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EDITOR'S LETTER

This week in *Mosaic*

Jonathan Silver looks back at the week

OBSERVATIONS



Podcast: Tara Isabella Burton on the Creation and Curation of the Modern Self

The author of *Self-Made* stops by to talk about how the modern self came to be, and how it differs from older, traditional modes of living.

FROM THE ARCHIVE



The Emerging War over Anti-Semitism

To understand the significance of a new definition of anti-Semitism speciously promising clarity and fairness, we need to see whose interests it serves, not what its supporters believe.

+ The best of the editors' picks of the week

Dear friends,

Today is Yom Yerushalayim, Jerusalem Day, on which we celebrate the reunification of the historic Jewish capital. So I thought that today I'd bring you some of *Mosaic's* best stories about Jerusalem.

- “We Were All Born in Jerusalem”: A Never-Before-Translated Speech by Menachem Begin was delivered in 1972, and it shows the emotional hold that the city has had over the Jewish imagination. It is one of Begin's most powerful speeches, translated here for the first time, and with a superb introduction by the scholar Neil Rogachevsky. And here is the rabbi Meir Soloveichik's wonderful tribute to Begin, presented as a commentary on that very speech.
- The 50th anniversary of Jerusalem's unification back in 2017 was also the 100th anniversary of a World War I battle fought there between the Turks and Germans, on the one hand, and the British on the other. Lenny Ben-David published this fascinating account of the battle, along with the most interesting, early 20th-century photos of the city that you can find.
- That battle concluded when the general Edmund Allenby strode into the city and assumed British control of Jerusalem, thus putting an end, as the historian Martin Kramer relates, to “The Fantasy of an International Jerusalem.”
- Or, perhaps, not quite an end, since that fantasy has lived on as a sparkle in the United Nations' eye. In 2019, the French editor and essayist Michel Gurfinkiel explained how the idea of Jerusalem as an international city became embedded in countless UN resolutions and foreign policies, and why it is so pointless.
- Jerusalem has often gripped the imagination of artists, and the critic Edward Rothstein explored, in a major Jerusalem-themed exhibition at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, a failed curatorial effort to internationalize Jerusalem.
- The art historian Marc Michael Epstein wrote a two-part examination of the depiction of the Jewish Temple throughout the history of Western art, puzzling over why painters rendered it like the Dome of the Rock, the Muslim structure built on that site in the 7th century.
- Jerusalem is not only the inspiration of artists and the object of historical analysis. It is also a real place. Here is a charming and evocative story of a bakery there, in which the story of Israel unfolds in microcosm. A

few years ago, I spoke on our podcast to its former mayor, Nir Barkat, about what it's like to govern the world's most spiritual city, which he did for about a decade.

- Perhaps I should end this list where I began, with the city's hold over the moral imagination. Here is a discussion that I had with the rabbi Meir Soloveichik in which he talks about his favorite symbols, images, and texts that describe Jerusalem's power over the Jewish mind and Jewish soul. Nor does Jerusalem speak only to our interior life. Our publisher, Eric Cohen, thinks that Jerusalem, the city and the idea, harbors a message to the societies of the West, and offers a vision of renewal and courage to stay steady amid the cultural winds that swirl around us.

Self-Made

What is our higher purpose? What are we here for? What should we do if we're aiming to live the best, most fitting life? These are fundamental human questions, questions that sit at the cornerstone of philosophy and religious life and are taken up by the best works of poetry and literature. The mere asking of questions like these is itself an exercise of a uniquely human capacity.

Well, here's one way we could begin to investigate the question of human purpose. There are many great traditions that believe that the answer to human purpose lies outside of the self. In fact, most traditional religious forms and classical and pre-modern philosophical traditions tend to see mankind as small, not at the center of the universe, but a part of nature or the created order. That's not to say that we're unimportant, but it is to say that what is good for us is to be found by calibrating ourselves to the good in the world.

I know that sounds a little abstract, but let me illustrate what I mean through the Christian example of vocation. The word "vocation" comes from the Latin word that means to summon, and many Christians believe that if a person can suppress their desire, govern their passions, quiet the chaos and sin inside of them, then they'll be able to hear a call from God that summons them to some vocation or another: to marriage and family, to the priesthood, to a particular profession.

The Jewish tradition, too, establishes an encompassing world of covenantal obligation whose many laws and ordinances discipline the self, and we answer our highest purposes not alone but in transmitting a moral order and national history from our ancestors to our children, helping them to know the Creator of the Universe and what He demands of us. This is a world in which the individual is present—for it is as an individual that every person is created in the image and likeness of God—but in which the individual answers their destiny conforming to something higher and greater. The Greek philosophers have a version of this. And Islam, the third great Abrahamic faith, literally means submission.

In modern times, new modes and orders have invited us to look for answers to fundamental human questions in a different location—not outside of ourselves but inside. These modes judge a person by the extent to which they are authentic to who they truly are inside. And that means that our own thoughts and feelings govern our behavior more than external standards or external channels of ambition. Modern people do not want the self to melt away into something greater, or holier; modern people are self-made.

That's the title, *Self-Made*, of a forthcoming book from Tara Isabella Burton, who was my guest on our podcast this week. *Self-Made* tells the story of how so many people came to believe in the importance of creating our own bespoke personalities, in “branding ourselves,” in self-definition, in fashioning our desires into our purposes.

From the archives

Very soon, the Biden administration will announce a national strategy for combating anti-Semitism. But in the days before launching that strategy, the administration has run into a problem: how will it define anti-Semitism?

That is a fraught question. The most prominent definition comes from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. The IHRA definition has been adopted by many local and state governments, community organizations, and non-profits—and it's being supported by many mainstream Jewish organizations. Critics of the definition believe that Israel and Zionism are too prominent in the IHRA definition, and that adopting it could suppress legitimate criticism of Israel.

In our archive pick this week, the writer Joshua Muravchik explains why defining anti-Semitism is important, why critics of the IHRA definition are mistaken or are operating in bad faith, and why alternative definitions are unnecessary and often counterproductive. His essay helps makes sense of the political pressures the administration is under and the place of anti-Zionism in anti-Semitism today.

With every good wish,

Jonathan Silver

Editor, *Mosaic*

Warren R. Stern Senior Fellow of Jewish Civilization



From the cover of *Self-Made*.

TARA ISABELLA
BURTON AND TIKVAH
PODCAST AT MOSAIC

MAY 19 2023

About the authors

Tara Isabella Burton is the author of *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World*. A contributing editor at *American Purpose* and a columnist for Religion News Service, she holds a doctorate in theology from Trinity College, Oxford.

A weekly podcast, produced in partnership with the Tikvah Fund, offering up the best thinking on Jewish thought and culture.

Podcast: Tara Isabella Burton on the Creation and Curation of the Modern Self

The author of *Self-Made* stops by to talk about how the modern self came to be, and how it differs from older, traditional modes of living.

Podcast: Tara Isabella Burton

Many modern movements and philosophies have invited humans to look for answers to fundamental human questions not outside of themselves—as many traditional religions and classical philosophical schools did—but inside of themselves. This is an impulse to seek contentment through self-realization, to judge a person’s inner attitudes by their authenticity. That means that personal thoughts and feelings now govern behavior more than external standards or external channels of ambition. Modern people do not want the self to melt away into something greater, or holier; modern people are self-made.

Self-Made is the title of a forthcoming book from Tara Isabella Burton, the author of *Strange Rites* and an occasional *Mosaic* contributor. *Strange Rites* was about the way old spiritual drives have endowed new and unorthodox practices, like eating organic food or exercising at a fancy gym with spiritual significance. *Self-Made* tells the story of how so many people came to believe in the importance of creating their own bespoke personalities, in “branding ourselves,” in self-definition, in fashioning desires into purposes. It’s an important book, and Burton is one the most theologically

attuned social critics writing today. Here, she joins *Mosaic*'s editor Jonathan Silver to talk about it. Their conversation ranges across many time periods, and through the varied philosophical and literary influences on her thinking about these matters.



Demonstrators at an anti-Israel rally on May 15, 2021 in Rome. Simona Granati – Corbis/Corbis via Getty Images.

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK

JULY 12 2021

About the author

Joshua Muravchik is the author most recently of *Heaven on Earth: The Rise, Fall, and Afterlife of Socialism* (Encounter).

Herzl Before Herzl

Fifteen years before Herzl's *The Jewish State*, a doctor named Leon Pinsker called for the Jews to reassert their honor by freeing themselves from the debasement of the diaspora.

This spring's iteration of warfare between Israel and Hamas once again occasioned passionate lacerations of Israel. Amnesty International accused it of a "horrific pattern" of "brazen deadly attacks on family homes," which it called on the International Criminal Court to investigate "urgently" as "war crimes." Senator Bernie Sanders introduced a bill in the Senate to block military aid to the Jewish state, joined by progressive members of the House where Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez called Israel an "apartheid state," adding the catechism, "apartheid states are not democracies." *The New York Times* combined inflammatory headlines on news stories ("Israel Opts for Brute Force") with an almost-daily sequence of anti-Israel columns by Sanders, Nicholas Kristof, Peter Beinart, various residents of Gaza, and others. Meanwhile, on the small and smaller screens, John Oliver and other personalities of the entertainment world struck up a chorus of denunciations of Israel's actions.

All of this came in response to a war in which Israel was plainly reacting to an unprovoked bombardment of rockets and missiles that Hamas launched by the thousands against Israeli populations centers, every one of them a genuine, unmistakable war crime. Such an outpouring of blaming the victim seemed, in some Jewish eyes, to border on anti-Semitism—or to cross that border.

By chance, this followed just a month after the outbreak of a different but related conflict—a war of words that could turn out to be as consequential as this most recent round with Hamas, first for the diaspora and ultimately for Israel. This second war was launched in March, with the release of something called the Jerusalem Declaration on Anti-Semitism (JDA), signed by over 200 leading lights of the Jewish intellectual world, including figures ranging from Beinart to A.B. Yehoshua, one of Israel’s most celebrated novelists, to Michael Walzer, one of America’s premier teachers of political thought.

What prompted the promulgation of the Jerusalem Declaration, as its authors explained, was the wish for “an alternative” to an earlier definition of anti-Semitism that was gaining remarkable traction. That earlier formulation was the “Working Definition of Anti-Semitism” released in 2016 by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). In the five years since, that document had been formally adopted by 29 states, as well as the European Union, the Organization of American States, the secretary-general of the United Nations, hundreds of local and regional governments in the United States, and various private institutions.

Something about the IHRA’s definition alarmed the writers and signers of the Jerusalem Declaration, inspiring several of them to issue polemics before joining with the larger circle in a series of online workshops over the better part of a year in which they hammered out their counter document. What stuck in their craw about the IHRA document was the place of Israel in its concept of anti-Semitism.

I. Defining Anti-Semitism

The battle over defining anti-Semitism that the release of the JDA brought into the open had been smoldering since the turn of the century. The 1990s were a time of increasing international acceptance of the Jewish state, marked by the dissolution of its nemesis the Soviet Union, and the repeal in 1991 of the UN General Assembly’s 1975 resolution branding Zionism “a form of racism.” This in turn was followed by the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan. But the hopes of this relatively benign decade had been blown to smithereens in September 2000 by the launching of the Al Aqsa intifada, with its deafening percussion of explosions in Israeli eateries, buses, and markets, and Israel’s military countermeasures.

This bloodshed was not contained within Israel and the Palestinian territories but spread to Europe, which became the scene of a string of violent, sometimes murderous, attacks on Jews, with the apparent aim of striking back at Israel. Rubbing salt in these wounds was the reaction of much

of the international community which condemned Israel's measures of self-defense more passionately than the sustained war of terrorism waged against Israeli civilians.

This reached an apogee at the UN's 2001 World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban, South Africa, which renewed in new guise the assault on Israel that had previously taken the form of the Zionism-is-racism resolution. While the attempt to delegitimize Israel was all too familiar, what was new at Durban was its accompaniment by an outpouring of open Jew-bashing that characterized the officially sponsored NGO convocation held in parallel to the formal diplomatic deliberations. This mass gathering was highlighted by the distribution of thousands of flyers expressing the wish that "Hitler had won," and it culminated in a menacing march of thousands not on any Israeli institution but on the Durban Jewish Club, which felt compelled to shutter its doors under the protection of riot police. In sum, the nexus between Israel and world Jewry, and between hatred of Israel and anti-Semitism, appeared stronger, or at least clearer, than ever before.

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These developments prompted several Jewish leaders, mostly based in Europe, to discuss a response. Their work led first to a 2003 conference on anti-Semitism sponsored by the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and then, in 2004, to an initial action by the European Union's European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), which issued its first report on anti-Semitism in Europe.

The report observed that, "It is not anymore mainly the extreme right that are seen to be responsible for hostility towards Jewish individuals or property . . . Instead, victims identify 'young Muslims,' 'people of North African origin,' or 'immigrants.'" The EUMCs also noted that there was a surprising lack of data on anti-Semitism in that time across multiple European countries. And the lack of data stemmed, in part, from the lack of an agreed-upon definition of anti-Semitism, a readily available and credible yardstick to judge individual acts. Thus, the EUMC, along with outside institutions like the American Jewish Committee, and aided by internationally respected academics and anti-Semitism experts, came up with what became known as the Working Definition of Anti-Semitism, issued in 2005. This would allow European individuals and institutions to properly identify and condemn what was becoming known as "the new anti-Semitism."

Over the ensuing decade, the Working Definition was amended, embraced, rejected, and readopted, and its sponsoring agency was reorganized and

replaced, until it was put on an enduring footing with its adoption in 2016 by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), an inter-governmental organization devoted to Holocaust understanding, comprising some 34 countries, mostly European.

Although the definition itself specifies that it is “non-legally binding,” it nevertheless offers a guideline for assessing the possibly anti-Semitic character of an act or statement. More importantly, it offers a benchmark for states or institutions to affirm their solidarity with the Jewish people in the face of anti-Semitism—and to police themselves against it.

And it has had some practical applications. It has been used in training materials for police cadets in the UK and in a guide on anti-Semitism and Jewish communities’ security issued by the OSCE, recommending that its 57 member governments create mechanisms for data collection on anti-Semitism. The European Commission adopted it formally and the EU as an institution uses it in a variety of ways. Many countries as well as the EU itself have also created envoys, coordinators, and working groups on combating and monitoring anti-Semitism. In 2019 then-president Donald Trump issued an executive order on combating anti-Semitism that required federal agencies to consider the IHRA definition and its examples in enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

In addition, the definition has increasingly been adopted by universities, soccer clubs, and political parties, among other non-governmental bodies. One such case propelled this esoteric document into the headlines. The surprising elevation of Jeremy Corbyn, veteran of what is called in Britain the “hard left,” to leader of that country’s Labor party brought in its train accusations of anti-Semitism aimed at the Corbynites. Many of his followers and allies were radical activists and militant anti-Israel campaigners enrolling in the party for the first time, and they brought the odor of anti-Semitism with them, compounding what was already there. In response to Corbyn’s adamant denials of these charges, Jewish members pressed for the adoption of the IHRA’s working definition, but the Corbynite leadership balked, insisting on excising parts of it. This crystallized a sense among the electorate that there really was a problem in the Labor party, and a sharp public reaction forced the party leadership to reverse itself and accept the definition in its entirety. But the damage had been done, with public opinion polls revealing that a plurality of voters believed the party to harbor anti-Semitism.

II. The Counter-Definition

posed. This controversy contributed to the downfall of Corbyn, who in short order led his party to electoral defeat, lost his position as party leader, and even suffered brief suspension of his party membership. It heightened the unhappiness with the IHRA definition on the part of the Corbyn camp, and thus it surely provided some of the impetus behind the

Jerusalem Declaration, since two of its eight listed coordinators, who were presumably the principal authors, were Britons associated with Independent Jewish Voices, a group of left-leaning Jews critical of the British Jewish mainstream's strong support of Israel, one of whom had served as vice-chair on the soft-soap inquiry Corbyn created to investigate anti-Semitism within the Labor party. (The other six comprised three Germans, an American, and two Israelis, one of whom has long lived in the U.S.)

But the IHRA document had by then been adopted by so many governments and prestigious bodies that it was unlikely to be repealed. What, then, could those discomfited by it do? Writing an alternative was a master stroke. Moreover, the new document stated that where the IHRA definition was already in effect, the Jerusalem Declaration could be used in interpreting it—never mind that in crucial provisions the one stood in direct contradiction to the other. Moreover, labeling the new alternative the Jerusalem Declaration to give it an Israeli aura was a clever fillip. The name came from the Van Leer Institute, a Dutch-sponsored center based in Jerusalem that has made itself a home for post-Zionist scholarship. It lent its imprimatur to the deliberations that produced the alternative document, although these occurred not in fact in Jerusalem but in cyberspace, the locus of all such processes during the pandemic.

The coordinators (and presumable authors) of the JDA tend to have records that are sharply hostile to Israel (one calls for it to cease to exist; another likens the Palestinian flight of 1948 to the Holocaust; another laments the Israel-Egypt Camp David accords as blocking a Palestinian state; another, a German Jew who lives part-time in Lebanon, tweeted one-sided venom against Israel each day of the recent Hamas offensive; and so on). Nonetheless the group took pains to compose a document that could appeal to those with more moderate views. In this they succeeded handsomely, so that when they released their product, they had gathered over 200 signatories, including many prestigious Jewish intellectuals and scholars: besides those named earlier, there is Bernard Avishai, Susannah Heschel, Derek Penslar, David Biale, and many more.

There is enough length and heft to this list to make the JDA a significant document. But why is an alternative definition of anti-Semitism deemed necessary or desirable? Proponents of the JDA fault the IHRA definition on various stylistic grounds, and here they have a point. While both documents list various immemorial tropes of anti-Semitism involving powerful conspiracies to control or harm Gentiles, the JDA expresses this more mellifluously. And in some places, it is more precise. But these points hardly justify its existence.

Why is an alternative definition of anti-Semitism deemed necessary or desirable? Proponents of the JDA fault the IHRA definition on various stylistic grounds. But these points hardly justify its existence.

Instead, there seem to be two main reasons why some part of the Jewish intellectual world seeks to undercut IHRA. The first is the concern that the IHRA definition is only about anti-Semitism and therefore its implementation can serve to “privilege one group over others by giving them additional protections,” in the words of the British scholar David Feldman, one of the JDA coordinators. From its name alone, one would think that the Jerusalem Declaration on Anti-Semitism is also focused on one group, but not so. The JDA declares that the “fight against [anti-Semitism] is inseparable from the overall fight against all forms of racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, and gender discrimination.”

The second and by far the weightier objection is that the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism concentrates too much on Israel, which is the focus of seven of the eleven examples of anti-Semitism that definition puts forward. And worse, in the words of the JDA, those examples, blur

the difference between anti-Semitic speech and legitimate criticism of Israel and Zionism. [This] delegitimizes the voices of Palestinians and others, including Jews, who hold views that are sharply critical of Israel and Zionism.

Let us, then, consider these two concerns one at a time.

III. Is Anti-Semitism “Inseparable” and Does it all Come from One Direction?

The creators of the Jerusalem Declaration appear to be people of the left who see anti-Semitism as inhering elsewhere on the political spectrum. Brian Klug, one of the Britons listed on the eight-member coordinating group of the Jerusalem Declaration, wrote about the IHRA definition that it “tends to divert attention away from the threat that Jews face from the far right and populist movements.” Three of the other members of the group—Aleida Assmann, Alon Confino, and David Feldman—wrote, similarly, that, to “delegitimize individuals and groups critical of Israel or Zionism as anti-Semitic . . . distracts from the acute danger of far-right anti-Semitism.” And the JDA itself affirms its “alarm [over] the reassertion of anti-Semitism by groups that mobilize hatred and violence in politics, society, and on the Internet,” an apparent allusion to “populist” and white-supremacist groups.

In this view, the effort to defend Jews and all other minorities as well as women is part and parcel of the broader ideological struggle of left against right. Yet, this seems oblivious to the long history of minority and leftist anti-Semitism, and to its recrudescence today, a recrudescence that is indeed part of the reason the IHRA definition came into existence.

In asserting, as a rebuke to the IHRA definition, that the struggle against anti-Semitism is inseparable from similar struggles, the JDA seems to be addressing the wrong audience; much of the anti-Semitism that plagues Jews arises from non-majority groups. In the U.S., many incidents of open smears or Jew-baiting have come from Malcolm X, Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, and of course Louis Farrakhan and his disciples, often indulged or applauded by the likes of, say, the leaders of the Women's March. Nor is this only an issue with racial minorities. The feminist icon Judith Butler has extolled Hamas and Hizballah, organizations that each openly proclaims the goal of killing Jews (not Israelis), as "social movements that are progressive, . . . part of a global left." The Chicago Dyke March has famously barred Jewish symbols. And on various college campuses, Jewish groups have sometimes been explicitly excluded from "intersectional" coalitions, the idea of which is to bring together all kinds of victims of injustice.

Marx's private letters are replete with anti-Jewish slurs against his main socialist rival, Ferdinand Lassalle who, for his part, was yet another leftist (and Jewish) anti-Semite, writing in *his* letters that he hated the Jews.

As for leftist anti-Semitism, the voluminous catalogue of leftist anti-Semitism stretches back to such giants of the Enlightenment as the philosopher Immanuel Kant, who styled the Jews a "nation of usurers"—which was weak gruel compared to the dish served by the essayist Voltaire, who called the Jews "the most abominable people in the world." It comes down through Karl Marx who wrote, "What is the worldly cult of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly god? Money." Marx's private letters are replete with anti-Jewish slurs against his main socialist rival, Ferdinand Lassalle who, for his part, was yet another leftist (and Jewish) anti-Semite, writing in *his* letters that he hated the Jews.

Then, in the 1920s and the 1930s, the Soviet regime built on Marx's ideas stamped out organized Jewish life and culture, which was only a forerunner to another campaign against Jews in the early 1950. Many historians believe that had Stalin lived beyond 1953, it would have culminated in the deportation of the entire Jewish population to forbidding climes. But Hitler had forced a change in terminology. As Walter Laqueur describes it:

While anti-Semitic stereotypes were constantly used, it would have been politically inopportune to attack Jews as Jews following the mass murder committed by the Nazis during the war—the parallels with Nazi Germany would have been too striking. Thus, Jews were usually termed "Zionists" or "rootless cosmopolitans." However, there was not a single Zionist among the victims of the anti-Jewish purges; they were fervent anti-Zionists, faithful sons and daughters of the Communist party and the Soviet Fatherland. Their crime was being Jews, not engaging in any ideological deviation, let alone treason.

Leftist anti-Semitism in the 20th century was not the exclusive province of Communists. Olaf Palme, Social Democratic prime minister of Sweden, analogized Israel to Nazi Germany with rhetorical flourish. In “an extraordinary reversal of roles . . . it is the Palestinians, not the Jews, who are being persecuted and are threatened by ‘liquidation.’ [I]t is the Palestinians who are locked up in a new Warsaw Ghetto.” The Austrian Social Democratic chancellor Bruno Kreisky came under repeated criticism for including numerous former Nazis in his cabinets. When this prompted questions about his own Jewish lineage, he denied that the Jews constituted a people, and added that if they are, “they are a wretched people.” And the British foreign minister Ernest Bevin, who worked to keep postwar Jewish refugees from reaching Palestine, “was not . . . anti-Semitic,” explains the historian Kenneth O. Morgan, “[b]ut, without a doubt, he was emotionally prejudiced against the Jews.”

Memory of Bevin brings us to the modern-day Labor party, about which more will be said below.

IV. What Is “Legitimate” Criticism of Israel?

But first, let us turn to the JDA’s most fundamental objection to the IHRA’s definition, that it would inhibit or malign “legitimate criticism” of Israel.

The IHRA definition, for its part, affirms at its outset that “criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic.” In other words, the familiar charges that Israel has not been forthcoming in peace negotiations, that it has wrongly appropriated territory, that Israeli settlements prejudice or foreclose peace options, that its Arab citizens suffer discrimination and invidious treatment, and so on—these are criticisms of Israel or Israeli government policies that clearly would not run afoul of the IHRA definition.

Still, there are other kinds of criticisms that lie outside this boundary and that, according to IHRA, do raise the specter of anti-Semitism. Broadly speaking, the IHRA says anti-Semitism may inhere in “Applying double standards by requiring of [Israel] a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.” More specifically, it calls “denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination”—in other words, denying Israel’s right to exist—an anti-Semitic act. It also includes “claiming that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavor” and “drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis,” either of which denies Israel’s legitimacy.

As its alternative, the Jerusalem Declaration’s treatment of the relationship between Israel and anti-Semitism consists of ten points. Five are examples of things that might be said or done “that, on the face of it, are anti-Semitic” balanced against five “examples that, on the face of it, are

not anti-Semitic.” Oddly, though, the former list does not encompass many of the derogatory things said of Israel. Three of the five don’t address direct attacks on Israel at all; rather they say in varying language that it is anti-Semitic to take out one’s anger at Israel on non-Israeli Jews.

In this approach, advocating the state of Israel’s demise would not be anti-Semitic unless the advocate also proposes annihilating its present Jewish population or otherwise mistreating it severely.

The fourth example that the Jerusalem Declaration lists among things that *are* anti-Semitic seems intended as a direct response to IHRA’s assertion that it can be anti-Semitic to deny Jews the right of self-determination. The JDA, by contrast, carefully allows for such denial. It states that in this regard what is anti-Semitic is limited to: “denying the right of Jews in the state of Israel to exist and flourish, collectively and individually, as Jews, in accordance with the principle of equality.” The essence of this dense verbiage is the distinction between the state of Israel and its Jewish inhabitants. In this approach, advocating the state of Israel’s demise would not be anti-Semitic unless the advocate also proposes annihilating its present Jewish population or otherwise mistreating it severely.

Only the fifth of the Jerusalem Declaration’s examples of anti-Semitism addresses hostile things that are said about Israel, to wit, “applying the symbols, images, and negative stereotypes of classical anti-Semitism . . . to the state of Israel.” To use a contemporary example, this might mean blaming Israel for COVID-19 in the way that Jewish communities were once blamed for the medieval plague or reviving, as Bashar Assad once did in the presence of then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the canard that the Jews killed Christ. Such assertions can be found here and there in Middle Eastern discourse, but they constitute at most an obscure corner of the universe of rhetoric against Israel. Yet this is perhaps the only point on which the Jerusalem Declaration would clearly grant that an attack on Israel is anti-Semitic. Nearly anything else would be fair game.

This understanding of the practical effect of the JDA is reinforced by its next section, those five examples “that, on the face of it, are not anti-Semitic.” The list includes: the advocacy of BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) aimed at Israel; the application of “double standards” in criticizing Israel; criticism of Israel that fails to be “measured, proportional, tempered, or reasonable;” accusing Israel of being an apartheid or “settler-colonial” state, or likening Israel to unspecified “other historical cases.” This would appear to exonerate from charges of anti-Semitism comparisons of Israel to Nazi Germany, a recurrent verbal assault that is intended at one and the same time to crucify Israel and to rub salt in the Jewish people’s never-healing wound of the Holocaust. Oddly, the document makes no explicit mention of this obscene analogy, even though it is addressed directly by the IHRA definition, which the JDA purports to correct.

Yet another item on the JDA's list of things "not anti-Semitic" underscores this inference, namely, "supporting the Palestinian demand for justice and the full grant of their political, national, civil, and human rights." This may sound anodyne, even unexceptionable, but the key modifier "full" is heavily freighted. Put in these terms, the assertion is widely understood, including by most Palestinians, to mean doing away with Israel. These "full rights" include the "right of return" of Palestinian refugees and all their descendants, an event that were it to occur would mean the end of the Jewish state.

That the JDA group means to countenance precisely this is made explicit in the next example of something it deems inherently "not anti-Semitic":

criticizing or opposing Zionism as a form of nationalism, or arguing for a variety of constitutional arrangements for Jews and Palestinians in the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. It is not anti-Semitic to support arrangements that accord full equality to all inhabitants "between the river and the sea," whether in two states, a binational state, unitary democratic state, federal state, or in whatever form.

The point—or, if not the point, the clear function—of all these lists of what is and is *not* anti-Semitic is to erect a protective fence around almost any condemnation of Israel, no matter how extreme, how far-reaching in its implications. This would include the likes of the UN's Zionism-is-racism resolution, which, in truth, constituted less a form of criticism than an invitation to violence and the destruction of the country. Racism needs to be eradicated, does it not? Just as Nazism, to which Israel is analogized, to the JDA's implicit countenance, needed to be utterly defeated.

The best defense of the JDA's endeavor to place this fence was put by the American political philosopher Michael Walzer, one of the most prestigious Jewish co-signers, writing recently in the online journal *Fathom*. The JDA, he writes, "leaves me plenty of room to condemn . . . anti-Zionism as the wrongheaded politics it often is, without looking too deeply into [the] motives or [the] feelings" of the anti-Zionists. Put in other words, his point is that it is hard to know other people's feelings, and without knowing them, it is impossible to tell whether "hostility to Israel" arises from "an anti-Semitic animus" aimed against "Jews as Jews," to use the words of the Jerusalem Declaration.

Walzer is surely right that it is usually hard to know people's feelings, but in this case the anti-Zionists all too often make it easy. The charter of Hamas declares that it "looks forward to fulfill the promise of Allah [when] 'the Muslims fight against the Jews and . . . kill them.'" Hizballah's leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, once said: "if [the Jews] all gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide." And the late Ayatollah Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the armorer of both these movements, declared, "Since its inception, Islam was afflicted with the Jews."

During the recent fighting between Israel and Hamas, the *New York Times* columnist Bret Stephens captured the surrounding events in a column titled “Anti-Zionism Isn’t Anti-Semitism? Someone Didn’t Get the Memo.” He elaborated:

Not the people who, waving Palestinian flags and chanting “Death to Jews,” according to a witness, assaulted Jewish diners at a Los Angeles sushi restaurant. Not the people who threw fireworks in New York’s diamond district. Not the people who brutally beat up a man wearing a yarmulke in Times Square. Not the people who drove through London slurring Jews and yelling, “Rape their daughters.” Not the people who gathered outside a synagogue in Germany shouting slurs. Not the people who, at a protest in Brussels, chanted, “Jews, remember Khaybar. The army of Mohammad is returning.”

Also not getting the memo are the people who have tweeted the hashtag #HitlerWasRight (including someone who now works for the BBC), along with the hashtag #Covid1948, a suggestion that Israel is a virus that needs the cure of Hamas’s rockets as a vaccine.

The fighting lasted only eleven days. Had it continued, the anti-Jewish vitriol likely would have surpassed that of the seven-week Gaza war of 2014, which occasioned the greatest outpouring of anti-Semitism in Europe since World War II. Eight synagogues in France were mobbed, firebombed, or otherwise attacked; marchers in Frankfurt, of all places, chanted “Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the gas” (their less-poetic confreres in Antwerp settled for “slaughter the Jews”); and a Turkish website reported that 27,000 Turks had tweeted in praise of Hitler. Much more in this vein could be cited.

All of these examples concern attacks on Jews, not on Israelis or “Zionists.” The point, as the British sociologist David Hirsh put it recently, is that

the IHRA definition . . . highlights the possibility of anti-Semitism which is related to hostility to Israel not because somebody thought it was a good idea in the abstract, but because this is a significant part of the anti-Semitism to which actual Jewish people are subjected in the material world, as it exists.

The dynamic in which hostility to Israel bleeds into hostility to Jews—or is driven by hostility to Jews—was also abundantly in evidence in the British Labor party under Jeremy Corbyn, helping to ignite the present debate. Corbyn, as has been amply documented in *Mosaic* and elsewhere, not only tolerated anti-Semitism but dipped into it himself. To pick but a few examples: when a British reverend was punished by the Church of England for having posted on Facebook an article titled, “9/11: Israel did it,” Corbyn wrote that the churchman was “under attack by a pro-Israeli smear campaign.” Then, in 2012, Corbyn rushed to the support of a graffiti artist who had produced a large east London mural depicting five bankers with ste-

reotypical Jewish features playing monopoly on an oversized gameboard balanced on the backs of bent over and apparently naked slaves or workers of various hues. (The artist denied that his intent was anti-Semitic, while at the same time slyly acknowledging that “historically, several of the characters may be of Jewish decent or ideology.”)

Corbyn and his defenders emphatically denied any anti-Semitism on his part, but the matter was sealed when a video surfaced in which Corbyn told an audience, “Having lived in the country for a very long time, probably all their lives, they don’t understand English irony.” When it came out, Corbyn explained that he was speaking not of Jews but rather of Zionists, an absurd claim that served only to illustrate the frequent use of that term as code for Jews.

This use was carried even further by another case adjudicated by the Labor party under Corbyn’s tenure, in which a high-profile party figure and self-described anti-racism activist named Jackie Walker had written that Jews were “the chief financiers of the sugar and slave trade.” She defended herself on the grounds that “to oppose Israel is not to be anti-Semitic,” even though her original post had not mentioned Israel, just Jews (and of course there was no Israel at the time of the sugar and slave trade). In other words, if someone establishes that they are “anti-Zionist” then even if they directly disparage “Jews,” they should be exempt from accusations of anti-Semitism because their underlying motivation can be presumed to be hatred of Israel rather than of Jews.

As it happens, Jackie Walker was an enthusiastic, day-one proponent of the Jerusalem Declaration. “A definition of anti-Semitism which is workable and acceptable,” she wrote on Twitter on March 25, perhaps an embarrassing endorsement from someone who had two years earlier been expelled from the Labor party for anti-Semitism.

V. What Harm Is Anti-Semitism?

Even if anti-Jewish sentiment can be disguised as anti-Zionist, surely it is possible to be anti-Zionist without being anti-Semitic. Is it not? Some of the authors and signers of the Jerusalem Declaration are strongly self-identified Jews who are frankly anti-Zionist. Take for example Brian Klug, an Oxford philosopher who wrote in the *Nation* in 2007:

It is time to cut the cord and begin anew. . . . [I]t is better to let go of the word [Zionism] along with the illusion. Jewish ethnic nationalism is no solution to the problems we face today It is time to move on. I like to think that 40 years from now, under the aegis of full civil equality, Arab and Hebrew cultures will thrive and mingle together in the area currently called Israel and Palestine.

Other signers, like Peter Beinart and Hasia Diner, have said similar things. The Jerusalem Declaration, itself, declared it “not anti-Semitic” to propose new “constitutional arrangements for Jews and Palestinians in the area between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean.” Whatever else this may mean, it means the disappearance of Israel, and the death of many Jews. Is such “anti-Zionism” merely “wrongheaded politics,” to use Walzer’s term?

Klug likes to recall that Zionism was once controversial among Jews, which is undeniable. Indeed, it was originally a minority position in the Jewish world. And he insists the debate is still going on. Klug, who apparently was raised in a religiously observant home, makes a point of invoking his Jewish education. Alan Johnson, a non-Jewish British scholar, grasps the matter much better. He writes:

“Anti-Zionism” meant one thing in the early 20th century (an argument among Jews, mostly, about how best to meet the threat of anti-Semitism). However, after the Holocaust and after the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, “anti-Zionism” came to mean something entirely different, something much darker. After 1948, “anti-Zionism” could only be a reactionary proposal to rewind history and eradicate Israel. But how on earth was that to be carried out, short of violence on a huge scale, conquest, in short?

This is far more real-worldly than airy formulations about new “constitutional arrangements” embracing the Jews and Arabs equally and peacefully in some new political condominium. The image serves only to demonstrate that one can earn a doctorate, which most of the signers seem to have done, without much noticing the world around.

One wonders if the drafters had in mind the “constitutional arrangements” prevailing in the lands around Israel. In Iraq and Syria, absent foreign intervention, inter-communal relations would have been resolved by the “constitutional arrangements” of Islamic State. The same might have ensued in Lebanon, although Hizballah would have resisted fiercely and the competition between the two would not have been settled at the ballot box. In Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Yemen, and throughout the region disputes are generally resolved by brute force, not constitutions. The same is true among the Palestinians, divided on that basis between two governments. Notwithstanding the daydreams of Klug and his colleagues, the likelihood that these Palestinians will coexist more harmoniously with the Jews than they manage to do with one another is precisely nil.

In reality, the only serious proposal for supplanting Israel is Ahmadinejad’s ambition to wipe it from the map. As Gabriel Schoenfeld, the author of *The Return of Anti-Semitism*, puts it, “to wish that Israel would cease to exist is, in effect, to wish for the mass extinction of its Jews.” That, and not some quixotic reprise of Bundism (the East European movement that saw a future for the Jews in a socialist Europe), is the meaning of anti-Zionism today.

Some of the proponents of the Jerusalem Declaration fixate on the question of hatred. Can someone be anti-Semitic without feeling animus toward Jews? The question is semantic.

Is that anti-Semitic? If not, then the term has little meaning. Some of the proponents of the Jerusalem Declaration fixate on the question of hatred. Can someone be anti-Semitic without feeling animus toward Jews? The question is semantic.

From Amalek in the Bible to the Babylonian exile to the destruction of the Second Temple to the Crusades to the expulsions of medieval times to the Inquisition to the pogroms of eastern Europe to the Holocaust, Jewish history is replete with chapter after terrible chapter of mass death and despoliation. As some Yom Kippur prayer books put it in a refrain, “how the arrogant have devoured us!”

How many of the perpetrators had hatred in their hearts, as opposed to, say, anger, revenge, cupidity, or simple imperial ambition? Amalek? Nebuchadnezzar? Titus? Vespasian? The various popes and inquisitors? Who knows? Who cares? Some scholars say Eichmann was a mere bureaucrat; some say Hitler himself was a mountebank, using anti-Jewish feeling for political advantage. There is much evidence to the contrary, but suppose they are right? Suppose Eichmann and Hitler felt no sincere hatred. Does that make it better?

In civilized countries, even in America, Jews have sometimes been scorned, sometimes excluded. This is not nice. But so what? Jews have even been assaulted, like the Chabad rabbi in Boston this month and the many Orthodox Jews in recent times in Brooklyn. And some have even been murdered, like the eleven who died in Pittsburgh’s Tree of Life Synagogue in 2018. But these terrible crimes have been blessedly infrequent and usually involved only small numbers. All of it, alas, pales in comparison to the massive violence that the Jewish people have suffered throughout our history. Today, there is one and only one major threat of a new episode of mass destruction visited upon us, a new devouring, and that is the threat to Israel, home to half the world’s Jews. That is the anti-Semitism that counts. Its motivation matters not a whit. In truth, neither does what we call it.

That threat is intensified by boycotts and the like intended to weaken Israel, by pseudo-legal maneuvers to make it more difficult for Israel to defend itself, by efforts to delegitimize Israel by branding it inherently racist or likening it to Nazi Germany, or by the straightforward denial of Israel’s right to exist or merely of the desirability of its existence. Those who indulge in such politics and those who make it their mission to diminish our vigilance against this threat stand guilty of abetting it.

“The Conversion of the Jews”

MAY 16 2023

From **Cynthia Ozick**
at *Harper's*

Set in 1933, **Cynthia Ozick's** newest short story tells of an ambitious young philologist named Solomon Adelberg, and his quest to uncover the secrets of a notorious Jewish apostate. Most of the action takes place in Manhattan's Lower East Side, but the story begins at a remote monastery in Mandatory Palestine:

What he knew, what every linguistic adept knew, was that an unrecorded portion of Pablo Christiani's writings had been sent here for safekeeping in the year 1265 by Pope Clement IV. Most were copies of official declarations, but some were purported to be clandestine and dangerous confessions.—Or were these hoary certainties no better than mere wishfulness?

Pablo's history was fully preserved. Born into a pious Jewish family, he was a Dominican friar dedicated to the conversion of the Jews. He journeyed to all the synagogues of Aragon to harangue, and if that fell short, to coerce, and if that too appeared useless, to punish. He appealed to Clement to compel the wearing of the Jew-badge. He ordered the confiscation of Jewish books, most particularly the Talmud, to be burned to ash in great smoldering heaps. Confident of his own mastery of Jewish sources, he prevailed on King James of Aragon to sponsor a public disputation in the royal palace in the great city of Barcelona, under the scrutiny of the world: he alone would confound Moshe ben Nachman, the most eminent Talmudist of the age, second only to Maimonides, with proofs of the Gospels taken from the Talmud itself. But James judged the Jew the winner, and the next day Moshe ben Nachman, accused of blasphemy, fled for his life to Acre in the Holy Land. The pope was more powerful than the king, and Pablo had the ear of the pope.

Solomon dismissed all this. He scorned the stale stuff of encyclopedias. It was to the mazy byways of the unspoken mind of Pablo Christiani that he was drawn. He was after impulses, inducements, animating subterranean drives. A philologist must be an excavator. So he had learned from his teacher, his mentor, the sovereign of his thought: tread where no one else has trod. The library was no more than a filthy niche in an old stone wall, crusted with the dung of rodents and bats. The monastery itself was defunct. Its archives were choked by the smell and the spew of heedless decay—no roster or index hinted at what it might hold. Shells of ancient generations of dead insects crackled under Solomon's soles. And his teacher too was dead.

In Iran's Quiet War with Israel, Gaza Is but One Front among Many

MAY 15 2023

From Jonathan Schanzer
at *Commentary*

In the past two weeks, Palestinian Islamic Jihad has fired nearly 1,500 rockets into the Jewish state, killing one Israeli and five Palestinians. On Saturday, after a five-day IDF campaign, a ceasefire went into effect, which seems to be holding despite a few sporadic violations. Islamic Jihad operates under the direction of Iran—more so even than Hamas, which is also beholden to Tehran. **Jonathan Schanzer** suggests the most recent conflict might be connected to the Islamic Republic's broader struggle with Israel:

Earlier this year, amid flaring tensions during the Ramadan holiday in April, Hamas brazenly shot more than 30 rockets at Israel, wounding three. The IDF fired artillery at the positions from which the rockets had flown, but stopped there. Admittedly, if Hamas's goal was to draw Israel into a two-front war, it failed. . . . Days later, on April 9, the leaders of Hamas and Hizballah met in Beirut to discuss their joint strategy against Israel. They released photos depicting their conversations held beneath photos of the former Iranian supreme leader Ruhollah Khomeini and the current supreme leader Ali Khamenei. The message was unmistakable: the Iran-led axis is preparing for a multifront war with Israel.

Releasing the photo was an audacious message to send to the Israelis, who have an impressive track record of removing threat actors from the battlefield. But the photo served a deeper purpose. It confirmed to Israel that the Iranian proxy threat has evolved. For several years, sporadic reports have pointed to the existence of a "nerve center" in Beirut. Participants include senior figures from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, as well as Hizballah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other groups. The nerve center is reportedly designed to coordinate the activities of the Iran-backed terrorist groups, to target Israel more efficiently.

According to data collected by Foundation for Defense of Democracies, more than 1,500 terrorist attacks have targeted Israelis in the West Bank and over the Green Line since March of last year alone.

Israeli security services believe that Iran (by way of Hizballah) is the primary source for the weapons flooding the West Bank. But there may be others. In April, a Jordanian parliamentarian was caught at the Allenby Bridge, between Jordan and the West Bank, with a jaw-dropping amount of weaponry along with more than \$6 million in gold.

What Israel Accomplished in Five Days of Fighting

MAY 16 2023

From Ron Ben-Yishai
at *Ynet*

During its latest duel with Islamic Jihad in Gaza, Jerusalem demonstrated the accuracy of its intelligence and the precision of its air force, writes **Ron Ben-Yishai**, explaining why he considers Operation Shield and Arrow a success:

The operatives of Hizballah and Hamas have now witnessed how Israel's intelligence directorate identifies and targets senior operatives, striking them one after another, even during combat, despite their attempts to remain hidden. All of this was accomplished while Israel maintained international and public legitimacy to continue its operation, as it demonstrated that it does everything possible to avoid harming uninvolved civilians.

Evidently, the U.S. government refrained from demanding Israel cease the operation for about three days. Even when the U.S. did raise its head, it was in the form of a polite request rather than a forceful ultimatum, which was the go-to tactic during the days of the former president Barack Obama. It is not that the Democratic administration led by President Joe Biden softened its humanitarian approach, but rather Israel has demonstrated that it acts out of self-defense and is thus forced to act aggressively against a terrorist organization operating deliberately from within a civilian population.

The Israeli achievements were felt not only in Gaza but also in Iran, Beirut, and even in Yemen. Both Israel's adversaries and allies have learned an important lesson from the civilian resilience and domestic cohesion they witnessed in Israel, even during the period of unprecedented social and political division.

Ben-Yishai does, however, add a cautionary note:

This was merely a mini-operation. The IDF, Shin Bet, and Mossad must be capable of dealing with Iran with the same operational and intelligence efficiency—and holding the fort when attacked from all directions. This [capability] has yet to be proven, and it must also be remembered that the IDF still does not manage to suppress offensive rocket and mortar fire [during the fighting itself].

An Islamic Jihad Rocket Killed Abdullah Abu Jaba. Nobody Will Be Demanding Justice for Him

MAY 17 2023

From Stephen Daisley
at *Spectator*

On Saturday, Palestinian Islamic Jihad fired a rocket into Israel that landed in a field near the Gaza border, killing a Palestinian laborer named Abdullah Abu Jaba and seriously injuring his brother Hamad, who was working alongside him. **Stephen Daisley** comments:

You haven't heard of Abu Jaba because he was an inconvenient Palestinian, one who cannot be held up as the latest victim of Zionist aggression. Pictures of his weeping widow and confused children will not fill your social-media timeline. Major media outlets will not compete to tell human-interest stories about how he played with his children or how his family will cope without him. No U.S. congressmen or British MPs will demand justice for him.

Palestinians are killed in Israeli air strikes, too. These Palestinians are also parents and children, and while there is no moral equivalence between lawful self-defense and terrorism, death is death. The difference is that Palestinians inadvertently killed by Israel quickly become faces of the conflict while you have to turn to page 27 and scan another dozen paragraphs to learn about Palestinians killed by Palestinian terrorism. The practitioners of this double standard want the world to see the Palestinians but they themselves can see only symbols, and Palestinians who lack symbolic value are of lesser interest to them. Some Palestinians just aren't Palestinian enough for pro-Palestinians.

Western progressives aren't alone in seeing Palestinians as symbols. To their political and paramilitary leaders, the Palestinians are archetypes, emblems of resistance and emblems of victimhood, their deaths peddled as martyrdom for the domestic audience and ethnic oppression for gullible CNN producers. Palestinians who fit into neither category lack instrumental value and may even prompt unhelpful questions about a leadership which has consistently failed its people.

A People Who Refuse to Forget Celebrate the Recapture of Jerusalem

MAY 18 2023

From Meir Soloveichik
at *Commentary*

Tonight begins Yom Yerushalayim, the anniversary on the Jewish calendar of the liberation of the Old City of Jerusalem during the Six-Day War. On that day in 1967, an IDF commander selected a young soldier named Dov Gruner to be the first to reach the Western Wall. He did so in recognition of another man with the same name, who had died for the Zionist cause after serving in the British army during World War II. **Meir Soloveichik** reflects on the legacy of the two Dov Gruners:

Captured during an Irgun raid on a Ramat Gan police station, [the first] Gruner was sentenced to death. Given his wartime service, an international campaign sought the commutation of Gruner's sentence. But the British, in an act that horrified even Menachem Begin's opponents in the Zionist movement, hanged Dov Gruner in the middle of the night in the Acre prison, denying him the right to see a rabbi before his execution.

It has been noted by scholars such as the historian Yosef Hayyim Yerushalmi and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks that while others speak of their connection to the past as "history," Jews instead tend to speak of "memory." The difference between the two terms is profound. History rightly records the great figures who oversaw the events that changed the world. Jewish memory insists on the debt we owe to all those who sacrificed in the past, and our obligation to remember them.

This month, after celebrating Israel's 75th anniversary, the Jewish world will mark Jerusalem Day, remembering one of the most miraculous moments in Jewish history. Jews will remember, and rightly so, the commanders who helped bring about this remarkable achievement. But it is right to remember the men who captured a mount and touched the stones of the ancient wall, men who remembered Dov Gruner, expressing thereby what it means to be part of a people who refuse to forget.
