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Positive Dialogue

Some Suggestions for Liberal Zionists and for Progressive Jews Who Are Not

The Magnes
Zionist

There are times when the pursuit of universal values should trump ethnic and communal loyalties.

Elul is the Jewish month for soul-reckoning. Traditionally, Jews don't make New Year resolutions, but they are expected to try harder in anticipation of the High Holiday season. So in that spirit, I have a few practical suggestions for my liberal Zionist as well as my progressive non-Zionist and anti-Zionist brothers and sisters (and for myself).

1. Pay for a subscription to Haaretz, and read it several times a week. Sign up for the daily notifications. Read articles by reporters like Nir Hasson, Amira Hass, and Gideon Levy, and op-ed writers like Dimitri Shumsky and Daniel Blatman, among others. Read 972mag regularly. Get an education on what is happening to the Palestinians living in Palestine today. I am amazed at the people who have all sorts of views on Israel, but who don't keep up with Haaretz. Reading the paper on a regular basis not only shows support for its journalistic courage; it has a long-term cumulative effect. You can read Gideon Levy once or twice and be shocked. You can read him a third or fourth time, shake your head, and turn the page. But if you read him weekly, year in and year out, and if you have not hardened your heart, you will be transformed.



Israeli journalist Gideon Levy.

2. Read Palestinian policy voices, like the Al-Shabaka policy network. Those folks represent some of the most thoughtful Palestinian voices writing today. For too long, discussion about Israel has been an intra-Jewish family affair. Jews need to be listening to Palestinians and working together with them.

3. Ban two words from your vocabulary when you refer to each other: "anti-Semitic" and "racist." There are bigots everywhere, but hoping that the State of Israel will be replaced by a state that provides equal rights for Israelis and Palestinians is not anti-Semitic; saying that the Jews don't have a right to a state is not anti-Semitic. What is anti-Semitic? Wishing Jews harm *because they are Jews*, or considering them to be objectionable *because they are Jews*. Calling a Jew who supports BDS an anti-Semite is often itself anti-Semitic, since it presumes to restrict what Jews can acceptably say. That's the first half of the suggestion. The second is to reserve the term "racist" for real racist statements, not for statements that are interpreted by other people as "dog whistles." Yes, we should be sensitive to what we say. But we should also be charitable in interpreting what others say, all things being equal. Terms like "anti-Semitic" and "racist" are terms of moral opprobrium. They represent the nuclear option, and their use should be restricted.

4. Learn about Zionism before you praise or condemn it. Don't reduce it to a slogan or a category. From its inception, Zionism spoke with several voices and appealed to different sentiments within the Jewish public. Its development was not linear and, like everything else, was a product of its historical context, and adapted to changing circumstances. For all its flaws in implementation, Zionism has provided hundreds of thousands of Jews with feelings of dignity, self-worth, ethnic pride, and security. The surge of Zionist identification among American Jewish progressives in the late 1960s and the early 1970s coincided with (and was influenced by) the Black Power and the Women's Liberation movements. This does not justify the problematic aspect of Zionism, its inevitable clash with the rights of the Palestinian natives. It doesn't justify the path it took, which was not inevitable, but was the product of decisions in historical context. Nor does it excuse some of its extreme versions. But both tactically and principally, the pursuit of justice for the Palestinians should not be held hostage to an ideological struggle over Zionism, especially when our identities are invested in that struggle.

5. Most importantly, the struggle for Palestinian rights must be placed front and center. Ending a long and brutal occupation must be the goal that brings together Palestinians and Jews, and Zionist and non-Zionist Jews. It's not about our own identity issues as Americans or as Jews, or Jewish Americans. Injustice is committed hourly in the name of the Jewish people. There are times when the pursuit of universal values should trump ethnic and communal loyalties. Even after Charlottesville, and the rise of the alt-right, the American Jewish community is still, *barukh ha-Shem*, very strong and safe. Jewish communities may be potential victims everywhere, but there is only one place where the Jewish community is a perpetrator. That puts upon us a responsibility to unhardened our hearts and to do the right thing. It's not about us; it's about what is being done to them in our names. ✪

THE MAGNES
ZIONIST is Charles
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of Jewish Studies and
Philosophy who di-
vides his time between
the U.S. and Israel.

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McGovern's Unheeded Message

Hush, Hush, Silent Democrats

"Every senator in this chamber is partly responsible for sending 50,000 young Americans to an early grave. This chamber reeks of blood. Every Senator here is partly responsible for that human wreckage at Walter Reed and Bethesda Naval and all across our land—young men without legs, or arms, or genitals, or faces or hopes."

—Senator George McGovern's denunciation of senators of both parties who refused to condemn the Vietnam War. 9/1/70.

Murray Polner



Senator George McGovern speaking at the Richard M. Nixon Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, California during his book tour

I've been reading Thomas Knock's new biography of George McGovern, *The Rise of a Prairie Statesman*. Yes, the same George McGovern who was a real-life WWII war hero who earned the Distinguished Flying Cross as well as the super-dove who was overwhelmingly rejected by voters in his run for the presidency in 1972. And for decades before and after, McGovern and McGovernism were dismissed by

Democratic Party VIPs upset by his efforts to develop a seriously restrained foreign policy and maintain limits on our military empire and its unwinnable wars. It was the hallowed era of our celebrated "bipartisan foreign policy," whose basic principles were rarely challenged and those who tried to do so were often denounced as irrelevant, even dangerous, by a sycophantic press and politicians. All the same, before the invasion of Iraq in 2003, McGovern warned about America's latest brainstorm on WABC's *John Batchelor Show*: "Mark my words: this is a tragic error that will haunt us." And still does.

Years later, in 2015, three think tanks, the Atlantic Council, Brookings Institution, and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs turned to Ukraine and issued a report, "Preserving Ukraine's Independence, Resisting Russian

Aggression: What the United States and NATO Must Do," after Putin's Russia annexed Crimea. It urged the sending of "lethal defensive arms—so that Ukraine is better able to defend itself" and concluded, "The West has the capacity of stop Russia. The question is whether it has the will." Somehow they failed to mention Moscow's thousand-plus nukes, even as it reminded me of Mark Danner's obliging, classic phrase, "Marooned in the Cold War."

McGovern's long-term legacy is that the party which rejected his views needs an alternative approach to war and peace and not another Hillary trying to show they're tougher than the Republicans.

After all, our generals haven't won much since their heroic victories over mighty Grenada and Panama. And, incredibly, the Democratic primary campaign in 2016 had little or nothing to say

about foreign policy, neither from Hillary the Hawk nor Bernie the Dove. Since then hardly a word from Democrats about NATO threatening nuclear Russia by provocatively moving ever closer to its borders with planes, ships and troops. Not a word about Yemen where a vicious civil war is armed by the U.S. and bombed by its Saudi and its Middle Eastern friends.

There is a quietness from prominent Democrats about exploring possible diplomatic solutions with North Korea, or Trump committing us to yet another generation of war in Afghanistan, or our empire's 80 or so military bases, and of course little or nothing said about the soaring profits earned by weapons makers hard at work turning out killing machines.

If George McGovern was too radical for Vietnam-era Democrats, I hope some present-day Senator will echo him on the floor of the Senate and remind his colleagues about the anti-Nazi martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer who warned his fellow Germans that "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil" and that "Not to speak is to speak and not to act is to act." ☆

Before the invasion of Iraq in 2003, McGovern warned, "Mark my words: this is a tragic error that will haunt us."

MURRAY-POLNER is SHALOM's co-editor.



The Challenge of Shalom: The Jewish Tradition of Peace and Justice

Edited by Murray Polner and Naomi Goodman

Highlights the deep and powerful tradition of Jewish non-violence. With reverence for life, passion for justice, and empathy for suffering, Jews historically have practiced a "uniquely powerful system of ethical peacefulness." *The Challenge of Shalom* includes sections on the Tradition, the Holocaust, Israel, Reverence for all life and Personal Testimonies. \$18.95 per copy, plus \$5 shipping.

Peace, Justice, and Jews: Reclaiming Our Tradition

Edited by Murray Polner and Stefan Merken.

A landmark collection of contemporary progressive Jewish thought written by activists from Israel, the US and the UK.

Publishers Weekly called it "literate, thought-provoking" and "by no means homogeneous" and which looked at "from all angles, the idea that editors Polner and Merken believe reflect the most basic attitude in our Jewish heritage."

Publishers Weekly concluded: "There is much to learn here for anyone, Jew or Gentile, interested in global issues of peace and justice."

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Pillars of Pacifism



Remembering Don Peretz

Featuring an Interview from September 8, 2014

Aliza Becker

A conscientious objector and a lifelong pacifist, Peretz was one of the first members of the Jewish Peace Fellowship and was also a pioneering chronicler of the Arab-Israeli conflict's early years.

Don Peretz was born on October 30, 1922 in Baltimore, Maryland. He passed away on April 29, 2017 at age 94.

Peretz attended Queens College for three years from 1939-1941. Inspired by two role models—his Quaker college professor and a pacifist rabbi who was a neighbor—Peretz became a conscientious objector during World War II. He also joined other Jewish pacifists as an early member of the Jewish Peace Fellowship, founded in 1941. Peretz was sent by the army to the University of Minnesota to study Japanese. Peretz was then assigned as a non-arms-bearing Japanese interpreter for a naval medical unit tending to wounded civilians from the Battle of Okinawa.

In 1946, Peretz took advantage of the G.I. bill for WWII veterans to travel to Mandatory Palestine, his father's homeland, and study at Hebrew University. The following year, he worked as a correspondent for NBC News, reporting on the growing conflict in the region. In 1949, Peretz worked for a year as a representative of the American Friends Service Committee with the UN Relief for Palestine Refugees in the northern city of Acre and the western Galilee.

After spending a year working for the Voice of America, in 1952, Peretz was awarded a two-year Ford Foundation grant to study the Israeli-Arab refugee problem. This research, one of the first major academic studies of the 1948 Palestinian refugees, was later to become his doctoral thesis at Columbia University. It was published in 1958 as a book entitled *Israel and the Palestine Arabs*.

Peretz worked for the American Jewish Committee for a year in the mid-1950s during which he traveled throughout the Middle East to help address hardships affecting Jewish communities in several Middle Eastern countries causing many to flee. He also conducted research on the status of Israeli Arabs.

Afterwards, Peretz taught at several colleges including Hofstra University, Long Island University, Hunter College, and Vassar College. He also served as a fellow at the United States Institute of Peace.

Peretz next worked at the New York State Board of Education for five years prior to beginning a 25-year tenure as a professor at SUNY-Binghamton. From 1966 to 1992, he taught and directed the school's Southwest Asia North Africa Program. In the 1970s, Peretz worked with the pacifist multi-denominational Fellowship of Reconciliation helping to arrange meetings for US activists on Middle East peace delegations.

In addition to his thesis, Peretz wrote 11 books, among them *The Government and Politics of Israel*, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising*, *The Middle East Today*, and *Israel and the Palestine Arabs*—and over 300 articles for various journals, including *Foreign Affairs* and the *Middle East Journal*.

ALIZA BECKER is Director of the American Jewish Peace Archive, a program of the Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities of Bard College.

Highlights from the 2014 Interview

Don Peretz's Jerusalem-born father, whose Sephardic family had lived in the Middle East for hundreds of years, was highly influential in his life's work for Arab-Israeli reconciliation. Peretz described him as "an ardent but a peaceful Zionist," who believed in furthering peaceful relations between Palestinian Arabs and Jews. His father spoke Hebrew, Ladino, English, Arabic, French, and Yiddish. During World War I, Peretz's father came to the US, leaving behind his large family to avoid being drafted into the Ottoman Turkish army. He came with an urgent message from his friend Aaron Aaronsohn that he passed on to several prominent American Jewish leaders. Aaronsohn was concerned that the Turkish alliance with Germany could lead Jews to suffer the same fate as the Armenians. Ultimately, Aaronsohn set up a spy network for Britain that helped them conquer Jerusalem. During his youth in Baltimore, Peretz was a supporter of Hashomer HaTzair. According to Peretz, the group had initially supported "a bi-national Jewish-Arab State" with "equal standing for both groups. But that idea as such melted away gradually over the years..." Peretz was inspired to declare himself a conscientious objector during WWII under the influence of a Quaker professor at Queens College and Rabbi Isidor B. Hoffman, a neighbor and pacifist who served as the Jewish chaplain at Columbia University. Peretz subsequently joined with a small group of other Jewish pacifists as one of the first members of the Jewish Peace Fellowship (JPF), a group founded by Rabbis Abraham Cronbach and Isidor B. Hoffman, and Jane Evans. He describes JPF as "a handful of Jews who were pacifist, although not necessarily anti-war" who sought to create an organization similar to that of the Quakers and Mennonites "but with an emphasis on Jewish traditions and writings." They published a newsletter and later a magazine with a pacifist outlook and advocated for alternative service for conscientious objectors. At Peretz's recommendation, they also emphasized the importance of peace between Jews and Arabs. During World War II, Peretz registered as 1-A-0 Conscientious Objector, meaning that while he objected to serving as a combatant in any kind of war, his convictions permitted him to serve in the military in a non-combatant position. After completing a course in Japanese at the University of Minnesota, Peretz served as an interpreter for a medical unit in Okinawa.

Peretz then spent two years in Mandatory Palestine under the GI Bill of Rights as a student at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. After refusing to join the Haganah—the Jewish paramilitary organization—because of his pacifism, he worked as a stringer to the radio correspondent for NBC. Following the 1948 War, Peretz worked for a year for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a well-known Quaker organization. He directed a unit in Acre that distributed United Nations rations to approximately 50,000 Palestinian refugees scattered in villages throughout Galilee in northern Israel. "Where I worked they seemed to regard me as one of the Quakers, although many of them knew that I was Jewish." Interestingly, in 1998, the AFSC asked Peretz and his wife, May, to return to the villages he had worked with in 1948 to see how things had changed over 50 years. Journalist Atallah Mansour, an old Palestinian friend and former Arab affairs journalist for *Haaretz*, accompanied them on their two-month visit. One big change Peretz noted was that they didn't see a single camel, whereas they were "quite prevalent in 1948 as beasts of burden." People had automobiles "instead of donkeys or camels." They also had abandoned their traditional garb for Western style clothing indistinguishable from the Jewish population. Many of the Arab villages had signs in Russian indicative of the influx of Russian immigrants. He also met a number of political activists "who were campaigning for Arab political rights in Israel, for better education, equal education opportunities for Arab youth."

After he returned from the Middle East, Peretz worked as a media evaluator for the Voice of America, "attempting to determine the influence of the Voice of America in the Middle East." He then applied for and received Ford Foundation grant to do a study of Palestinian refugees from 1952-54. Subsequently, he attended Columbia University where he received a master's degree and doctorate based on that research.

In the mid-1950s, Peretz was hired by the American Jewish Committee (AJC), when "you could call it a liberal, broadminded Jewish organization sympathetic to the idea of a Jewish State in Israel but non-Zionist."

As the situation for Jews in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon was growing increasingly dire, the AJC sent Peretz to investigate the situation. There was so much anti-Jewish sentiment that the "Jews in Egypt who had been more or less integrated nearly all fled. They had property confiscated and demonstrations against them, making life terribly uncomfortable." ✪

Women's Activism Against Nuclear Weapons

Words, Intentions and Negotiations Matter

Madelyn Hoffman

On September 20, 2017, New Jersey Peace Action displayed 6,000 origami cranes made for its "origami cranes for peace" campaign. The date was selected because ratification began that day on the International Treaty to Ban Nuclear weapons.

On September 20th, 2017, many of the world's nations ratified the newly negotiated "International Treaty to Ban Nuclear Weapons". Representatives of 122 nations agreed to this first-ever total ban treaty on July 7, 2017 at the U.N. in New York City after months of intense negotiations and public pressure. Ninety days after 50 countries ratify the Treaty, it carries the force of international law. Just before these negotiations began, on June 17th, thousands of men and women from all over the world marched from the New York City Public Library to Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza in the middle of the pouring rain in the International "Women's March to Ban the Bomb" organized by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

WILPF is the oldest women's peace organization in the world. In 1915, women from countries at war with each other and from neutral countries came together in The Hague to discuss solutions to the causes and violence of World War I. They founded WILPF as an organization with a mandate to challenge militarism, patriarchy, and capitalism as the roots of war and violence.

Lauretta Freeman, 95-years-old and a member of WILPF in New Jersey for more than 50 years, is also inspired by Margaret Mead's famous quote: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Blanca Gerard, a relative newcomer to WILPF added, "When a nuclear bomb is dropped it does not discriminate. It decimates everything in its path, civilians and the environment, and contaminates the earth. It takes years for the earth to recover. That's why I chose to march."

Susan Klein of the New Haven Peace Council also attended the "Women's March to Ban the Bomb." She's pictured below with a photo of a rather soggy peace crane that has traveled with her through countless demonstrations and vigils since 9/11.

"Particularly after our government began bombing Afghanistan," Susan said, "I found myself at a loss for words. I began folding origami cranes, an international symbol of peace since the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I made one to carry in a local anti-war demonstration, and then began using newspaper pages.

Since I worked at Yale's Sterling Library, I had access to newspapers from around the world in many languages. For a display at the library I had cranes with text in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Hebrew, etc."

Nine women from the New Japan Women's Association (NJWA) engaged in four days of activities including the march, an evening of exchange with local activists from New Jersey Peace Action (NJPA) and Peace Action New York State (PANYS) and a conference organized by Peace and Planet. Since the Japanese government refused to participate in the negotiations, NJWA represented the voice of Japan's civil society in support of the treaty from the world's only atomic-bombed country. During the Conference, Hibakusha (survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) presented almost three million signatures to ban nuclear weapons to Conference President Elayne Whyte, including many signatures collected by NJWA.

"I speak on behalf of the NJWA, an NGO of women working together to protect children against nuclear war for 55 years," stated NJWA President Kasai Kimiyo. "Heightening international tensions are the reason why we must hurry to eliminate nuclear weapons. They should not be used as a pretext to oppose it."

Not surprisingly, none of the nine nuclear-weapons-possessing countries participated in these negotiations. The 122 nations who agreed in principle to ban nuclear weapons did so because they had lost patience with nuclear-possessing countries, watching with growing horror as they did far too little to move the world closer to nuclear abolition. In fact, the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Review Conference of May 2015 ended without an international agreement for continued reduction in the numbers of nuclear weapons.

Instead, in an initiative begun under President Obama, Donald Trump recently touted the U.S. pledge to spend \$1 trillion over the next 30 years to "upgrade and modernize" our entire nuclear arsenal, making it bigger and more powerful even than at the height of the Cold War.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty may be the world's largest arms control treaty with all the world's nations currently signed on—except Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea—but there are still 15,000 nuclear weapons worldwide, 6000 in the U.S., and 7000 in Russia. Current tensions between the U.S. and North Korea and the U.S. and Russia over Syria, Iran, Ukraine and more, all have the potential to lead to a catastrophic nuclear war!

Statements like the one made by Donald Trump on August 8th intensify these tensions. How irresponsible to call for a U.S. response to North Korea filled with a "Fire and Fury" unlike anything the world has ever seen!

Does he not remember the impact of atomic bombs dropped on August 6th and August 9th, 1945, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Or the 210,000 people who died instantaneously in those blasts, with hundreds of thousands more continuing to be affected in the 72 years since? Use of a nuclear weapon today, of any size, would be more potent than the bombs used in 1945! Use of a nuclear weapon on the Korean Peninsula could directly impact 300,000 people or more.

NJPA plans to mark September 20th, the date when ratification began, with actions displaying the more than 6000 origami cranes many individuals, schools and organizations made for NJPA as part of its "10,000 origami cranes for peace" campaign began last year in honor of its founding as New Jersey SANE 60 years ago. The abolition of nuclear weapons was NJPA's primary mission then and remains so today.

This time, though, the whole world is watching. ✨



Thousands of men and women from all over the world marched in New York



Blanca Gerard stringing peace cranes for NJPA



Susan Klein



New Japan Women's Association

MADELYN HOFFMAN is Executive Director of New Jersey Peace Action in Bloomfield, New Jersey.

Open Hearts and Open Doors

My father, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, was a Dreamer Too

Susannah Heschel

I cannot bear the word “deportation.”

My father, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, was living in Frankfurt, Germany, in October 1938 in a rented room from a Jewish family in the leafy suburb of Eschersheim. My father was born and raised in Warsaw, Poland, the child of great Hasidic rebbes, and had gone in 1927 to study in Berlin, which he viewed as the cultural and intellectual capital of the universe at that time. He finished his doctorate just weeks after Hitler came to power, and tried to find a position outside the Nazi Reich, to no avail. Martin Buber, who left for Palestine, asked my father to come to Frankfurt in 1937 to replace him as director of the *Jüdisches Lehrhaus*, the adult Jewish education center.

In March 1938, Poland passed a law withdrawing the citizenship of Poles who had been living outside the country for five or more years. Around 30,000 Poles were then living in Germany, and 20,000 in Austria, which had just been annexed to the Nazi Reich. Among them were many Polish Jews, some of whom had come, like my father, to study at the German univer-



Martin Luther King Jr., left, and Abraham Joshua Heschel, right, during Selma march in 1965. Courtesy of Susannah Heschel

sities and had become scholars and professors, doctors and lawyers, rabbis and teachers, students and workers.

Not wanting stateless Poles living in the Reich, the Nazis arrested and deported the Polish Jews in late October 1938. My father was arrested in the middle of the night, on October 28, 1938. He was given an hour to pack his things; he quickly gathered his manuscripts and a few books. He was held in a cell at a police station overnight. Then he was deported on an overcrowded train and dumped in a no man’s land on the border between Germany and Poland. The conditions were dreadful; he shuddered when he told me about them.

I grew up hearing with horror the word “deportation.” All the adults around me had lost family; everyone was a refugee or a survivor. What we needed more than anything was to know with certainty that this would never happen again.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, my father, was a “Dreamer.”

After a year in Poland and just weeks

before the war started, he was plucked as a brand from the fire, brought to America by Julian Morgenstern, president of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. My father was grateful every day of his life for the United States, and he spent the rest of his life trying to make this a better country. He marched for voting rights, demanded freedom for Soviet Jews, spoke movingly about the importance of Israel, cultivated our piety and awareness of God’s presence, and worked to improve relations between Jews and Christians. Most of all, he gave his heart to making his fellow Jews realize the sanctity of human life and the importance of standing up for the great principles of Judaism.

Today’s 800,000 “Dreamers” in the United States are young people brought as babies and little children to this country by parents who entered illegally. They are now young adults, students and workers, making their contributions to this country.

They are just like my father.

Are we going to deport them, punish them for having had American childhoods? Whatever the sins of the parents, their children should never be punished: This is forbidden under Jewish law, and it is inhumane.

I am sickened when I think of the many human beings whose lives may be destroyed by this insane, vulgar, inhuman rage against the Dreamers in our midst. Such cruelty for no reason.

There is a spiritual sickness abroad in this land, a wild, inchoate lust for vengeance that has no motivation, no goal, no purpose; it is destructive of our souls, and I fear we will not recover our moral compass very easily.

Raise your voices, Jews! We who have known expulsion and deportation, we who have screamed in rage about the torments of our own history! We must rise up and insist that the revocation of DACA cannot be permitted and the immigration rulings of the past months must be repealed. We must open our hearts and the doors of our country to refugees.

Who among them will be our next Abraham Joshua Heschel? ☆

Today’s 800,000 “Dreamers” are just like my father.

—Susannah Heschel

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