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# Making Mensches

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## israel Won't Save Us: Moving Towards Liberation



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You want to take us to Jerusalem  
So we can die as a nation  
**We'd rather stay in the Diaspora  
And fight for our liberation"**

- Translation by Daniel Kahn, Oy Division — "Oh you foolish little zionists" (1931)

As co-founders of an American Jewish organization seeking to confront the Jewish community's racist practices and beliefs, we must speak out against israel's most recent attack on Gaza. While it is especially abhorrent that israeli settler-colonial violence escalated during the holy month of Ramadan, israel's legalized apartheid regime has been brutalizing Palestinians for decades. We believe our role as white American Jews is to resist the American-israeli military-industrial complex and the ways in which American Jewish support for israel has enabled the genocide in Palestine to continue. Making Mensches believes in the right of Palestinian self-determination and rejects the Zionist claim to the land of Palestine.

As white American Jews who were raised to proudly support israel, we refuse to perpetuate the one-sided narratives and propaganda that many American Jewish institutions disseminate about israel. We call for American Jewish institutions to revisit their educational philosophy and curriculum about Palestine and its history. Making Mensches stands by the Jewish ideals of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), the ethics laid out in *pirkei avot*, *tzedakah* (justice), and *emet* (truth). These Jewish ideals, amongst many others, are what drive our passion for liberation. The Jewish struggle throughout history has *always* been for liberation. The liberation of Palestine is tied into the struggle for Jewish liberation everywhere.

We reject the notion that Zionism is a value of Judaism. Zionism is not equivalent to, or a necessary component of, Jewish identity. To conflate Zionism and Judaism is not only inaccurate but dangerous; if we do not understand the difference between settler colonialism and religion, we run the risk of spreading deeply antisemitic narratives about the nature of Judaism. In fact, support for israel often conceals deeply antisemitic views, as seen in [some vocally pro-israel evangelical Christian groups](#). Additionally, Judaism's survival is not conditional upon the existence of israel. The notion that israel must exist in order to prevent another Holocaust is predicated on the belief that eradicating global antisemitism is such an unattainable goal that we cannot exist elsewhere safely. We believe that this is a false Zionist narrative perpetuated by those who wish to conflate an issue of settler colonialism with religious freedom. While many Zionists may argue that israel exists for the protection of the Jewish people, israel does not protect American Jews from antisemitic attacks on our synagogues, community centers, or cemeteries. No matter how difficult it is, the struggle towards dismantling white supremacy is one that makes the world safer for *all* marginalized groups.

Antisemitism (and white supremacy) do not disappear with the existence of israel — israel only placates us against revolution by giving Jewish people hope that there is a safe haven from antisemitism while turning us away from the struggle all marginalized groups must fight together.

As American Jews, we demand an end to American funding of Palestinian genocide. Earlier this month, Biden notified Congress of a proposed sale of weapons to israel worth \$735 million. The reason the sale will most pass Congress so easily is due to the expedited congressional review process for israel. Institutional support for israel in the American political process enables American taxpayers to more efficiently finance the genocide of Palestinian people. Jews in the United States must speak out against genocide in our name and state-sponsored murder disguised as support for Jewish people. On top of the American taxpayer dollars that already go towards our military budget every year, israel has also acted as a funnel for additional tax dollars to go back into the American military-industrial complex. This military-industrial complex includes funding of police forces across the nation, which, as we know, leads to police violence against marginalized communities. The struggle against police violence and the struggle against israeli settler-colonial violence are connected. israel actively trains the actors of our military state to enact violence against our Black and Brown siblings. It has been well-established that the israeli Defense Force (IDF) trains the New York Police Department (NYPD) and many other police forces across the United States. Amnesty International and other human rights groups have criticized israeli police forces for committing acts of torture and unlawful killings of Palestinians. We cannot engage in critiques of police violence in the United States without actively reflecting on israeli settler-colonial violence used to subjugate Palestinians.

Our anti-Zionist journeys, while difficult, have been nothing short of essential to strengthening our passion for Judaism. Being anti-Zionist has made us even more invested in building Jewish community and fighting for justice for *all* Jews. To the Zionists who call us self-hating Jews, we understand your conviction and your zeal. We too were once judgmental of Jews who criticized israel, assuming we were more deeply connected to Judaism and more highly educated. To these Zionists, we wish you an anti-Zionist journey as transformative as ours.

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