could help,” he said. “We divided ourselves up in the cars so that there would be people responsible for different things: gathering information, rescuing and administering first aid.”

Within a short while, one of the teams confirmed that a person listed as missing up until that point had been killed. Following this tragic discovery the phone numbers of the members of the teams began to be distributed widely and the requests for assistance didn’t stop flowing in.

“In no time,” said 48-year-old Shlebe in a phone interview conducted while he was in the field, “we received dozens of phone calls and messages from parents begging us to help them find out what had happened to their children, and from people who asked us to come rescue them from their homes or the fields. We tried to respond to everyone and to help anyone who made contact.”

All this was happening despite the fact that he and his people had no weapons – and armed Hamas terrorists were still roaming the area. “It’s true that some of those among us worked in security, but who was going to give a weapon to Bedouin?”

Shlebe continued: “One of the phone calls was from an Arabic speaker who said he had been shot. He asked that we come to rescue him in a field abutting the Gaza Strip. When we got there, we realized that it was a terrorist who was trying to kill us all. Fortunately, we got out alive. Our best weapon is God.”

The fact that such a vital rescue apparatus had been created literally overnight came to the attention of the established security forces in the area. At a certain point they dispatched police officers and guards from the regional council to provide an armed escort for the Bedouin squads. “They realized that our knowledge was important, and we used it to help save Arabs and Jews from danger,” Shlebe said, adding that together with the other forces, the Bedouin volunteers searched for, defended and helped to save hundreds of people in dozens of locations over the next few days.

“We stood outside army bases to evacuate people to the hospital. Together with armed teams, we entered Jewish communities where there were terrorists. We collected the survivors from the party [the Supernova rave, near Kibbutz Re’im] who were hiding outside for hours. We tried to help everyone we could, but unfortunately it was too late for a large number of them.

Shlebe lives in Bir Hadaj, an agricultural Bedouin village that was officially recognized by the state in 2003. But most of the volunteers joining the search and rescue effort live in non-recognized villages in the desert, along Highway 40, where no air-raid sirens can be heard and there are no bomb shelters. Some of their villages don’t even have proper schools.

“Many of us feel that the state has abandoned us, but we haven’t abandoned it,” said Shlebe, expressing the hope that his 11 children would receive a good education and be safe, and that the homes in his and other unrecognized villages would not be left without water and electricity in the coming days.

Shlebe’s impressive and brave team was formed ad hoc in the midst of war. However, a dozen Bir Hadaj residents operate a community-wide group of volunteers that provides emergency rescue and medical services as a matter of routine. Naturally, all 12 contributed to the war effort this past week. It was thus difficult to catch Ahmed Abu Habak, the head of that group, referred to as the Local Emergency Team, which works in coordination with the Israel Defense Forces, the police, firefighters and other emergency services.

On Saturday, Abu Habak and his people managed to transfer a shooting victim to Soroka Medical Center in Be’er Sheva after the ambulance carrying the man had been stopped because the roads were blocked. On Sunday, he himself was trapped for a time by terrorist fire. On Monday, he waited for soldiers to arrive and handed an unarmed terrorist over to them.

“We found his footprints leading toward the Tze’elim army base,” Abu Habak told Haaretz. “We tracked him down and then captured him and waited for the army.”

All 12 of the Bir Hadaj volunteers have undergone first-aid training with the Ihud Hatzala or Magen David Adom emergency rescue services. Abu Habak took special courses for first responders offered by the Home Front Command and the National Fire and Rescue Academy.



HAARETZ.COM

Across Israel, Jews and Arabs join forces to help war victims and prevent riots

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October 14

David Grossman's brilliant essay (for the Financial Times). So many powerful components to it. We discussed it around the dinner table Friday night here in Haifa. Of course it's written before the unfolding violence in Gaza has reached its apotheosis.

"What kind of human beings will we be after seeing what we've seen in Israel?"

(The writer is author of 'More Than I Love My Life' and Winner of the 2017 Man Booker International Prize and the 2018 Israel Prize • Translated by Jessica Cohen)

Some 1,000 killed, more than 3,000 injured, scores of people taken hostage. Every survivor is a miraculous story of resourcefulness and bravery. Countless miracles, countless acts of heroism and sacrifice by soldiers and civilians.

I look at people's faces and see shock. Numbness. Our hearts are weighed down by constant burden. Over and over again we say to each other: it's a nightmare. A nightmare beyond comparison. No words to describe it. No words to contain it.

I also see a deep sense of betrayal. The betrayal of citizens by their government — by the prime minister and his destructive coalition. A betrayal of all we hold precious as citizens, and in particular as citizens of this state. A betrayal of its formative, and binding, idea. Of the most precious deposit of all — the Jewish people's national home — which has been handed to its leaders to safeguard, and which they should have treated with reverence. But instead, what have we seen? What have we grown accustomed to seeing, as though it were inevitable? What we've seen is the utter abandonment of the state in favor of petty, greedy agendas and cynical, narrow-minded, delirious politics.

What is happening now is the concrete price Israel is paying for having been seduced for years by a corrupt leadership which drove it downhill from bad to worse; which eroded its institutions of law and justice, its military, its education system; which was willing to place it in existential danger in order to keep its prime minister out of prison.

I also see a deep sense of betrayal. The betrayal of citizens by their government — by the prime minister and his destructive coalition

Just think now of what we collaborated with for years. Think of all the energy, thought and money we wasted on watching Netanyahu and his family play out their Ceaușescu-style dramas. Think of the grotesque illusions they produced for our disbelieving eyes.

In the past nine months, millions of Israelis took to the streets every week to protest against the government and the man at its head. It was a movement of huge significance, an attempt to get Israel back on course, back to the lofty notion at the roots of its existence: creating a home for the Jewish people. And not just any home. Millions of Israelis wanted to build a liberal, democratic, peace-loving state that respects the faith of all people. But instead of listening to what the protest movement had to offer, Netanyahu chose to discredit it, to depict it as traitorous, to incite against it, to deepen the hatred among its factors. Yet he took every opportunity to declare how powerful Israel was, how determined, and above all — how well-prepared it was to face any threat.

Tell that to the parents driven mad with grief, to the baby thrown on the side of the road. Tell that to the hostages. Tell that to the people who voted for you. Tell it to the 80 breaches in the most advanced border fence in the world.

But make no mistake, and do not be confused: with all the fury at Netanyahu and his people and his policies, the horror of these past few days was not caused by Israel. It was effected by Hamas. The occupation is a crime, but to shoot hundreds of civilians — children and parents, elderly and sick in cold blood — that is a worse crime. Even in the hierarchy of evil, there is a "ranking". There is a scale of severity that common sense and natural instincts can identify. And when you see the killing fields of the music festival site, when you see Hamas terrorists on motorcycles chasing young partiers, some of whom are still dancing without realizing what's going on . . .

I do not know whether Hamas operatives should be called "animals", but they have undoubtedly lost their humanity.

We move through these nights and days like sleepwalkers. Trying to resist the temptation to watch the horrific clips and listen to the rumors. Feeling the fear seep in among those who, for

the first time in 50 years — since the Yom Kippur war — are experiencing the terrifying prospect of defeat.

Who will we be when we rise from the ashes and re-enter our lives? When we viscerally feel the pain of author Haim Gouri's words, written during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, "How numerous are those no longer with us." Who will we be and what kind of human beings will we be after seeing what we've seen? Where will we start after the destruction and loss of so many things we believed in and trusted?

I pray that there will be Palestinians on the West Bank who, despite their hatred of Israel — their occupier — will set themselves apart from what their compatriots have done

If I may hazard a guess: Israel after the war will be much more rightwing, militant, and racist. The war forced on it will have cemented the most extreme, hateful stereotypes and prejudices that frame — and will continue to frame all the more robustly — Israeli identity. And that identity will from now on also embody the trauma of October 2023, as well as the polarization, the internal rift.

Is it possible that what was lost — or indefinitely suspended — on October 7 was the minuscule chance for real dialogue, for each nation's true acceptance of the other's existence? And what do those who brandished the absurd notion of a "binational state" say now? Israel and Palestine, two nations distorted and corrupted by endless war, cannot even be cousins to each other — does anyone still believe they can be conjoined twins? Many warless years will have to pass before acceptance and healing can even be considered. In the meantime, we can only imagine the magnitude of fear and hatred that will now rise to the surface. I hope, I pray, that there will be Palestinians on the West Bank who, despite their hatred of Israel — their occupier — will set themselves apart, whether through action or words, from what their compatriots have done. As an Israeli, I have no right to preach to them or tell them what to do. But as a human being, I have a right — and an obligation — to demand of them humane and moral conduct.

Towards the end of last month, the leaders of the United States, Israel, and Saudi Arabia spoke enthusiastically of a peace accord between Israel and the Saudis, which would build on Israel's normalization agreements with Morocco and the United Arab Emirates. The Palestinians are barely present in these agreements. Netanyahu, arrogant and exuding self-confidence, managed — in his words — to sever the connection between the Palestinian problem and Israel's relations with Arab states. The Israeli-Saudi accord is not unrelated to the events of "Black Saturday" between Gaza and Israel. The peace it would have created is a peace of the wealthy. It is an attempt to skip over the heart of the conflict. These past few days have proved that it is impossible to begin resolving the Middle Eastern tragedy without offering a solution that alleviates the Palestinians' suffering.

Are we capable of shaking off the well-worn formulas and understanding that what has occurred here is too immense and too terrible to be viewed through stale paradigms? Even Israel's conduct and its crimes in the occupied territories for 56 years cannot justify or soften what has been laid bare: the depth of hatred towards Israel, the painful understanding that we Israelis will always have to live here in heightened alertness and constant preparedness for war. In an unceasing effort to be both Athens and Sparta at once. And a fundamental doubt that we might ever be able to lead a normal, free life, unfettered by threats and anxieties. A stable, secure life. A life that is home.

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October 14

Sinai with [Habib Hanna](#). Catching up. On everything. The future is dark in Habib's eyes. Denouncing the terrible extremism for years on both sides. Hates Hamas. Hates the way the Palestinians have pushed, to the brink. How things have been made worse. And yet the music, the collaborations, the platforms to perform, are still so important, and needed. The pay still sucks. The royalties, less than ever. But he has never been busier. Until this week. He plays a clip of his latest composition: "Yesh Od" (in Hebrew), or "Baad-Fi" (in Arabic), or "There is More... Much More" (in English).



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October 14

Timi!

Reunion with Chalutzim Unit Head from 1976-79, and Professor of Political Geography at Middlebury College for the past 39 years, Dr. [Tamar Mayer](#)! (and then wrote so much more about all three conversations; with Timi; then Sinai and Timi; and the Sinai's and my lunch with George at Abu Shakra who I hadn't seen in 8 days... and Facebook lost it all!! Will have to recreate again!)



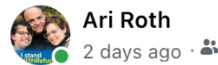
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October 14

The civil society awakening... has already been awake, fighting through the trauma, quickly volunteering to resettle the displaced; the bereaved; the traumatized. The sign holders asking for Safety for the Kidnapped; Safe Exchange of the Captive; they are the same volunteers working to bring fruit; to offer massage therapy; comforts of all kinds to people who have lost so much. And at 5 pm, they come with their signs; a first wave of public voicing. "Revenge is Not a Policy." "Return our Children." None of the signs are against the war. Yet. Because responding to the slaughter perpetrated by Hamas is an imperative. Even the most ardent pacifist would be pushed to respond, with force. To what degree? That's what people who love their country argue, protest and fight about. And the consequences of that degree: are measured in dead bodies.



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October 14**Ari Roth**

2 days ago · 🧑🏻‍🦱



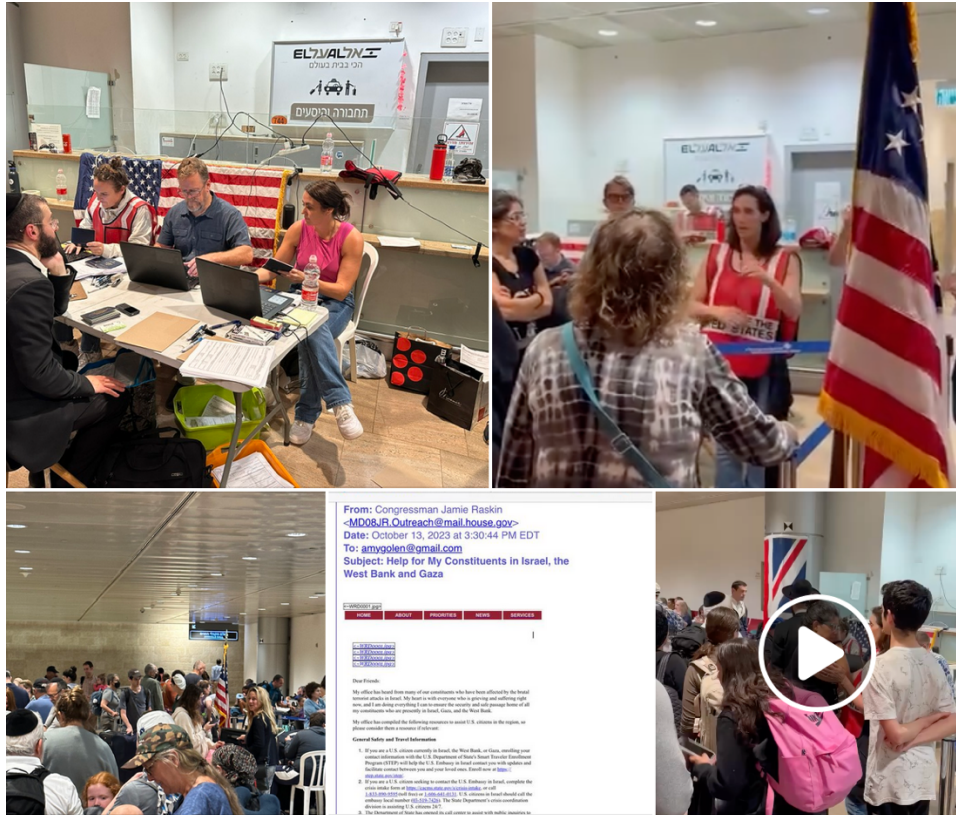
Leaving Haifa



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October 14

11 pm — What emergency evacuation looks like. I can post this because, in the end, I didn't use it. After four commercial cancellations and not making it onto the first or second US State Department chartered flight to Greece (and from there, who knows how long a wait with thousands of others?), I've made it out on El Al to Istanbul and from there, I'll tell you details only after I arrive home 28 hours from now. I'm learning discretion from good people. Meanwhile the scene at TLV Ben Gurion was moving and not all that chaotic. Just slow (with promises of being slower) and expensive one you signed the promissory note to the US government to repay the charter flight and then paid sticker shock prices from Athens for whenever. Thanks to a friend who forwarded the constituent service email from Rep. Jamie Raskin with the US Embassy/State Department info. I was very impressed with the Embassy team working tirelessly since Thursday to help get people signed up. They were improvising everything and dealing with some very overwrought people, some of whom (as in the shorter video) were coming under prepared, without the visas for their ultimate desired direction. In the end, I went my own way, finding a seat on the lone El Al flight that wasn't sold out. I'm en route now and will check in when I land. I'm sure I'll write more.



From: Congressman Jamie Raskin
 -MD08JF.Outreach@mail.house.gov-
 Date: October 13, 2023 at 3:30:44 PM EDT
 To: amygolden@gmail.com
 Subject: Help for My Constituents in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza

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October 15

Sharing this performance - and also some final words about this trip to Israel - along with a reflection on our Facebook delegation that's been tagging along on this sojourn - as I decompress now, somewhere in the Arab world, on this 7-hour layover before a doubly-long flight over the ocean back to DC. A relatively cheap flight to get here means i can spend the \$ for access to the Al Maha Lounge and watch BBC News' "Week of War: Israel & Gaza" on silence - only images in the multi-room spa - while sampling the open coffee and juice bars with more food than a person could want, and the promise of a shower before the flight, and comfy chairs to read and write in, as I am now. And then this song on Facebook - the first audio I take in after so much brutality on screens - and so much catching up on Words from the War - from, of course, my usual Jewish suspects, Peter Beinart and Tom Friedman, whom i hadn't heard from all week, on top of other disturbing articles - and so much homework before me on VFP producing matters - and so many people - particularly extended family that I didn't see in Israel (ah, pangs of guilt, or just regretting that I missed that connection) - Hearing Stevie Wonder reshape Sting's brilliant elegy to our shared Fragility - it's really just so beautiful, despite (or maybe because of) how big the platform is - Stevie Wonder's harmonica that's played though 6+ decades of strife and change and celebrations of life (Isn't She Lovely?) - that artistry lifts and

transforms an already brilliant song, while Sting, rather graciously, uncharacteristically, steps back and lets Stevie make the song his own.

I'm thinking about how nice it was to have the company of FB Friends here (who are also family members, many, and some folks whom I've never met, but appreciate in their responsiveness), giving me a home for thoughts to record what I saw; who I listened to; what was happening as war unfolded for me and for friends. I was really moved that others were moved and could feel the love amongst old friends who shared of themselves and exuded warmth and hope in their appreciating of my visit; the company that I, an outsider, but family-friend nonetheless, could provide. And so here too: We kept each other company in global solidarity with back up and support, to allow us - and me - to forge forward; to continue engaging; to continue recording; to be a tape recorder and go out and make appointments and take pictures and videos and feel like there was a sense of mission or duty to move closer toward the human beings involved in this mess, rather than retreat into one's homework, or isolation.

We are keeping each other company in times of crisis; of continued COVID crap in the States - though no one gives an iota of thought about COVID abroad (and there's sneezing and coughing that I'm keenly aware of, even on board the flight - a stewardess is coughing rather continuously! and a little in this lounge) and we're still canceling performances left and right in our American theater - which is... well, I won't indulge that thought now. It's getting quieter in this lounge as more and more people go to catch flights and I still have a few hours. I'm gonna read a script to prepare for DC. And transition my thoughts a bit away from Israel for the rest of this journey home and back towards Bertholt Brecht (a Zoom reading next Monday), and the shaping of interview transcript for our care project (a reading at the end of the month). I'm going to put these unfinished feelings about an unending war to bed for the night; shower in this health club of a lounge, recharge the batteries (literally) and prepare to fly home strengthened by feelings of companionship derived from keeping company on this long journey that we're living through. I feel there are multiple inflection points all impinging on each other at this moment, and the potential for deeper resolve - for a strengthening of spirit - based on our shared fragility; our humanity - is all sensitively and beautifully at hand, amidst all that's terrible. I'm glad for this decompression here. I'll remember how quiet it got in here. And how good it felt to refresh. And carry on.

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October 16, 2023

Back (!) via Doha and Qatar Airways. Took a bit. Very relieved to be heading home. (Interesting flight path, flying over the Sinai Peninsula, avoiding war zones; several of them)



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