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ABOUT THE COVER

This is just one of some thousands of cars machine-gunned, burned, and otherwise destroyed as the young people at the Supernova Music Festival tried to flee Hamas terrorists. It remains near the festival site with the others as a makeshift memorial. The wildflowers, anemones, grow across Israel in pastel colors, but in the south, they bloom only in bright scarlet. These brilliant red anemones came to life last fall in the Gaza Envelope despite the tanks, bombs, and missiles, and they have become a symbol of resilience throughout the country, recreated in artworks, near gravesites, and around the thousands of impromptu memorials the Israelis continue to establish.

Cover photo courtesy of Pesha Kletenik and Justin Zammit.

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This poster is at the site of the Supernova Music Festival and includes photos of all of the revelers who were murdered or taken hostage. Courtesy of Karen Shawn. The Hebrew text above the photos says, "7 October 2023. You will be forever remembered—with your light and joy at once silenced."

Introduction

How does one commemorate an event whose aftershocks continue to reverberate? We all remain traumatized by the atrocity of October 7th; the cries of the abused and murdered still haunt us, and the names and faces of the hostages are always with us, on Israeli news stations, on posters, in our hearts. On this first anniversary, we all hesitate, wondering what would be most appropriate, most meaningful; what would resonate with our audiences when even until now we mourn the losses we have endured. When I saw, by chance, the lament by Mijal Bitton, a graduate of Yeshiva University and a 2023 Sacks Scholar, I knew her words must be included. Created for Tisha B'Av 2024, it is highly relevant for October 7th; it sets the precise tone for this memorial issue and serves as the introduction for the essays that follow.

A group of students from Yeshiva University's Emil A. and Jenny Fish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies MA program and from the Fish Center's Advanced Certificate program, along with director Dr. Shay Pilnik, staff member Hodaya Blau, co-planner and student Dylan Morpurgo, and me, spent 10 days in Israel in July visiting Holocaust museums, centers, and memorials to learn how Israeli educators are teaching about the Holocaust in light of October 7th. We walked to Hostage Square in Tel Aviv, where a long table set for Shabbat awaits all those kidnapped and still held captive by Hamas terrorists. We visited Har Herzl and paid our respects at the newest graves of IDF soldiers who lost their lives defending Israel. In the south, we witnessed the destruction and devastation of Kibbutz Kfar Aza, the Supernova Music Festival site, the impromptu car memorial, and Sderot. We felt as well the resilience of the Israelis, their strength and remarkable ability to continue living their lives in the best way possible, helping one another, united, determined. We came away from each place of memory and each encounter silent, lost in thought, anguished, trying to find our way somewhere along a continuum of despair and hope.

For the final project for this three-credit summer study experience, each student wrote a short personal narrative. Each had a different focus; each highlighted particular moments of meaning or a new and deeper understanding and appreciation. As a whole, these essays form a meaningful memorial to those we have lost, both in the Shoah and in this most recent brutality. They echo, in many ways, survivors' responses to the Holocaust, which were, as Michael Berenbaum (2024) notes, "the most deeply Jewish way of all: remembering suffering and transmitting that memory in order to fortify conscience, to plead for decency, to strengthen values, and thus to intensify a commitment to human dignity" (n.p.).

Without professional editing, we present them here, with the hope that they will encourage you to respond as survivors did; to consider the same essential questions these narratives raise; to learn all you can about these two seminal events and about Israel and its people; and to join us as we remember and mourn on this first anniversary of the seventh of October.

REFERENCE

Berenbaum, M. (April 16, 2004). Can a museum—any museum—'eliminate hate?' https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/holocaust-museums-are-at-a-crossroads-just-not-the-way-edward-rothstein-thinks/.

—Karen Shawn, PhD

Mijal Bitton wrote this dirge for Tisha B'Av 2024. Its power and relevance, though, extend beyond that date, making it the perfect introduction to this distinct commemorative issue of *PRISM*. On October 7th, 2024, we cry.

Mijal Bitton

Tonight, We Cry

Cry for our people. For the murdered, the raped, the hostages.
For the families in mourning. For the torrent of hatred that feels too great for our small and tired nation to bear.
Cry for the soldiers killed. Cry for those haunted by the trauma of war. Cry for the reservists whose lives have unraveled, and for the evacuees. For the widows, orphans, and bereaved parents.
Cry for shattered dreams—businesses, partnerships, parenthood—discarded.
Cry for the triumph of our enemies. For how terrorists with simple weapons have upended our people and spread lies, falsehoods, and Jew–hatred across the world.
Cry for the new fear we have in our streets, subways, and universities.
Cry for the shattering of Jewish history. For living in a time when—unimaginably—we must add new *kinnot* to Tisha B'Av.
Cry for our internal divisions, failed leadership, and catastrophic overconfidence. For the ways we replicate the sins of the past—hating each other.
Cry for a fretful Jerusalem, its people awaiting the enemy's attack. Cry. Just cry.

May the depth of our mourning bring us redemption.

Elli Klapper remembers, "On October 7th, 2023, on my way home from shul (synagogue), an acquaintance stopped me in the street and asked me if I had heard about what happened in Israel. I didn't know it then, but that moment would change my life forever." Klapper details what this past year has been like for him and what he experienced on our summer study in Israel.

Elli Klapper

October 7th and the Holocaust

The months following October 7th would be fraught with fear, depression, sadness, anger, and a whole slew of other emotions. I battled with understanding how this could happen in our lifetime and what I could do as a Jew in the United States of America to help. I remember wondering if this is how American Jews felt during *Kristallnacht*, the Night of Pogroms.

In my office, I was set on bringing awareness of what had occurred on October 7th and the remaining hostages still held by Hamas as well as bringing together other people who were feeling the same as I was. I plastered my office with posters of the hostages and set up Zoom calls with colleagues to foster unity. We raised money for IDF soldiers in desperate need of equipment and for civilians being displaced from their homes. In early November I traveled to Israel, bringing nine duffel bags of supplies for soldiers and civilians alike, helping them while bringing me some comfort in what seemed like my very helpless state of mind.

Given the brutality of the heinous acts that the world had seen on October 7th, I thought everyone would certainly have to sympathize with the plight of the Jews in Israel and around the globe, but I was very wrong. Starting on October 8th, we in the diaspora had our own battle to fight, with an unprecedented rise in antisemitism. My community was bombarded every week with mobs of protesters targeting our shuls, schools, and places we shop and eat. Disrupting holiday events and community celebrations, they were blocking public roads, leaving a trail of intimidation and violence in their path. We were assaulted on social media by hate speech and threats. Adding injury to insult, the words and language used by the people attacking us were deliberately misappropriated by the demonstrating mobs. The word genocide, a word created specifically to describe the atrocities committed during the Holocaust, was deliberately used against us. It felt as though there was no safe place to be a Jew.

While all this was going on, I continued pursuing a Master's degree in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Yeshiva University's Fish Center, which I had started just two years prior. On October 7th I was enrolled in a class on the history of antisemitism. It felt strange sitting in a Zoom class learning about this history that seemed to be more about the present than about the past. Focusing on my class work became increasingly hard, as the topic was no longer abstract but very real.

One of my main reasons for studying the Holocaust was my concern that Jews, and the rest of the world, would forget what had happened to our people now that they were living comfortably in the 21st century; I felt that it was my responsibility to keep the memory alive. After October 7th this no longer felt like a memory but rather another chapter in what has been a pattern of hatred of the Jewish people throughout the centuries. It was hard for me to recognize the difference between what I had been learning and what was now happening to my fellow Jews and to me.

I knew that the Holocaust was unique, a watershed that had never been and hopefully will never be met in scope or atrocity, but I couldn't help but see the resemblances.

At the end of June, I traveled to Israel with the Fish Center to learn about how the October 7th massacre had affected the study of the Holocaust and how different institutions teach about it in its wake. Throughout our trip to Israel, we discussed, debated, reflected, and even argued about the intersectionality of October 7th and the Holocaust. We met with many Holocaust educators at various institutions with very different views on how we should react in this post–October 7th reality. And while I've been to Israel more times than I can remember (this was my 4th visit this year), this trip was different. All the museum and educational institutes were enlightening and brought a unique perspective on the future of Holo-

caust education. I particularly liked one of the ideas we heard at the Massuah International Institute for Holocaust Studies, where we discussed the testimony of the October 7th survivors and how similar their words were to those Holocaust survivors used when describing their experiences.

"We don't have the terminology, so we borrow from the Holocaust and past events in Jewish history to describe our own pain," our guide explained.

The Mashmaut Center was one of my favorite places. The way in which their educators taught the Holocaust to young people was astounding. I was riveted by their plays, graphic novels, and unique educational models. They also didn't shy away from comparing and using some understandings of the Holocaust to deal with the anguish people are going through today because of the October 7th assaults.

But by far the most meaningful day was spent in the Gaza Envelope. While I had read articles, watched videos, listened to podcasts, and more, what I experienced visiting the Nova festival, Kfar Aza, T'kuma, and Sderot shocked my system like nothing else had done. I felt as if I was bearing witness to the most horrific tragedies to befall the Jewish people since the Holocaust. I don't know how to describe it other than to say that if you haven't been there, you can't know how it feels. Seeing the artifacts of people's lives sprawled in the wreckage in front of your eyes, flip flops still on the ground, glasses still on the table, playgrounds barren of children . . . the horror seemed endless.

For me, the Holocaust was, and hopefully will always be, an event unlike anything in the past or future. October 7th didn't change that, but it did change the way I and many Jews think about and understand how we relate to the Holocaust, having seen just the slightest glimpse of what the Jewish people went through at the hands of the Nazis.

In many ways, October 7th reverted to what had been the status quo for Jews throughout our history: the Crusades, the blood libels, the pogroms of Europe, and the thousands of years of persecution. Only now have we seen that the last 75 years of relatively low levels of antisemitism in the West were the anomaly. The protests across the globe and the fear that many Jews have felt for the last 10 months can now be seen through the wider lens of Jewish history.

On the other hand, what makes this moment different from the rest of Jewish history is October 8th. Never before has there been a Jewish army and a Jewish government that was able to exact revenge from the perpetrators of these heinous acts; never since the time of the kings of Israel have the Jewish people had a homeland of their own that could respond as it did on October 8th and afterward. I think about the thousands of years of Jewish yearning to return to a land for which we have prayed, and I have hope.

"Both the Holocaust and October 7th, as periods of profound tragedy and loss, mark significant events in Jewish history," writes Bette Zaret. But "the Jewish people have repeatedly demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for survival, renewal, and rebuilding." Zaret offers examples as she reflects on events and speaks with Israelis on our summer study tour.

Bette Zaret

Bearing Witness to Unbreakable Resilience and Infinite Hope

Impressions From a Summer Study Excursion to Israel

One definition of "unbreakable resilience" is the ability to survive and thrive through challenging life experiences, especially through one's mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility. Such resilience involves physical, emotional, and psychological strength, and the ability to recover or adapt after experiencing adverse events.

One definition of "infinite hope" is the importance of not giving up, especially when facing struggles. Such hope can help people overcome obstacles and stay anchored to reality. It is a hope that is solid, steadfast, unwavering, and enduring amid the uncertainties of our world.

Every year during Pesach, my family recited the Haggadah, reminding us of the Jewish people's flight and ultimate freedom from Pharaoh. But we also always went beyond those readings to explore and discuss the unprecedented and relentless persecution, displacement, and attempts at annihilation of Jews, and to marvel that, through each hardship, we have demonstrated an extraordinary ability to persevere, adapt, and thrive with an unbreakable resilience and infinite hope that have remained unyielding.

Historically, Jews have faced numerous crises and periods of extreme adversity. From ancient persecutions and the destruction of the Temples to the horrors of the Holocaust and the wars that have followed the establishment of the State of Israel, the Jewish people have repeatedly demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for survival, renewal, and rebuilding.

As students of Holocaust and genocide studies, we know the Holocaust stands out as one of the darkest chapters in Jewish history. The senseless tragedy of six million Jews systematically murdered by the Nazis fuels our passion to teach and to keep alive the knowledge and memory of this atrocity.

At the same time, we learn that from this unimaginable suffering emerged stories of profound courage and strength. Survivors rebuilt their lives, often starting from nothing, and contributed significantly to their new communities and to the world at large. Their achievements continue to inspire with their messages of endurance and the human spirit's capacity to overcome evil, and to love.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 marked a new chapter in Jewish resilience. Against considerable odds, including immediate military attacks from neighboring countries, the burgeoning nation not only survived but thrived. Israel became a beacon of innovation, democracy, and cultural renaissance in the Middle East. The perseverance and determination of its people transformed a barren land into a vibrant, modern state.

In contemporary times, Israelis have faced ongoing security threats, political challenges, and divisive social issues. Yet, the spirit of hope and resilience has remained undiminished. The country's advancements in technology, medicine, and science are testament to the creativity and tenacity of its people. Israeli society, with its diverse population including Jews, Christians, Arabs, Druze, and others, has continued to strive for a more inclusive and harmonious future.

SUMMER STUDY IN ISRAEL

Graduate students, two professors, and our administrative assistant from the Emil A. and Jenny Fish Center for

Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Yeshiva University planned to meet in an experiential and educational summer study course in Israel and visit Holocaust museums, memorials, and centers to learn how each institution taught its visitors the story.

And then, October 7th happened. And the world turned upside down.

This time, at least to me, the threat seemed different. The existential threat for our homeland combined with the subsequent expansive and insidious expression of anti–Israel sentiment and overt antisemitism around the world lay bare that this was a formidable global challenge. For those of us in the diaspora, as the rug was pulled out from under us, the potential destruction of our safety net shook us to the core.

Yet no one spoke of canceling our summer study. We were all aware of possible risks, of course, but I and 14 others chose to make the journey, despite this time of uncertainty and instability, as an act of solidarity, of compassion, and as an expression of support. Now the agenda would include not only learning about how Israeli educators taught about the Holocaust, but also about how they would teach it in light of October 7th and the aftermath.

I was heartened by the applause on the plane upon arrival in Tel Aviv, which was louder and longer than at any of the multitude of times I had previously visited.

We met as a group on our first evening and took turns sharing our thoughts about why we had come and what we expected to learn. One of the youngest of our colleagues asked, "In this world, do any of you have hope?" In the silence that followed, she added, "I have no hope."

Some of us gasped; others felt protective; others were dismayed by someone so young expressing feelings of hopelessness. And, yet, many of us not only understood her statement but, sadly and privately, agreed with her.

I remember wondering how I could have the audacity to admit that I have no hope when I had been taught that Jews throughout millennia had demonstrated the inner strength, courage, and resilience to survive, to prosper, and to contribute to the societies wherever they settled. I was reminded of what Elie Wiesel once wrote: "Even in the darkest moments, there is always a ray of light and hope." And what David Ben-Gurion said: "In Israel, to be a realist, you must believe in miracles."

And then we began our travels throughout Israel.

We did visit six institutions as intended. We learned from their dedicated and passionate educators how each museum honors the memory of the Shoah, those who died, and those who survived. We learned how ghetto fighters rebuilt their lives and a vibrant, vital kibbutz. We learned how, since 1948, Israel was able to thrive amid so much adversity.

We learned about, discussed, and analyzed the parallels and the differences between the Holocaust and October 7th and understood that while the Holocaust and the October 7th assault differ significantly in scale and context, the experiences of survivors from both events share common themes of trauma and the need for community and support in the aftermath.

By understanding these parallels, I can better appreciate the strength and resilience of those who survived. I can also better understand the importance of providing comprehensive support to aid their recovery and preserve their memories.

And then we traveled to the south of the country, as close to Gaza as we could get, and we listened to and learned from those who had lived through and survived the October 7th attacks. Their demonstration of resolve, inner strength, and courage touched my soul.

The events of October 7th and its aftermath are profoundly tragic and are still raw. We bore witness to a nation still in mourning. And yet, the slivers of resilience and glimmers of hope I witnessed and felt were palpable. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks wrote in his *Letters to the Next Generation:*

> This is how to deal with crisis. Wrestle with it, refusing to let it go until it blesses you, until you emerge stronger, better, or wiser than you were before. To be a Jew is not to accept defeat. That is the meaning of faith.

I spoke with a number of Israelis whose responses embody the sage words of Rabbi Sacks. Maya Melamed and her twin brother, Yoav, were born in Israel. Maya, now a mother of two, is a successful marketing executive. She reflected,

> When I think about the Jewish people, what stands out to me is our incredible resilience and strength, even in the face of the most adverse and threatening circumstances. The Holocaust proved beyond a doubt that the Jewish people needed their own country. Since the establishment of the State of Israel, we've had to fight for our existence in countless wars. . . . Surrounded by hostile countries that want nothing more than to see Israel and the Jewish people destroyed, we've persevered.
>
> In Israel, boys and girls at 18 must serve in the army. Military service acts as an acceleration program for growing up, teaching us to deal with all the challenges life throws our way. Like many people worldwide, we just want to live and raise our children in peace. However, if we want to survive under our

> political, demographic, and geographic circumstances, we must continue to fight for our future and the future of the next generations.
>
> I have hope! Desperation is not a plan. My kids are 13 and 10, and I must fight for their future. . . . Nine months after the October 7th massacre, it's crystal clear our job is to restart and rebuild our country. And because we as a people are determined, tenacious, courageous, hopeful, strong, unyielding, persistent, enduring, and optimistic, we will.

Evi Dror, born just after WWII in Arad, Transylvania (Romania), emigrated to Israel with her older brother, Andre, and her parents when she was 14 years old. She served in the IDF, married her husband, Gideon, is the mother of two, grandmother of six, and has a thriving beauty and wellness center in Tel Aviv. She shared her thoughts with me, saying,

> Our strength and resilience are collective. Golda Meir once told Joe Biden, "We have no other place to go." As a daughter of both parents who lived through the Shoah, I wouldn't go any other place even if there were an option. . . .Antisemitism [is] raising its ugly head again. And yet we don't lose hope. Of course, this current situation will end and for sure we are here to stay. And when the hostages, God willing, will come home, we will breathe again. There is no doubt about the fact that normal times will return.

Dr. Lea Ganor, director of the Mashmaut Center for Heritage, Holocaust, Tradition, Values and Rebirth, explained,

> The recent events of October 7 . . . shook everyone to the core and put us into shock, but we have role models in the Holocaust survivors to give us strength. We are still devastated but we must always have hope. There is no other alternative.

Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, a study tour participant, explained that on October 8th he and his wife left their home in Los Angeles to move back to Israel to be close to their newly married son and his wife who had both volunteered to fight for their country. He noted that

> the dedication and devotion of this younger generation, and that of our son, Ilan, inspires us and fills us with hope for a better future. We moved here to help make that future better for him, for his wife, and for his generation. After everything they have done for us in fighting for and defending Israel these past nine months, we owe that to them.

We have much Holocaust testimony, study, and research, and we continue to learn and aspire to teach. However, the specific details surrounding October 7th are not yet fully known and have not yet been studied, researched, or taught; the situation is ongoing and changes daily, and the language used to describe and reflect on this atrocity has not yet been found. When it is, it will shape how the event is understood, remembered, and commemorated in the immediate future and in the collective memory of the Jewish people.

What is known, what can be taught even now, is that the infinite hope, unbreakable resilience, the steadfast belief in the possibility of a brighter future, and the collective spirit of the Jewish people remain undiminished, even in the face of such profound challenges.

At the end of our study tour, in our final ceremony, our young participant shared with us that she had changed her mind. "I now see," she said, "the possibility for hope."

And to that, I say, amen.

"A missile sent from Hamas slipped past the Iron Dome and fell directly into the front façade of my apartment building in Tel Aviv. When the missile exploded, so did my life," recalls Uriel Peizer in this reflective accounting of the days that followed October 7th and his return to Tel Aviv nine months later to join our summer study in Israel.

Uriel Peizer

Where Were You on October 7th?

My entire life changed on the morning of October 7th.

Everything happened so fast that there was little time to think. I realized that I had loved ones at the Nova music festival, that I had friends in Kibbutz Kfar Aza, that my Israeli friends in the army would be going to war, and it all felt like a nightmare. No one knew where anyone was.

The numbers of text messages that were sent asking people where they are, if they are okay, if they are safe conveyed the massive wave of fear sweeping over the people of Israel.

As a citizen of both Argentina and the United States, I received notice from both countries that if I wished to stay in Israel, a country at war, my safety could not be ensured. One of the hardest decisions I had to make was to leave Israel, a place that I now called my home. With a heavy heart I made the difficult choice and eventually was evacuated from Israel with the help of the military Air Forces of Argentina and flown in a military plane to Rome to await further travel.

The day I arrived in Italy was October 16th. I had a full–day layover in Rome and went to pray at the Tempio Maggiore, the city's largest synagogue. I met the rabbi, who told me about what had happened there exactly 80 years earlier. I had no idea that on the very day when 230 Argentinian Jews were flown to Rome to escape the war in Israel, 1,259 Jews were deported from Rome to Auschwitz to their deaths eight decades before. The eerie feeling that Jews have no safety and continue to face war enveloped me and remained during my entire journey. I couldn't stop thinking about the Holocaust and I couldn't understand why this feeling of hatred for Jews continues until today.

I was soon flown to Buenos Aires, Argentina, where I began to explain to my close friends and family what I had lived through in Israel during the first week of the war. I soon realized, from their looks and their weak responses, that no one really understood the situation or my feelings about it. I told people my experiences and yet I felt a massive communication barrier, as if words were not enough to convey what I saw and felt during that initial shocking week.

I had left all of my personal belongings behind in Israel, as I was allowed to bring only one bag with me, but I believed I would soon be back to retrieve them. I thought about my great–grandparents, who fled Europe during the Holocaust and how painful it was for them and for others to leave one's home and everything in it and never return to claim anything at all. For the first time, I felt that history was repeating itself. My great–grandparents fled Russia and Poland because of pogroms and now I fled Israel because of a pogrom in the Middle East.

I never thought that I would live through what my great–grandparents lived through. Of course, this was not at all the same, especially not for me; October 7th was not the Holocaust, but I could not help hearing echoes. I began to see how difficult it must have been for them to tell others what they had gone through and to see faces that showed no understanding. When I thought about bearing witness and what it means to give testimony, I realized how hard it is to put into words what one has lived through, especially trauma. I think that when anyone chooses to give testimony, one fears that no one will understand or be able to relate, or believe, or even listen.

I've always heard that the Jews were the Chosen People, but I shied away from this statement because I felt that we were people chosen for tragedies: the Spanish Inquisition, pogroms, the Holocaust, antisemitism, all the wars in Israel. As I read our history, I never understood why we Jews had so many horrific events befall us, and then I found myself not reading history but living through it.

When I was still in Israel, I did everything I could to raise thousands of dollars for our troops and to help send hundreds of care packages to IDF bases in both the south and the north, yet I still felt a tremendous amount of guilt for leaving the country. Even now I think about what else I could have done to help. I wonder why I didn't do this or that. I ask myself if I had stayed how much more would I have been able to do.

NINE MONTHS LATER

I had to return. The moment I got off the plane and landed in Eretz Israel, I felt this massive reminder that the war is not over yet. As I entered Ben Gurion airport, I saw the posters of all the hostages still being held captive in Gaza, and as I walked down the entrance ramp into the main terminal I realized that while I was finally back home, they are not [Fig. 1]. I took the time to look at the faces and read the names and ages of all those who are still held hostage, kept against their will till this day by murderous terrorists. Mine was a bittersweet return; I was relieved and grateful to be back in Israel, yet I never imagined that I would be returning to a country still at war, still praying for the return of the hostages in the hands of Hamas.

FIG. 1. Photos of hostages lining the entrance hall to Ben Gurion Airport. Courtesy of Karen Shawn.

The hardest part of my return was witnessing, with our Fish Center summer study group, the utter destruction of Kibbutz Kfar Aza. While walking around this once-thriving, now devastated community, I recalled being there on October 2nd, a week before the war broke out. The horrors that occurred in this kibbutz and in many others near the Gaza Envelope are unspeakable. As I walked and saw all of the bullet-riddled homes where the massacres occurred, I knew I had stepped into one massive crime scene, more gruesome than anything that could ever be explained to anyone who had not seen it.

We drove from the kibbutz to the site of the Nova Music Festival, another crime scene, although the bullet holes and evidence of slaughter were not visible. The space was tranquil. The 364 people murdered at this site each had their own tree of remembrance adorned with their photos and some of their possessions, brought by family and friends and left, like the stones in a Jewish cemetery [Figs. 2, 3, and 4].

Our study group director, Shay Pilnik, pointed out that the trees at this music site were newly planted by the Jewish National Fund; they were not there during the festival to provide any sort of coverage or shelter for people running from the terrorists. Unlike some dense forests in Europe, where partisans and survivors hid and found shelter, this was completely different. These young women and men were completely unaware of what was to happen, were fully exposed, and had nowhere to hide or escape their tragic fate when the massacres began.

I thought a lot about these trees, growing with the names of those who were murdered by Hamas, how, in Judaism, trees are symbolic, like the tree of life, yet these young lives were cut short. I reflected on family trees and realized that so many family lines end here at this place of death.

I looked at the crowds, still sparse, but coming from all over the world—from France, the United States, Australia, South Africa, and Argentina—to see this site of remembrance and pay their respects. I could hear the different languages being spoken around me and could sense how powerful it was for all of us to come together, to be here for one another. A Taglit Birthright group sang songs of Jewish hope—"Kol Ha'olam Kulo Gesher Tzar Me'od" ("The Whole World is a Narrow Bridge"). The essence of this song is to understand, to have no fear, to never be overcome by fear.

I am hopeful and have אמונה (faith) that Israel will come out of this war even stronger than before and will rescue the remaining hostages from Gaza. This war started during Simchat Torah, which is supposed to be the happiest day of the year when we finish reading the Torah and then dance and rejoice with the Torah scrolls. We complete the last portion of the Torah reading and immediately start the first reading, beginning anew. We remember that the Torah is an endless source of wisdom, and this renewal, this beginning once more, is a metaphor for the Jewish people, that we will always be able to begin again with חזק ואמץ (strength and courage). I believe that if the Jewish people have been able to overcome so many tragedies and have survived and thrived for thousands of years, we will resurge and survive this disaster with חזק ואמץ as well.

It's been almost a year since the hostages were kidnapped by Hamas. Here in Israel, we haven't lost hope, we will not stop fighting for what is right, and we will continue to pray for the safe return of all the hostages. *Am Yisrael Chai!* The People of Israel Live!

FIGS. 2, 3, and 4. Photos and names of young people murdered at the Nova Music Festival attached to trees planted in their memory. Courtesy of Karen Shawn.

"We who study and teach about the Holocaust are the guardians of memory," writes Daniel Bouskila. Throughout his essay, he prompts readers to consider: "What are we doing with those memories?"

Daniel Bouskila

Trauma, Memory & Resilience: Personal Reflections on October 7th and the Holocaust

It was April 22, 1993, 48 years after Elie Wiesel was liberated from Buchenwald. On that day, Wiesel spoke at the opening ceremony of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., and reminded the world of the vision that inspired and informed the creation of this shrine of Holocaust memory: "When President Carter entrusted me with this project in 1978, I was asked about my vision, and I wrote one sentence: For the dead and the living, we must bear witness."

Wiesel's words are etched in stone at the entrance to the USHMM. For all who are engaged in Holocaust research and education, his words are also etched in our hearts.

Indeed, Wiesel's powerful call to memory and testimony accompanied me throughout our 10-day summer study tour in Israel. I felt that the moral obligation to bear witness, both for the dead and the living, was deeply embedded in every museum and memorial we visited.

But the timing of our trip—post October 7th—enhanced and deepened the power of Wiesel's call. We now carried with us the trauma, pain, and ongoing nightmare of the October 7th massacres by Hamas. The dead and the living of the Holocaust were now joined by the dead and the living of October 7th.

The dead: 1,200 innocent men, women and children who were terrorized, brutalized, humiliated, tortured, raped, mutilated, and murdered by Hamas terrorists, along with over 600 Israeli soldiers killed in Israel's war to destroy Hamas.

The living: the survivors from the southern kibbutzim and cities that were attacked, the traumatized youth who survived the Nova party, the injured IDF soldiers, thousands of Israeli citizens displaced from their homes, the State of Israel under continuous missile attacks, and Jews around the world subject to a poisonous rise in antisemitism. Of course, the living—or so we hope—are also some 105 Israeli hostages that remain in the brutal captivity of Hamas.

One tragic day in October, and its ever–present aftermath, took Wiesel's call to bear witness to another level.

The journey with our group began on a Friday afternoon in Tel Aviv, but for me it started on Sunday morning, in an event that brought these traumas together in a very personal way. I was privileged to host our group in my home in Herzliya for breakfast and a talk by my son, Ilan, about his experiences as a combat soldier in this current war in Gaza. While this may sound like an interesting and gracious way for me to welcome my fellow MA students into my home and, as a bonus, have them hear Ilan's war stories, it was personally much more than that.

I was in Israel on October 7th, together with my wife, Peni; our son, Ilan; and his wife, Kayla. The four of us experienced the frightening air raid sirens that day, as well as the horrors of what was unfolding before our eyes. The newlywed couple had just returned from their honeymoon, and before they could blink, they were both drafted—Kayla in the north, and Ilan down south, on the front lines in Gaza.

That fall, I was enrolled in Yeshiva University's Fish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, taking a class called Holocaust Testimonies. We began in late August, ran through September, and broke for the Sukkot holiday. We resumed October 10th, three long days after October 7, and one day after Peni and I dropped Ilan at his base to go to war. Like Wiesel's statement, the Testimonies class took on a whole new meaning.

It was then—while Ilan was fighting the post-October 7th war, and while I was studying the various expressions of Holocaust testimony—that these two traumas first met up in my life.

Many on our study tour were in my YU class. Now Ilan stood in front of them. Ilan spoke about the gruesome and tedious side of war. "War is not glorious," he told us. He bared his soul, speaking about his sense of responsibility to defend Israel, and the personal price of post–trauma that comes with that responsibility.

Ilan drew no comparisons between the Holocaust and October 7th. He simply told us what it was like fighting Hamas. But he did share with us that in 2018, on his senior year trip to Poland, he stood at the remains of the MILA 18 bunkers of the Warsaw Ghetto, and it was there that he decided to join the IDF. What that tells me is that upon entering Gaza to fight Hamas, Ilan had, embedded somewhere in his soul, the motivation to eradicate this generation's Nazis, doing so as a member of a sovereign Jewish state's military forces. The spirit of MILA 18 lives on in the post–October 7th war. That's not a comparison but rather a powerful link from past to present.

THE MUSEUMS AND MEMORIALS

At the Massuah International Institute for Holocaust Studies, our guide began with the Institute's extensive exhibit about the Eichmann trial. My initial reaction was that it felt chronologically awkward and out of context to start a museum tour about the Holocaust in 1961. I then understood that it was the Eichmann trial when Holocaust survivors in Israel were first given the platform to bear witness—for the dead and the living.

But I really came to appreciate the depth of their curatorial decision when our guide started a discussion about the Holocaust in our post–October 7th world. This triggered thoughts and reflections about the legal trauma we all witnessed just two months after the massacres.

It would take a combined effort by George Orwell and Franz Kafka to write a dystopian novel whose plot had the world's so-called highest court of justice accuse Israel—post-October 7th—to stand trial for war crimes and genocide. But that dystopian nightmare became our reality: a trial in South Africa, at the International Court of Justice. The accused: Israel.

In Israel, we awaited the opposite. We waited for Nuremberg 2.0, for Eichmann redux. The world had witnessed atrocities, and we waited for the international community to seek justice for those wounded and murdered on October 7th, for the victims of sexual violence, for those taken hostage. Yes, we waited, and waited, and we continue to wait.

In the post–October 7th reality, starting the tour with the Eichmann trial was a profound reminder of how perverted and politicized the term "justice" has become. For the dead and the living, a trial needs to happen—a legitimate one.

Our journey continued with learning at the Mashmaut Center. In Hebrew, the word *mashmaut* means "meaning." The Center staff, led by its founder, director, and driving force Lea Ganor, engages students in discussions about the meaning of being a Jew in a Jewish State born of the ashes of the Holocaust. These discussions seamlessly blend the trauma of the Holocaust with current–day questions about Zionism, Jewish values, and Jewish identity. As such, this center was more about curating ideas than exhibits.

The most powerful post–October 7th reflection I have from the center comes in a quote from Ganor's post–doctoral research about Holocaust survivors who became pilots in the Israeli Air Force. One man told her, "If I managed to go from a Yellow Star on my chest to a Blue Star of David on my wings, then what more does a person need?" I was reminded that, unlike in the Holocaust, the massacre of October 7th was immediately followed by a formidable response from Israeli Air Force pilots bombarding Hamas terror sites in Gaza.

"What would I have done if I had lived in Nazi Germany?" I asked myself during our visit to Moreshet: The Mordechai Anielevich Memorial Holocaust Study & Research Center. Through a series of creative pedagogic exercises helping us to understand the mindset of a citizen in Nazi Germany, we were asked to reflect on the decisions made by ordinary citizens in the face of the rise of National Socialism.

Resistance. Armed resistance. More than any other Holocaust museum in Israel, Beit Lohame Ha'getaot, the Ghetto Fighters House Museum, is for me the ultimate expression of Zionism's narrative of the Holocaust. Its dedicated exhibit to the heroic story of armed resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto conjured emotional images of the Maccabees of the Holocaust. It invoked as well the image of my son standing at the remains of the MILA 18 bunkers, making his life-changing decision to join the IDF. The link from those fighters to the IDF soldiers who currently fight Hamas is, for me unquestionably, the strongest expression of "Never Again."

For the dead and the living, and for the heroic members of armed resistance during the Holocaust, the Ghetto Fighters House Museum bears witness.

Each visit to Yad Vashem moves me in different ways. This time, the most powerful emotion of my visit came not from any exhibit but rather from the very end—from its light at the end of the tunnel. As I stepped out of Israel's national shrine of Holocaust memory, I gazed at the pastoral view of Jerusalem, reflecting on what lay on the other side of this mountain: the Har Herzl

[FIG. 1] The author sharing documents with the group during their visit to the Chamber of the Holocaust, Jerusalem. Courtesy of Darren Bahar.

Military Cemetery, the final resting place for thousands of men and women who fell in defense of the State.

It was here, at the meeting point between Shoah and *t'kumah* (Rebirth), that I reflected on the heavy price of both having and not having a Jewish state. It was here that I realized that the connection between the Holocaust and October 7th is not a theoretical debate written in ink, but an existential reality etched in Jewish blood.

The destruction at Kibbutz Kfar Aza. The Nova party killing fields. The ground zero of burnt cars. Sderot. Together in one voice, these sites of the October 7th carnage scream out the opening stanzas of Haim Nahman Bialik's "The City of Slaughter":

> Arise and go now to the city of slaughter; / Into its courtyard wind thy way; / There with thine own hand touch, and with the eyes of / thine head, / Behold on tree, on stone, on fence, on mural clay, / The spattered blood and dried brains of the dead. / Proceed thence to the ruins, the split walls reach, / Where wider grows the hollow, and greater grows the breach; / Pass over the shattered hearth, attain the broken wall / Whose burnt and barren brick, whose charred stones reveal / The open mouths of such wounds, that no mending / Shall ever mend, nor healing ever heal.

"The City of Slaughter" is not a Holocaust poem. Bialik wrote this in 1904, about the 1903 Kishinev pogrom. But it very well could be a Holocaust poem—or an elegy about Kibbutz Kfar Aza on October 7th, 2023.

I had the privilege of introducing our group to Israel's first and perhaps most forgotten or unknown Holocaust memorial, the Chamber of the Holocaust**.** [Fig. 1]

This uniquely Orthodox narrative of the *Khurben* ("Destruction" in Yiddish), as the Holocaust is known in strictly Orthodox circles, brings me back to Elie Wiesel.

During our visit, I reminded the group of his famous theological experience, when concentration camp inmates put God on trial, and just after pronouncing God guilty, they gathered to pray *Maariv,* the evening prayer service. In a televised interview, Wiesel (1995) said,

> For me, God was still my anchor. I do not understand, I cannot conceive of Auschwitz and Buchenwald with or without God. And every time, I keep asking myself the question—"But God in all of this, what was He doing, where was He?"

Walking through the Chamber of the Holocaust in a post–October 7th world, I feel the same. God, Torah study, and prayer are still my anchors. But I continue to ask the question: where was God?

"For the dead and the living, we must bear witness." These words drove Wiesel's vision for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, as expressed in his speech on the museum's opening day. In that same speech, he posed a challenge for the future, adding, "For not only are we responsible for the memories of the dead, we are also responsible for what we are doing with those memories."

We who study and teach about the Holocaust are the guardians of memory. We willingly bear the burden of responsibility to preserve those memories. As guardians who visited Israel's Holocaust museums and memorials in the shadow of October 7th, we bear the additional responsibility to ask ourselves: what are we doing with those memories?

In this reflective narrative, as she considers both the Holocaust and October 7th, Erin Jackson urges us: "Please don't forget these places where time stands still."

Erin Jackson

Summer Study Abroad: Israel and the Landscape of Holocaust Education

Please don't forget the places where time stands still. We look to the past to seek comfort when facing the unknown. This is true in all walks of life, but it is especially relevant in the discussion of October 7th. Many seek to draw comparisons between October 7th and the Holocaust. How do we process emotions? Seek comfort? Look for answers, advice, and the next step forward?

What comparison can be made? That both events were an attack on Jewish life? October 7th was a tragedy of unprecedented loss, and it is only natural that we try to seek comfort. However, I firmly believe that October 7th and the Holocaust must remain separate. Look to Holocaust survivors first, if you must look to the past. Survivors are asking for the two events to stay separate.

Separating October 7th from the Holocaust comes with many challenges. First, I don't think the language needed to process October 7th has been determined yet. Many express their thoughts in terms used to discuss the Holocaust, and that language is applicable to the Holocaust alone. And what is truly unfortunate in this scenario is that Israel may be ready to talk about October 7th, but the world is not (an echo from Holocaust survivor experiences). Genocide has been added to the ever–growing list of words that are so frequently misused that the true meaning behind them has disappeared. One of the most recognizable words on that list, in my opinion, is fascism, but I think genocide will quickly overtake it.

When I came home from our summer study abroad, I posted pictures of Yad Vashem on my social media account. I got a few nice comments from friends, but one comment I received stood out to me the most. It read, "Knowingly visiting Israel while they're committing the same atrocities you're researching is absolutely disgusting and I'm ashamed to have ever looked up to you." I deleted that comment from my feed and promptly blocked that person, but let's take a moment to discuss it.

It was strange and highly disturbing for a couple of reasons. First, I have not spoken to that person in over seven years. Second, the writer's profile contains no name, personal photos, or other identifying information. I honestly had to sit and think about who it was for a while before I remembered. How pathetic it is, I thought, to hide behind your screen, and to expect also that your presence is still relevant in my life.

I can't help it if people want to remain ignorant. But I will always advocate for the truth: October 7th was caused by terrorists whose only goal is the eradication of Jewish life. 1,189 people were murdered, and another 251 were taken hostage! Why has the world ignored and distorted this fact?

Then I worried, thinking I might be a hypocrite: it is reminiscent of attitudes surrounding the Holocaust after the end of World War II. Nobody wanted to accept that the Holocaust happened, and chose to ignore survivors and media in hopes talk of the Jews would go away. The Holocaust didn't make a mark in mainstream media until the Eichmann trial. What do we have to do to get October 7th discussed honestly, without bias, in the media?

This, however, brings us back to the first dilemma. How do we talk about October 7th, in the media or elsewhere? First, we must recognize that it and its aftermath are fresh, raw, unprocessed, and ongoing events. We were not given the space or time to mourn. We do not have closure. We may never have closure, and yet, these emotions are a very much–needed aspect of our conversation. If we are to recognize this horrific day and what followed, we must not become desensitized to our feelings. It is in our feelings that progress is born. Our anger, our loss, our confusion, our defeat, our hope: all must be felt. These are the emotions we weaponize in order to pave the path to future education. And yet, we must also

recognize the weight of having to wield our emotions for progress. Why must this fall on us? Why can't we simply feel, without having to justify what is felt?

I felt much horror on October 7th, and it hasn't lessened. In fact, I was even more appalled after seeing the responses my peers have made in pro-Palestinian spaces. When I see these responses from strangers, there's still a sense of removal from the idiocy. When it comes to my friends, former classmates, and peers, I can't help but feel angry. You have a college education and the means and tools to conduct your research on a topic so that you may come to your conclusion, and still you choose to believe blindly every post you see on the internet. Then you attack those of us who do choose to do the research. The hypocrisy is astounding.

After visiting Israel, I feel much more vindicated in my reactions. You didn't see what I saw. I have dedicated much of my studies to Holocaust education. I'm not really surprised by anything anymore. I've seen the videos and photos of the Holocaust, read the Nazi propaganda, and viewed their films. I've seen too the murders of October 7th. The pictures and the day are still fresh. It will just be one year since it happened. Visiting Kfar Aza was such a visceral experience that I will never forget it. I will never forget how every single building had a sticker on its doors that identified where the deceased had lain. I will never forget seeing the letter C on every building, marking it cleared by the IDF. I will never forget the Sukkot hut that still stands in the kindergarten field. Time stands still in Kfar Aza. [Fig. 1].

Please don't forget the places where time stands still. When time is forever paused, you have the ability to see so much more than you ever will when everything moves around you. So much hangs in those warped, desecrated, destroyed spaces: every emotion, hope, fear, and surrendered dream. While I have yet to visit, I suspect time stands still in the forest of Treblinka, and at the train tracks leading to Auschwitz. Are there places where time stood still for you? Did you stand still with it? Did you watch and listen, or did you move through the moment? What will you teach when you teach about the Holocaust and October 7th? Please don't forget these places where time stands still. Maybe in these places, we will find how to begin again.

FIG. 1. A home in Kfar Aza destroyed by Hamas. Courtesy of Karen Shawn.

"When the horrendous attack on Israel and the Jewish people at large happened, I knew I had to discuss it with my students," writes Darren Bahar, "and refute the propaganda and misinformation campaign that soon followed, but I grappled with how to do it." In his essay, he reflects on his journey of understanding.

Darren Bahar

Connecting the Past With the Present

Since October 7th, I've struggled to clarify my role as an educator of students in grades 5 through 8. I teach math and history, including ancient history and current events, passions of mine. I'm always working on connecting the past with the present, and specifically how and where we as Jews fit into both.

When I learned about the Advanced Certificate program for teachers at the Fish Center, I enrolled for the spring semester and took three different modules, all of which have helped shape the way I will teach my students. When the three-credit summer study in Israel program was announced, I decided join it. I wanted to learn how Israelis are teaching about the Holocaust in the aftermath of October 7th and to see how Israelis are coping with the ongoing tragedy. On a recent visit to a museum in Maryland, I had been struck by a quote by James Baldwin that I would carry with me on this study tour: "The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it. . . . History is literally present in all that we do."

Arriving in Israel, I couldn't help but notice how empty the airport was. I went through security in five minutes. I worried that I would see a beaten country with low morale. For sure, I saw a country that had been punched in its gut, and the horrific assault is a topic of conversation every day. Everyone knows someone who has been directly affected. However, I also saw a strong, resilient country, with cranes working on massive construction projects. I saw people who will not back down from fear, who manage to go on with their lives, live in the moment, and share happiness with each other. I saw volunteers like my cousins who, every week, help on farms that no longer have workers. I also saw protests, some that would affect my ability to move around Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, but they were never violent. Recurring throughout my entire stay was my appreciation for how grateful and warm Israelis were to me and everyone on our program. I thought I should be the one thanking them for making me feel so welcome.

We spent our first Shabbat in Tel-Aviv, and bonded during a joyful and lavish Shabbat dinner in our hotel on the beach. The next afternoon, on our walking tour, I learned about the painful struggle that Holocaust survivors experienced when trying to make aliyah after the war, how so many faced deportation by the British. As someone born in England, I was pained to see how strongly the British resisted the Jewish migration to Israel when it was so desperately needed.

Saturday night, on our way to Hostage Square, we saw a fairly large protest, its participants demanding the release of the hostages. I walked around by myself; it was my first introduction to the pain that I would be seeing throughout my trip. I saw the Shabbat table set up, awaiting all the hostages; the makeshift tunnel for people to enter and try to understand, in a small way, what being imprisoned in a such a space would feel like. I sat and closed my eyes, just wanting to think about the hostages still alive, sadly dead, and those who have been released. Recurring questions started to take form. Was what happened on October 7th a new Holocaust, something that could be compared to it, or something totally different? My view at this time was that it was more like the Holocaust than it was different. But that idea would change almost daily, as I would hear varying opinions from a variety of people.

The next morning we started the emotionally draining but spiritually uplifting part of our study abroad. We met with Daniel Bouskila, a participant who had made aliyah, at his home in Herzliya. We met his son, Ilan, a soldier who had fought in Gaza, who talked about what he did there, and the lengths that the IDF goes through before opening fire. He struggled as he spoke, and the toll it took on soldiers to do the work that needed to be done was very clear [Fig. 1].

FIG. 1. Ilan Bouskila speaking to our summer study group about his experiences as a soldier in Gaza just after October 7th. Courtesy of Daniel Bouskila.

We learned that some older Israelis were not sure if the 18–25–year–old generation would be up to the task of defending Israel, but we have seen them come through brilliantly. This is where one big difference between the Holocaust and October 7th lies. Thank God we have a country and a strong army that can defend it. We now have the ability and the weapons to fight, and although we prefer peace, we also understand that at times we must use force to achieve that peace. Hamas might very well have the same ideology as the Nazis and want to do the same kind of harm, but they can't. October 7th was the worst attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust, but it did not continue for years or cover the territory that the Holocaust covered. At this point, my opinion had changed, and I now believed that we shouldn't compare the two at all. Conflating them would cheapen the memory of the six million who died and diminish the fact that Israel has the power to protect us.

We left Herzliya to travel to the Massuah International Institute for Holocaust Studies, where we saw, among many other exhibits, how the trial of Eichmann had unfolded. We learned that the Mossad could have killed him when they first captured him, but Israel wanted a trial that would allow the Holocaust to take center stage in the world and to give voice to the survivors, who were never until then able to have one. One lesson we learned from this is that today we must listen avidly to all those who survived, and will survive, this ongoing tragedy.

Our next place of learning was the Mashmaut Center, focusing on heritage, Holocaust, tradition, values, and revival. There I saw first-hand the power of drama as a teaching tool, as an actor reenacted a scene from a survivor testimony. It brought learning to life, and I will use this pedagogy with my students.

The director of the center made clear that October 7th was not a Holocaust, but the words we use to discuss it may be the same, because we do not yet have the language to describe or explain the slaughter. We also heard directly from a survivor, who spoke eloquently and powerfully despite her advanced age. It saddens me that survivors won't be with us much longer; hearing from them is immeasurably important. But we will still be able to learn about the Holocaust from the testimonies they leave behind.

Our next center was Moreshet, which focuses on how the Germans could have allowed Hitler to come to power. Other than Yad Vashem, this was my favorite place, because it did a fine job of explaining how this could happen, which helps us to see the warning signs. We saw how uniformity, athleticism, competition, bravery, and acting for the greater good were all highly valued qualities Hitler had for German youth. But the underside of such qualities in Hitler's Germany was cruelty, violence, and unquestioning obedience to authority. We saw how propaganda was used to dehumanize all Jews in the eyes of their neighbors. We learned how Hitler created a society of informants, and how one can control a population through fear of retribution. We discussed such essential questions as how much power is too much. How do we recognize the point at which democracy is destroyed, freedom of speech is gone? I found all of this eye–opening and understand more now than ever that there was nothing so unique about Germany that such a thing could not happen again.

At Beit Lohame Hageta'ot, the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum, we learned of many different types of resistance, including physical, offensive resistance; polemic resistance, including writing poetry and music, keeping diaries and journals, producing underground newspapers; spiritual resistance, including teaching, forming mutual aid societies, offering music and theater to ghetto residents, and finding ways to survive emotionally and psychologically; defensive resistance, hiding Jewish babies, helping others escape, smuggling food; and religious resistance, including keeping Jewish traditions and laws as much as possible and praying under the most challenging circumstances. We heard a quote from Zivia Lubetkin, one of the leaders of the Jewish underground and a founder of this remarkable museum, the first Holocaust museum in Israel. She explained about the youth movement:

> The movement tried to educate young Jews to take their fate in their hands. To stand up and fight for the emancipation of their people and all mankind. It was our moment and education that gave us the strength to endure and resist as we did.

When we arrived at Yad Vashem, we learned about the 28,000 gentiles remembered there, the Righteous Among the Nations who, at grave risk to their lives, helped Jews to survive. We know there must have been many more whose names and actions are lost to us. We learned that resistance was a choice, and thus complicity was one as well. We learned that anyone can be a hero; greatness isn't thrust upon people; regular people can do great things.

I believe that it will be the righteous gentiles of the world today, many of whom were on this trip, who will help again with diminishing the antisemitism that currently plagues us. Will we discover any such people among those who still hold hostages in Gaza? The museum is a wealth of information, and I will continue to use it as a resource to teach my students.

After visiting Yad Vashem, we went to Har Herzl to pay our respects to the fallen soldiers of past and current wars. It is hard not to see the comparisons between the fallen soldiers who sacrificed their lives to help create and then defend Israel and the soldiers who have paid the ultimate price over the past year in Gaza, the North, and throughout Israel. The military cemetery is peaceful, beautifully designed and landscaped, and reminded me of Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia [Fig. 2].

FIG. 2. Har Herzl. Courtesy of Darren Bahar.

The newest graves, though, are replete with mementos from family and friends. I put stones and multiple bracelets on the tombs of numerous soldiers [Fig. 3].

FIG. 3. The most recent graves are adorned with mementos. This is the grave of Liel Hayou, a young soldier who was murdered in an ambush in Gaza. Courtesy of Rabbi Nasanayl Braun.

One of the students on our trip spoke on behalf of a lone soldier he knew who had been killed fighting and had been buried only days before. If the cost of the war hadn't hit home yet for me, it surely did then. I thought this would be my emotional low point, but that was yet to come.

We finished our educational part of the trip the next day with a visit to Kibbutz Kfar Aza. This was the hardest thing I have had to witness in my life. Seeing the total devastation of an Israeli kibbutz, listening to a survivor of the kibbutz, and learning about the loss of life at this place, his home, was something that will be hard for me to cope with for the rest of my life. We were given permission to step into a few of the destroyed homes of Israelis who were murdered. The evil that I saw—the life that was snatched, the crimes that were committed against

sweet, innocent, peace-loving men, women, children, and babies—is gut-wrenching. My tears flow each time I think about it.

We drove to the site of the Nova festival, which was grim yet surprisingly uplifting for me. There I saw people who didn't know each other, from all different backgrounds, sing together as a way of mourning and commemorating all who had been murdered there. This gave me a little hope in humanity, as I joined in singing the songs I knew by heart.

In conclusion, I will teach about each museum and center I visited and will share photos from each one. I am still struggling with how exactly to bring October 7th and the Holocaust together for my students, and for me. As I plan to teach it now, I will keep them as separate events in the history of our people, but just as I am struggling with comparisons between the two, so will many of my students. I cannot tell them there is no way to compare them; that would be wrong. I cannot say October 7th was another Holocaust; that, too, would be wrong. They will question, and I will not know the answer to every question they have, and that's okay, as I discovered on this summer study tour; sometimes we don't yet have answers. I will learn with them, cry with them, and grow with them. This study tour in Israel was the most important trip of my life. Now, more than ever, the words Am Israel Chai live within me.

"At every Holocaust museum we visited in Israel," Emily Dehmer notes, "the guides stressed the necessity of not equating the Shoah and October 7th. . . . Yes, the two atrocities cannot and should not be linked, and conversations surrounding the transition of roles in the Holocaust and the aftermath of October 7th are widespread and worth discussing." Her essay prompts essential questions about the two tragedies.

Emily Dehmer

Blurred Lines: Victims, Bystanders, Perpetrators

I recently had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to visit Israel with my classmates enrolled in Yeshiva University's Fish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies graduate programs. We spent 10 days studying how Israel educates about the Holocaust and what, if anything, they are—and by extension, we should be—changing about the approach in the wake of October 7th. This was my first visit to Israel (though it will certainly not be my last), and it was incredibly powerful and meaningful to learn and bear witness during this painful time.

At every Holocaust museum we visited in Israel, the guides stressed the necessity of not equating the Shoah and October 7th. I agree. However, I cannot help but view it dialectically. Yes, the two atrocities cannot and should not be linked, and conversations surrounding the transition of roles in the Holocaust and the aftermath of October 7th are widespread and worth discussing.

Regarding the Shoah, countries such as Poland have sought to rewrite history and flip the roles of victim and perpetrator. In 2018, the government went so far as to make it illegal to claim that the nation was at all complicit in the crimes carried out by the Nazis during World War II, thereby insisting that they were the victims. True, some Poles helped Jews at risk to their own lives; and true, many Poles were murdered by the Nazis, but most stood by, and some carried out the murders of their Jewish neighbors of their own volition. In response to the outcry about the 2018 law, the prime minister remarked that "there were Polish perpetrators, as there were Jewish perpetrators" (Lipstadt, 2019, p. 159).

When making statements about roles in the Holocaust, it is imperative that speakers not insinuate that Jews were culpable by using their "choiceless choices" as evidence of their blameworthiness. As Deborah Lipstadt (2019) commands in her book *Antisemitism: Here and Now*, if such a repugnant claim arises, we must dismiss it rather than respond rationally, for that would give the assertion "the gravitas it [does] not deserve" (p. 78).

When we visited Yad Vashem, I was struck by the thousands of trees planted in honor of the Righteous Among the Nations, the non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. I wondered what was going through the minds of the 28,217 Righteous (Yad Vashem, n.d.) the moment they decided to help Jews, despite the danger to themselves and their families. What allowed them to transition from the role of bystander to rescuer when hundreds of millions of other civilians turned a blind eye?

The blurring of roles surrounding the current war is most starkly evident in the death tolls presented by the Hamas–run Gaza Ministry of Health. (I seem to have missed the memo when the world decided that terrorists were an inherently credible source.) The death tolls—of which the accuracy is questionable—make no distinction between innocent civilians and terrorists, between victims and perpetrators.

Neither is the truth. There are individuals who are putting their lives on the line to speak out against Hamas. Through their renowned series "Whispered in Gaza" and "Voices from Gaza," PeaceComms (or the Center for Peace Communications) offers "ongoing interviews with Gazan men and women bearing witness to Hamas wartime abuses" (2021). All–or–nothing rhetoric concerning an entire population is never accurate; it erases the tremendous courage of those few Gazans willing to speak out; and it disregards the existence of civilians tragically caught

in the crosshairs, through no fault of their own.

Conversely, rhetoric that asserts that every Palestinian casualty is an innocent civilian ignores the reality of the decades of radicalization and extensive stronghold Hamas has in Gaza.

We see the swapping of roles in some of the world's reactions to the hostages taken on October 7th. The five young women taken captive from the Nahal Oz base—Agam, Karina, Naama, Liri, and Daniella—have been stripped of their innocence on parts of social media and rebranded as legitimate targets and even perpetrators because they are in the IDF. For some, they do not count as victims.

Is there a clear line linking bystanders, beneficiaries, accomplices, and perpetrators? Earlier in July, a figure of 186,000 Palestinian casualties published in a *Lancet* piece went viral on the internet. Aside from the continued failure to distinguish between civilians and terrorists, the piece in which the number appears is not a peer–reviewed source but rather a letter to the editor. The figure arrived at was pure speculation; even the primary author, Rasha Khatib (2024, n.p.), admitted that the number was merely a guess when she writes: "It is not *implausible* to estimate that up to 186,000 or even more deaths could be attributable to the current conflict in Gaza" (emphasis added). Never known for their critical-thinking skills, social media account contributors took the 186,000 figure and ran with it. Khatib did not carry out any violence herself, but by spreading misinformation sure to increase outrage at Israel—which will, in turn, increase violence against Jews in the diaspora—does her role cross the threshold into that of an accomplice or a perpetrator? I do not know.

Can one be an immoral bystander without being a perpetrator? When considering this question in the context of the Shoah, German citizens who made the occasional antisemitic comment and raised the Nazi salute come to my mind. Additionally, in his book *The Holocaust by Bullets*, Fr. Patrick Desbois (2008) states that every Ukrainian witness to a mass shooting of Jews he interviewed remarked that the ground at the top of the grave pits shifted for at least two days because some Jews had been buried alive. Surely, the Nazis could not have been watching the graves for the entirety of the 48 hours, as there were instances of Jews who crawled out after being buried alive, escaped, and survived the war. Did the Ukrainian citizens who did not go back to the pits to check for survivors transition from their role as bystanders to one of deserving blame? As a present–day example, I think of the Gazans who handed out sweets to celebrate on October 7th (*MEMRI*, October 29, 2023, n.p.). They did not carry out the horrific violence of October 7th, but they also did not merely stand idly by.

I hate uncertainty. Yet these questions I have posed are not an abstract exercise or mere fodder for a lively dinner discussion. They are part of a contemporary quandary that I fear is not going away anytime soon. After the war, when the crimes against humanity carried out by Hamas on October 7th are investigated, I imagine the international community will be asking questions such as these when determining whom to put on trial and with what they can be charged.

We might not get to choose if we are victims, but we do get to decide where we will be along the continuum of bystander–beneficiary–accomplice–collaborator–perpetrator. A powerful quote by Fritz Bauer (1968) painted outside of Israel's Massuah Institute, which we visited, reads: "We cannot turn earth into heaven, but each of us can do something so that earth does not turn into hell." How will you choose to act?

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Justin Zammit articulates what all of us are wondering when he asks, "In trying to comprehend the tragic events of the past nine months, do we need to look back to the Holocaust? With regard to October 7th, 2023, is never again now?"

Justin Zammit

Was October 7th Another Holocaust?

Zachor! Never again! As a Holocaust educator, I understand the uniqueness of this Jewish tragedy. I believe in the importance of making connections to the Holocaust for today's students to allow them to understand the world of the past. This will help them navigate the world of the present so we can all help create a better world for the future.

After two weeks exploring Holocaust museums and centres throughout Israel and visiting the memorials and sites of October 7th, I ponder these many questions: Is never again now? To what extent can we link the traumatic events of October 7th to the Holocaust? Should they be linked? Is October 7th the same as the Holocaust? To what extent has Holocaust education changed since October 7th? How does one create a memorial within the physical space of an unfolding tragedy? How can one memorialize homes and communities ravaged by Hamas and yet are still homes and communities to the living? How does one use language to convey a tragedy where the language has not yet been crafted? How do we commemorate events that are so raw and sadly still unfolding? The more I try to grapple with these complex issues, the more questions I find myself asking. Inadvertently I fall back on terminology and memory that is sadly familiar to us all—that of the Holocaust.

The events of the Holocaust have a clear end date: the liberation of the camps, the conclusion of World War Two. In the months following liberation, memorials sprang up to commemorate the murder of European Jews. Over time these memorials were turned into something more official and eventually transformed into permanent memorial sites and Holocaust museums. They became places of remembrance, commemoration, prayer, education, and learning. What is to become of the October 7th sites? How does one memorialize an event that is still ongoing? How do remembrance, commemoration, prayer, education, and learning take place at these sites?

We went to Israel's southern border to find out. We went to stand as witnesses; to listen to the survivors; to show them our love and support; to remember; to commemorate; to pay our respects, and pray for peace. We left the hustle and bustle of Jerusalem for the kibbutzim along the Gaza Envelope. As our bus drove into Kfar Aza, we were greeted with the first sights of the kibbutz: what were once neat and tidy homes, well–presented buildings, immaculate gardens, children's bicycles leaning against walls, and sukkot decorations still in place from that October weekend where life here changed forever. On the surface there was a sense of normality, until you looked closer and saw the devastation and realized what was missing—people. No laughing children rode around on their bicycles, no mothers chatted in groups, no fathers milled around. It was the silence that hits you like a powerful blow to the face—sudden and fierce. The few residents who had survived the slaughter, the terrorist attack on their community, had been evacuated. One of the only sounds we did hear was that of the lawn mower trimming the lawns of the kibbutz. Even the bird life seemed to stay still in Kfar Aza. Our visit was eerily silent. We walked past empty homes, along empty pathways, and across empty open spaces until BOOM! Our quiet reflective sojourn was suddenly and violently interrupted by the sound of a rocket fired from Gaza and the explosive response of Israel's Iron Dome defense system seconds later. Within moments it was all over and a quiet calm returned to the area.

We continued silently on, focusing on the sites of destruction all around us. We saw broken windows, bullet–covered doors and walls, burnt homes [Fig. 1].

Destruction everywhere offered an eerie sense of familiarity to those who understand Jewish history and suffering. Empty streets, destroyed homes, void of community and life echoed films we had seen of ghettos after deportations. There was grief in the air. Without adequate terminology to describe what I was looking at, I referred to what I could connect with, and the horror of the destruction of Kfar Aza reminded me of photographs

FIG. 1. One of the many destroyed homes of Kfar Aza. Note the shoes in the entryway. Courtesy of Karen Shawn.

I had seen of pogroms. Images from museums visited in the past, and educational resources I had used in the classrooms sprang to my mind.

From Kfar Aza we silently journeyed to pay our respects and remember the victims of the Nova music festival massacre. Upon stepping off the bus, we walked among the saplings, the young trees newly planted to memorialize each one of those murdered as they danced. My mind turned to the forests of Eastern Europe where the Einstazgruppen roamed the area hunting down Jewish people to murder. Yet I knew this area was not the forests of Eastern Europe. It is different, not a forest at all, not a place of shelter, and yet somehow similar. Jewish blood was spilled here by terrorists on a genocidal campaign against the Jewish people almost 80 years after the previous one had been carried out in Europe. Here young party goers were murdered for being Jewish. The persecution against the Jewish people sadly continues.

Silently, we walked past makeshift memorials, created by individuals and groups for loved ones and friends. A more permanent memorial was in its development stage. Each of the trees planted in honor of each individual massacred was draped in an Israeli flag or displayed a photo of the young man or woman killed there, forming neat little rows [Fig. 2].

FIG. 2. Photo of murdered Eldad Bergman with Israeli flag. Courtesy Karen Shawn.

Looking around, we saw faces and names of those murdered at this dance party with precious photos, notes, and mementoes added to each individual memorial. There is a focus on the individual. Everyone has a name here. We see faces, not numbers, not lists. We are focusing on the lives they lived, not on how they were murdered. Israeli flags fluttered in the wind. Everywhere, the blue Star of David proudly danced in the air. Individuals and small groups huddled together, lighting *zachor* (memorial) candles in honor of each murdered Jew. My mind wandered back to our Fish Center study trip to Auschwitz the previous year where we lit the same candles and recited prayers for the Jews murdered

in the Holocaust. And here we are again lighting candles for murdered Jews. There is a sense of similarity to the Holocaust, but only a sense, because somehow it is not quite the same.

At this site of so much tragedy, we made our way to a large tent, united in our grief, anger, and prayer with Israelis, Jews from the Diaspora, and their allies from abroad. We were all there to sing in worship under the glaring sun almost nine months to the day of terror that had been unleashed here. Our voices rose in unity, arms wrapped around each other's shoulders while we sang in prayer. I did not understand the Hebrew but I understood the power of prayer and unity. Our differences were put aside. Today we were one. Today we will not be beaten. We will not be destroyed. We will not be taken from our beds again. We will not be gunned down in the desert or among trees again. Our enemies will not win. We will dance here again.

In July 2024 we gathered, as witnesses, to remember and mourn Jewish men, women, and children murdered in a genocidal rampage by a terrorist organization committed to the destruction of the Jewish people. This resonates with the memory of Holocaust survivors who came together in 1945 to remember and commemorate their brethren wiped out in that genocidal Nazi rampage.

So, is October 7th another Holocaust? I grappled with this question constantly during my time in Israel.

The Massuah International Institute for Holocaust Studies made it clear that the Holocaust and the events of October 7th were not the same. Horrible, yes—but two clearly distinctive events. Survivor testimony from both events have helped us, educators and students, to try to understand and comprehend what occurred. October 7th survivors themselves have used Holocaust terminology in an attempt to describe and comprehend what they experienced and survived.

"I have been through a Holocaust."

"It felt like a death march."

"No one is coming to save me."

How does one describe the events of October 7th? What terminology should be used? What terminology is appropriate? What terminology does one use when the events are still so raw, ongoing, unfinished? Without specific terminology to use to describe October 7th, survivors themselves have fallen back on Holocaust-related references and terms. As Holocaust educators, we grapple with the same dilemma. With so much surrounding October 7th still fresh in our individual and collective minds, specific and appropriate language has not been established yet. As Holocaust educator Lorenn Peer (2024) pointed out to us during our visit to the Massuah Institute, the Holocaust then becomes a point of reference to try to understand and relate to the October 7th attacks. One can understand this reference. We hear suggestions: people ask, why take students to Poland when they can be taken south?

The aim of Massuah is to "build a bridge between history and memory by debating questions pertaining to Jewish, Israeli and human identity." This is achieved using eyewitness testimony presented to the center's visitors. Peer suggested this is the lesson the Holocaust has for October 7th: let the survivors speak about what they went through, using their own words and expressions to give voice to their own experiences so that we can learn what happened to them that fateful day.

Dr. Lea Ganor, the director of the Mashmaut Centre (Heritage, Holocaust, Tradition, Values and Rebirth) is cautious about linking the Holocaust and October 7th. She reminded us that during "the Holocaust no one wanted to save us. On October 7th, the next day, the IDF attacked our enemy." Dr. Ganor is mindful of negative consequences of the two tragedies becoming linked. "If we use the term the Holocaust for everything, we minimize the term," she said, making a very powerful statement against referring to October 7th as a new Holocaust. No one wants to risk diluting the uniqueness of the Shoah.

At the Moreshet Holocaust and Research Centre, Ron Veledneger, our guide, told us that "a good visit here helps students ask difficult questions, to talk about there and then to understand the here and now." While this approach is appropriate for Holocaust education, we can take this same pedagogy and apply it to October 7th. The key teaching pedagogy is to ensure students learn about, as well as from, these events. How can students make sense of the Holocaust today? We teach them to stand up to racism. We teach them about the dangers of antisemitism, hatred, and extremism. Israeli students, during their visit to the Moreshet, ask themselves, "What do I need to do to help improve my country?" This is the question that students the world over can ask themselves when learning about the Holocaust. Without losing the uniqueness of the Holocaust, we can apply this same question to a post–October 7th society.

According to Michelle, our guide at the Ghetto Fighters House Museum, their philosophy of education comes from their founders, who "sought to tell the story of the Holocaust focusing on the Jewish and universal human spirit in many shades, the possibility to choose, even in difficult situations, and the triumph of the human spirit." The focus is on the resilience of survivors. Here we learn an aspect of the history of the Holocaust through the story of the Warsaw Ghetto, its uprising, and the experiences of survivors rebuilding their lives in Israel. The museum hopes to build "a bridge between the past and the present so that we have faith in a better future." Michelle spoke of the "power of individuals who main-

tained their humanity in darkness." When discussing the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, students are shown how one can overcome tragedy by focusing on the brave and heroic fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto. They see examples of hope and resilience in the face of total annihilation. The museum has linked this message to October 7th as a teaching tool to help students comprehend events unfolding within their own country.

However, Michelle was clear in pointing out that she does not compare the events of October 7th to the Holocaust. While she acknowledges that these current events relate to and remind us of some of the experiences of the murdered and of Shoah survivors, "We cannot take away the impact of the Holocaust from the six million." Michelle summed up clearly and succinctly: "There is a clear difference between situation and association."

I go back to my previous questions. Is never again now? Are the events of October 7th a new Holocaust? Should these events be linked? Despite our lengthy visits and discussions at some of the leading Holocaust institutions in Israel, I'm still not sure how to accurately articulate my answers. At Yad Vashem, our guide, Lori Gerson, said it well.

"We must teach genocide and explain the difference between it and a war. This is what genocide is—the Holocaust. People die in a war but that does not make it genocide," she told us. There is a clear distinction made between victims of war and victims of genocide.

The biggest difference between the Holocaust and October 7th was the Jewish response. Following the brutal attacks on October 7th, the IDF responded quickly to defend the state of Israel. There was no Jewish state during the Holocaust, no haven for Jewish people. We now have a proud Jewish army defending the existence of the State of Israel, the homeland of the Jews. This, sadly, was a haven not afforded European Jewry. I feel it is this importance difference that makes October 7th not another Holocaust. But acknowledging this difference certainly does not diminish the horrific, tragic nature of the murderous onslaught of October 7th.

After the darkness there will be light. While October 7th is not another Holocaust, there are clear associations in our minds and hearts. And they share a common educational message: the need to continue to speak against hatred, the urgency to stand up against antisemitism and Holocaust denial and distortion. We will continue to teach. We will never forget.

Written on a wall at Hostage Square in Tel Aviv, this message stood out strong and clear to me: "Our wounds are centuries old but so are our resilience and our strength." [Fig. 3]

Am Yisrael Chai.

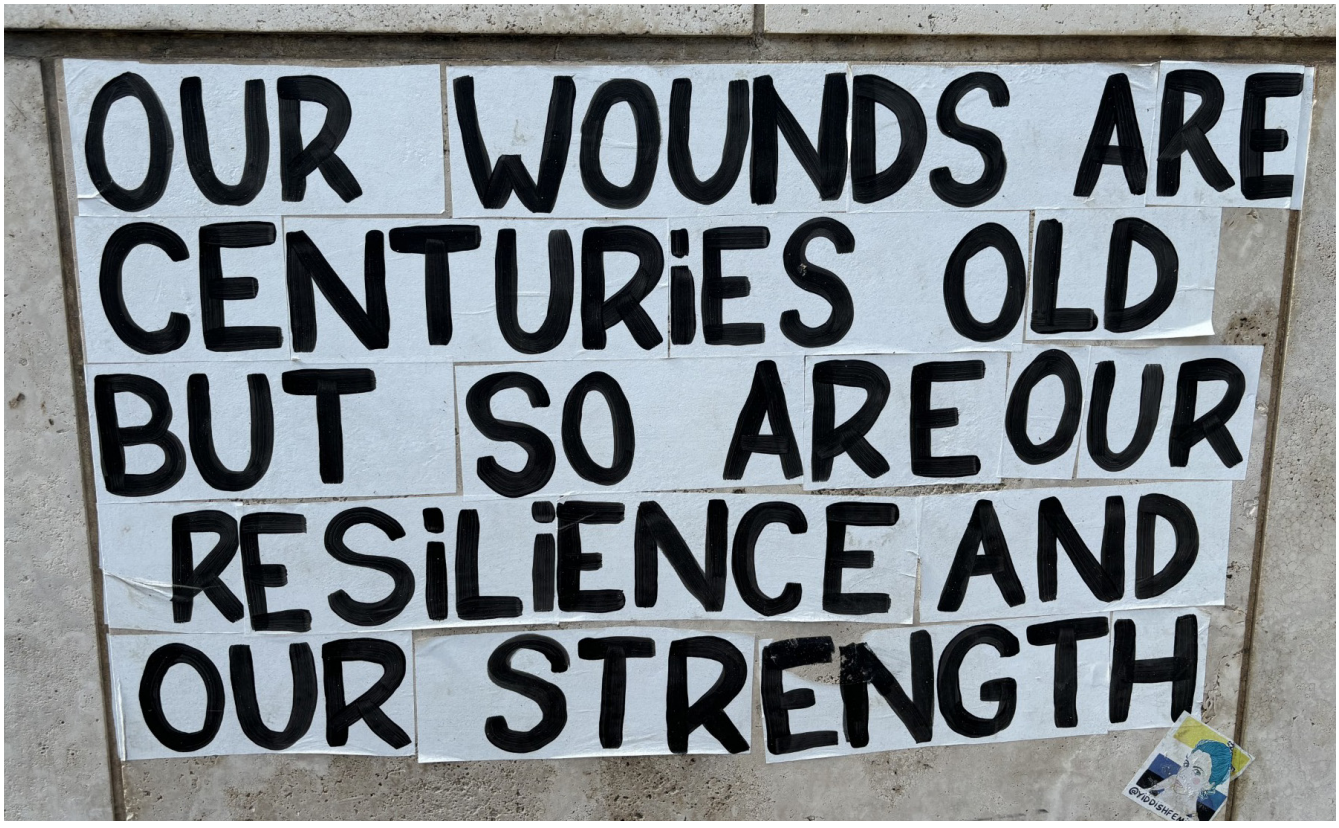

FIG. 3. Sign in Tel Aviv's Hostage Square illustrating the resilience, optimism, and dignity of the Israelis. Courtesy of Justin Zammit.

Julian Schmidt reminds us that Holocaust survivor Anushka Frieman declared, "I want to tell, I have to tell, I promised." In his essay, he leads us to the conclusion that we, the witnesses of October 7th, must affirm the same.

Julian Schmidt

Kibbutz Kfar Aza: We Witnessed With Tears

All of us write our earliest life stories with brave vivid ink, convinced that our tales will be never–ending, rushing forward to our envisioned purpose, our own promised land. For many in Israel, such a place is a kibbutz, imagined and built on idealistic and egalitarian values, a community of families, friends, and neighbors. Kibbutz Kfar Aza, prior to October 7th, was a serene, thriving place existing seemingly at peace with its Arab neighbors, encouraging and fostering cross-cultural connections. Kfar Aza was also home for Kafrit, a global leader in the plastic industry, and Syncopa, a company that operates sound and lighting for the entertainment industry. Kibbutz Kfar Aza illustrates the idealism of the State of Israel's founding days and the innovative energy embodied by the term Start-Up Nation.

In this seemingly contradictory community prior to October 7th, how would the residents of Kibbutz Kfar Aza have envisioned their life story, their place in the world? Would they have seen themselves foremost as Israelis, as Jews, or as global citizens?

Before, during, and after our group's journey to Israel post October 7th, we wrestle with the appropriateness of comparing the recent horrors to those of the pogroms and to the Shoah. Do we personally choose to approach this dilemma of comparison as historical chronicler or as poet?

Pogrom is a Russian word meaning "to wreak havoc, to demolish violently." Historically, the term refers to violent attacks by local non–Jewish populations on Jews in the Russian Empire and in other countries.[1] It is also described as a mob attack, either approved or condoned by authorities, against the persons and property of a religious, racial, or national minority.[2]

I confess that, although historically speaking, the facts at hand should quiet my poetic feelings, the silenced tears of the young man guiding us through the dreadful pathways of his kibbutz command me to attempt to connect to what the place was dictating to us. Inaudible and indecipherable, each individual story is written with tears.

Within this historic terminology, the unleashed horrors of October 7th cannot be viewed as a state–sanctioned attack on the local Jewish population, because the militants unlawfully entered into the sovereign state of Israel. Yet the level of violence perpetrated in Kfar Aza evoke echoes of Kishinev and Kielce. In the eyes of the militants, was the violence inflicted not committed with the goal to induce fear in the Israeli population and tempt them to lose trust in its institutions and the state's ability to safeguard its citizens? Was it not an attempt to sow division between Jews living in Israel and in the Diaspora, an effort to alienate Jews within the countries, communities, and neighborhoods where they live as fellow citizens outside of Israel?

October 7th was, historically speaking, not an internally state–sanctioned pogrom, but I would pose that the gleeful obfuscation of the anti–Judaic and eliminationist antisemitism that lies at the core of the attackers' ideology is part of a coordinated Global Intellectual Pogrom (persecution), an intellectual pogrom condoned by corrupted western institutions. Grotesquely and in geopolitical terms, the militants at times appear to have succeeded in giving Jews the impression that the heinous acts perpetrated against them were condoned, intellectually and emotionally, by the global community. Institutions such as the UN have remained actively inactive in not clearly condemning the perpetrators, instead redoubling their efforts to delegitimize the democratic state of Israel. Geopolitical and internal adversaries to Western interests would have ample cause to continue their efforts to undermine general political and strategic potential of western powers. Efforts will be made in such countries to disrupt national self-confidence, to hamstring measures of national defense, to increase social and industrial unrest, to stimulate all forms of disunity. All persons with grievances, whether economic or racial, will be

FIG. 1. Photos of seven of the kibbutzniks murdered on the morning of October 7th as they ran to defend their homes. Nadav Amikam, third from right, was one of Eilon's best friends. Sixty-four Jews on this kibbutz were murdered; 19 were kidnapped. Courtesy of Karen Shawn.

urged to seek redress not in mediation and compromise, but in defiant violent struggle for destruction of other elements of society. Here poor will be set against rich, black against white, young against old, newcomers against established residents,[3] as US Ambassador George Keenan outlined prophetically to the Secretary of State James Byrnes on February 22nd, 1946, in his analysis of the Soviet Union's geo–political ambitions.

A cold culture war continues to be fiercely fought within academic circles and within the party–political discourse of Western societies. It is a struggle regretfully confined to the narrow optical prism between the global proletariat and global capitalism. This blinkered mindset muddied the connection between racial proletarianism and racial antisemitism. In the words of Franz Neumann (1942): "Racial proletarianism is the genuine theory of National Socialism and its more dangerous expression."[4]

For purely party–political expediency, a large part of the political organizations within the West rejects making any meaningful connection between racial proletarianism and racial antisemitism, because doing so would alienate voters and sympathizers that need to be captured, both on the right and left. In his book *Behemoth*, Neumann, himself a man of the political left,[5] illustrated how the adaptation of Marxist slogans met the needs of National Socialism.

Marxist Form	**National Socialist Form**
Class Struggle	Proletarian war against capitalistic states
Labor theory of value	Money as the fetish of nation's productive power
Classless society	People's community
The bearer of truth	The German race as a proletarian race is the incarnation of morality

I would submit that by openly excusing hate embedded within class strife over the last 25 years, we have collectively allowed private forms of antisemitism to remanifest themselves toxically as proudly publicized anti–Zionism in the form of ideological antisemitism.

What needs to be recovered and embraced in the current party–political discourse is the art of humility, having the clarity to unharden our hearts and reopen our eyes to deter societies from slipping into ideological, nihilistic sightlessness. We need to expose our ears and our minds to become aware that we are being invited to listen to the testimonies gifted to us, to witness the inherent warnings of history embedded within them.

As Shoah survivor Anushka Frieman so profoundly declared: "I want to tell, I have to tell, I promised," I in turn must recognize the monumental task of witnessing Eilon Kotler, the young man guiding us through the dreadful pathways of his kibbutz [Fig. 1].

I must remain present in his presence, and to witness his world view, his life conception, shatter again, as it must have on October 7th, indecipherable, frozen in time. I must witness the dissonance between an envisioned egalitarian global community attacked by global neighbors. I become a bystander in witnessing, recognizing with him that every single individual story written in tears in Kibbutz Kfar Aza is, in large measure, intellectually abandoned by a plurality of the western community. Standing in front of our group, he is once more alone, as he was that fateful day, willingly rejected by a global community of once perceived peers, which prides itself in supporting class struggle and human rights. I must help retrieve his memories, retell his story, to amplify the promises made to the witnesses of Kfar Aza. Despair must not have the last word. I become aware of the subconscious promise I make, to tell, and to warn.

Unlike stories written in cold and fading ink, the stories recorded in warm tears will have the power to transform. These yet–to–be–dictated stories will be transcribed for generations to come. Tears from our eyes, tears from our souls, will reach out and connect one generation to the next. Prophetic poets will have to tell, will have to warn, by keeping alive the promises to the souls lost. The tears of Kibbutz Kfar Aza and those of October 7th fill vessels overflowing with immense sadness. Still, their sorrow will vitalize our agency to enrich prophetic seeds of resilience, reawakening to life.

END NOTES

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"Is God accountable for October 7th? Will there be a reckoning" for that massacre and for the hateful rhetoric in its aftermath? Pesha Kletenik raises these and other essential questions in an essay that considers the necessity "to hold those who carried out evil accountable."

Pesha Kletenik

God on Trial for October 7th

It was one of those questions that is profound, yet so simple. It should not have surprised me, as I taught a group of parents at my weekly Parsha class, only a week after the horrific pogrom of October 7th. Yet, it caught me off guard.

"We are all created in the image of God, part of us Divine, part of us dust, physical mass," I cited as a matter of common knowledge.

"How can you say that the terrorists who carried out the massacre in Israel are created in the image of God?" one mother exclaimed.

THE TRIAL OF ADOLF EICHMANN

The trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961 was a watershed in the relationship between the new State of Israel and its many Holocaust survivors. It forced the general public to confront and acknowledge the suffering survivors had endured and melted the facade survivors had erected as they forged new lives. Holocaust testimony became a part of the national story.

An exhibit about this trial opens the Massuah International Institute for Holocaust Studies, one of our first visits on our summer study in Israel. The trial is the start of the story of Holocaust memory in Israel. The entire country held one man, one Nazi, responsible for the murder of six million Jews and the actions of an entire movement and its collaborators [Fig. 1].

Eichmann offered disappointment as such an evil target. He came across dispassionate, not regretful or at all emotional. Hannah Arendt coined the phrase *the banality of evil* to describe the detached, ordinary manner of such a murderous Nazi. Our collective consciousness has absorbed the discordant notion of family men and women, good husbands and wives and upstanding citizens, committing mass genocide. It shifted how we think about good and evil and made sense of Nazi Germany. One can almost see the murderers as human despite their evil actions.

The rampaging, savage attacks with Go-Pro documentations and mini celebrations that characterized the October 7th massacres appear to be cut from a different cloth of anti-Jewish murders than that of the organized, routinized, and "scientifically"–driven Nazi killing machine. It may be more satisfying to bring a Hamas leader to trial than it was to try Eichmann. One can imagine his emotion, open Jew hatred, and call to others during proceedings. Would he, perhaps, shout at cameras and send kisses to his proud mother? He would openly celebrate

FIG. 1. Poster of Eichman at Massuah International Institute for Holocaust Studies. Courtesy of Pesha Kletenik.

the rape and mutilation and claim it for his great cause of Jihad. He would exhibit no detachment, no sense of being ordinary. Onlookers could nod and say, "Those crazy animals, of course they committed these heinous acts."

SHANI LOUK

The horrific image of the young woman Shani Louk, beaten, dying or already dead, and marched through Gaza with terrorists standing over her triumphantly, is seared into our minds. The debate about the use of her picture, featuring Louk at her lowest moment, abused by terrorists, continues. It is reminiscent of the conversation about the naked Jews, victims of the Nazi shootings, standing at the pit, about to be murdered. These images do not bring honor to their memories, do not remind us of their humanity and Divinity. The most painful outcome of Louk's picture being made public was that after the compromise to release it, it garnered not sympathy, not calls to action and justice, but rather feelings of triumph from the community of the perpetrators, a journalism award for the photographer, and denial and minimization of Louk's torture from many in the West. The most critical part of the picture to focus on is not Louk herself, but the terrorists on top of her, full of glee degrading her and celebrating. Are these men created in the image of God?

WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?

Is God accountable for October 7th? Elie Wiesel addressed the skepticism in a tale from Auschwitz where three rabbis held a Bet Din trial against God for the deaths of millions of Jews during the Holocaust. The trial ended with the group hurrying to attend evening prayers. God expects us to hold perpetrators of evil to task, even God Himself. The first such encounter was Abraham arguing with God not to destroy the people of Sodom. Even God, according to the text, does not want to face Abraham with His plan. Beloved to God are those who call out to Him on behalf of others. The three rabbis, convicting God, are beloved to God.

Eichman, Hamas, all perpetrators of evil, can be called evil only because they are created in the image of God. Had humans not been created to wield free will and to be full of creative spirit, they could not be held accountable. Divinity within us is the driving force of our actions. Good, and its direct opposition, evil, are possible only because we are the image of our Maker. God was tried not only by prisoners in Auschwitz, He sat trial in Jerusalem in the form of Eichmann, during the Nuremberg trials in the form of those few Nazis held accountable, and any time one of His creations carries out evil and is brought to justice. Because we are the image of God, God is on trial. God expects us to hold Him, and those created in His image and likeness, accountable for perpetrating crimes against others.

Will there be a reckoning for October 7th? Rav Soloveitchik, in his post-Holocaust exploration of evil in the face of a benevolent God, changed our question of why evil to what is expected of me in the face of evil. What is expected of us in the aftermath of October 7th? Who have we each become after living through this devastating pogrom in the State of Israel? It is clear that we are tasked with holding God, through those in His image, accountable for rejecting their Divine potential and perpetrating evil in the world in the form of murder, rape, infanticide, and celebration of suffering.

We are called on now to hold those who carried out evil accountable. We are called on to stand strong in the face of those who minimize what Shani Louk and the other Jews endured and who continue to call for the destruction of our people and our homeland. Questions regarding the comparisons of the pogrom of October 7th to the Holocaust remain unanswered, but there are some very compelling similarities: the negative one of Jewish destruction and degradation by terrorists, and the positive one of the Jewish spirit that glows even in the face of adversity.

It has been heartwarming to watch as the varied factions of the Jewish people have united. Sadly, it took a tragedy to do so. When we find ourselves on the other side of this nightmare, for most of us, the question will not be where you were when the October massacre occurred, but rather, where you were in its aftermath. What did you do to stand up to evil, to carry our people and restore and maintain our dignity?

As part of their daily assignments, we asked each student to note a sentence or two spoken by our museum guides or taken from text panels, words that touched or taught them, that made a difference in their thinking, or that reinforced or refuted an idea with which they struggled. Reading them aloud as a part of our closing ceremony was moving and meaningful, and we share them with you here.

Karen Shawn

Closing Ceremony: The Fish Center Summer Study in Israel

JULIAN: We step over the threshold, together—to gather. Together, I and thou enter this sacred space to fulfill our singular roles, as guide, as friend.
KAREN: How can we summarize, recall, remember the details of the six Holocasut museums, centers, and memorials we visited in only five days? How can we do justice to the witnessing of Har Herzl and of the atrocity of October 7th and its aftermath with our visits to Kfar Aza, the Nova Music Festival site, the car memorial, Sderot? How can we consider the whole of the experiences and also reflect on the moments that were most meaningful to us, collectively and individually? Perhaps we can succeed by saving and savoring the facts and the feelings, the concepts and the observations we heard and read in each of the places of history and memory we were blessed to have visited.

What we share now is a compilation that we hope will serve as a memento of our journey this past week as well as a fitting conclusion. We present a wide variety of thoughts and ideas that expanded our minds, touched our hearts, and etched themselves into our souls. We noted words from each of the guides and speakers who gave so generously of their time and expertise.

DYLAN: "Teaching now is a huge, huge challenge."
ERIN: "Many people feel betrayed after October 7th because something in their trust has been broken."
ELLI: "A museum is not a history book. Its purpose is to create a different kind of dialogue with the visitor."
BETTE: "Germans were the makers of culture. Everyone else was a user of culture. And the Jew? He was a destroyer of culture."
DANIEL: "War is not glorious."

KAREN: We collected words from Holocaust survivors and from those who were murdered:

PESHA: "Everyone will look at my yellow star and they'll know: she's six, and she is Jewish."
JULIAN: "The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything."
DARREN: "The forgotten memories one cannot forget; the losses one cannot escape."
JUSTIN: "These heroic girls travel back and forth to cities and towns in Poland. Every day they face great dangers. They assume the most difficult missions and fulfill them without a trace of hesitation. When it is necessary to travel and smuggle underground publications, documents, and money, when comrades from Vilna, Lublin, or other cities need to be rescued, they accept their missions."
URIEL: "If you go to the place where food is distributed, you will always witness the same scene: People asking for soup, which is only warm water."
PESHA: "We came here to build houses, full of life."

KAREN: We listened to words from Jews and from perpetrators:

DYLAN: "I was caught up in a crowd greeting Hitler: Never before or after have I witnessed the same emotional outburst. I yelled like everyone else, raised my hand like everyone else, cried like everyone else, and loved like everyone else."
JUSTIN: "Whether they were bank directors or mental cases, the people who were loaded onto these trains meant nothing to me. It was really none of my business."
DANIEL: "You dog, you killed my entire family!"

KAREN: We heard from and about the helpers:

JULIAN: "Hermina Hirschler was deported . . . from Slovakia to Auschwitz and worked . . . as a clerk . . . She managed to save the postcards that she got during her

time in the camp . . . . Through an SS officer, she managed to maintain connection with her family in Slovakia."
BETTE: "You always had a choice."
EMILY: "That there were so few Righteous is always disappointing, but the number of lives they saved can give us hope."

KAREN: We considered feelings about the Holocaust, about October 7th, and about how the two events were connected:

EMILY: "October 7th is NOT a Holocaust."
PESHA: "We were in shock. We couldn't breathe."
JUSTIN: "Our lives stopped. I am trying to find my way."
ELLI: "The events shook everyone to the core and put us into shock, but we have role models in survivors to give us strength."
DYLAN: "I witnessed the shocking sight of masses of people fleeing: a disastrous traffic jam, workers fleeing on bicycles, on foot, with wheelbarrows, in fully packed cars . . . June 11, 1940."
JULIAN: "Behind every vehicle in the Nova car memorial, there is a story of families, children, parents, adults and young people who attended the party."
URIEL: "Each story complements another aspect of the spirit of heroism that was revealed in all its glory, alongside the unimaginable cruelty of that terrible event."
DARREN: "Acknowledging another's pain does not minimize your own."
DYLAN: "Some people say, "Why go to Poland? We can take them south!"

KAREN: We made meaning from all who taught and touched us, including every person in this extraordinary group, and we are grateful. We share now, in no particular order, additional fragments of learning from these past days.

ELLI: "Has the likes of this happened in your days or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it, and let your children tell theirs, and their children the next generation!!" —Joel 2–3
JUSTIN: "A country is not just what it does—it is also what it tolerates."
DYLAN: "It takes an entire nation to *kill* an entire nation."
DARREN: "It became very bad to be a Jew in the 1930s."
BETTE: "It's not that Jews were treated like animals; you wouldn't even treat your animals like that."
DANIEL: "All of Europe has turned into a monster."
JULIAN: "Thus, in an instant, our women, our parents, our children disappeared. We saw them for a short while as an obscure mass at the other end of the platform; then we saw nothing more."
PESHA: "Our generation is realistic, for we have come to know man as he really is. After all, man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also that being who entered those gas chambers upright, with the Lord's prayer or the Shema Yisrael on his lips."
DARREN: "People aren't born with greatness; greatness is thrust upon people."
EMILY: "I have to tell, I want to tell, I promised."
ELLI: "We talk about there and then to understand the here and now."
JUSTIN: "The dead can not speak, but I can. I remember . . . "
ERIN: "Every testimony is a voice. Every memory is a light."
JULIAN: "*Ich kann es nicht mehr hoeren!*" "I can't listen to it anymore."
URIEL: "We cannot turn earth into heaven but each of us can do something so that the earth does not turn into hell."
DARREN: "Small miracles happened every day in the camps."
DYLAN: "We had no bread, but we did manage to get hold of candles. We fasted on the Day of Atonement, we did not eat bread at Auschwitz on Pesach....and we handed over our rations in exchange for potatoes, so that we could avoid eating bread on Pesach."
ERIN: "We wanted to live an ordinary life."
DYLAN: "It was our humanity that allowed us to believe that something like the Holocaust couldn't happen."
DARREN: "The movement tried to educate young Jews to take their fate in their hands, to stand up and fight for the emancipation of their people and all mankind. It was our movement and education that gave us the strength to endure and resist as we did."
EMILY: "I felt as if I just was born, and the world doesn't exist yet, and now I have to get up and build, because everything starts again."
BETTE: "And suddenly we saw; we're alone. There're no Jews at all. I noticed that my whole world had been destroyed. What am I doing here? For what? For whom?"
DANIEL: "We were physically released, mentally we were not . . . "
PESHA: "You have no one and I have no one. So, let's get married and we can have no one together."
BETTE: "You can take the man out of the camp, but you can't take the camp out of the man."
ELLI: "Some survivors returned to their home countries in the hope of finding family members. Many of those who returned to Poland heard their former neighbors ask, 'What, they didn't kill you all?'"
JULIAN: "How could the Holocaust have happened in the 20th century?"
JUSTIN: "How could October 7th happen in the 21st?"
ERIN: "Life is a festival! Smile like Omri! 1998–2023."
EMILY: "They cut off a girl's life, my daughter's life. One of my two daughters. Who am I now?"
PESHA: "I'm sorry, sad, angry, now a little desperate . . ."

EMILY: "October 7th broke my heart. October 8th through now shattered my faith in humanity."
ELLI: "Memory is about the why."
PESHA: "People lived in these shoes . . . "
BETTE: "Think of the children that could have been . . . "
URIEL: "It can't happen here! It CAN happen here. It can happen anywhere."
JUSTIN: "Remember the past, live the present, believe in the future."
EMILY: "Remember and do not forget: "To remember is passive, but to not forget is to take action."
JULIAN: "I continue to struggle in finding words to capture the memories that could have been and those that were lost."
ERIN: "October 7th needs its own terminology."
BETTE: "The terminology is not yet available."
DANIEL: "Ariel Biton, 22 years old. May God avenge his blood."
ELLI: "Our Ariel was the center of the family, the pillar and the man of the house. Be good. Choose to see the good in life. Be like Ariel."
PESHA: "Sivan Elkabets and Naor Hasidim were brutally murdered in this house."
JUSTIN: "He was my best friend."
DYLAN: "Here the reality surpasses any imagination."
URIEL: "I used to say that I could forgive but not forget. Now I know that I *cannot* forgive and I will never forget."
JULIAN: "Today is the third Shabbat of *that* Shabbat. Simchat Torah. There is no happiness at all."
PESHA: "Despite the darkness, there is always a place for hope."
JUSTIN: "I'm ever hopeful to connect to the silenced voices that are reaching out to connect with us."
BETTE: "Soldiers came from early morning and fought like lions and protected us like a human shield."
URIEL: "I'm still devastated but we must always have hope. There is no other alternative."
EMILY: "It gives me hope to be here with everyone."
JULIAN: "Unsure in our guidance, uneven in our friendship, we need to be both and neither, at any given time, on any terrain. We realize we are asked simply to be present for each other today."

KAREN: We have been fully present for each other, today and every day of our summer study here. We've learned together, mourned together, and celebrated together. We've been strengthened, each by the other, and by all of the Israelis we've met during our brief time here. Rabbi Daniel Fridman of the Jewish Center of Teaneck, NJ, in writing about October 7th and the aftermath, reminds us, as we surely know, that "this intense campaign of harassment . . . is nothing new for our people." But, he reassures us, we have "earned the title that Yirmiyahu HaNavi gave us thousands of years ago: **עם שרידי חרב**, *am seridei charev*, the nation that has survived the sword." History showed us . . . nothing will break us. We will not merely survive; we will thrive.

Editor

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