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A New Jewish Vision - Why the time has come for a global Jewish Peace Camp

Avrum Burg, Oct 16. 2025

The Jewish world stands today before one of the most difficult moral questions in its history. For generations the Jewish people were victims of oppression, expulsion, and the denial of rights. Out of that experience of suffering they gave humanity one of its greatest moral gifts: the understanding that there are boundaries that must never be crossed, and that every human being is born with dignity and rights that cannot be taken away.

From this consciousness, and in the shadow of the twentieth century's lessons, came the recognition that every nation has the right to self determination. Out of that belief the State of Israel was born, not only as a historical correction but as an expression of the universal idea that all peoples deserve to live in freedom, dignity, and security.

Yet the very principle that justified Israel's creation now calls it to account. The right of self determination does not include the right to deny another people's identity, nor to erase its existence. A state that rules another nation in the name of liberty for itself alone undermines the moral foundation on which it stands. Israel, born as a member of the family of nations, has drifted away from it, losing touch with the universal values that once gave it meaning: justice, freedom, equality, and human solidarity. In their place has risen an ideology of brutal power, racial supremacy, and political isolation.

From a moral perspective, Jewish civilization is not bound to this course. Israel is not Judaism, and Jews are not bound to the policies of this state, even if it flaunts as "Jewish". On the contrary, the further Israel moves from the shared values of humanity, the greater the need for a Jewish voice that will say clearly to the world, and to ourselves, that being Israeli and being Jewish are not the same. The war in Gaza made this truth impossible to ignore. Israel's actions may not be unusual in the history of nations, but they are utterly alien to the Jewish tradition. A tradition built on the sanctity of life, on responsibility for the other, and on the belief that power must serve moral ends cannot coexist with a culture of humiliation and violence.

Had a Jewish peace camp existed during the Gaza war, Israel would have acted differently. A broad Jewish moral voice could have restrained the loss of direction and reminded all that morality is not a luxury of peace but the foundation of national survival. Since Gaza on one side and Jewish nationalism, occupation, and repression on the other are not going away, a global Jewish Peace Camp must be created now to prevent the next and greater horrors already on the horizon.

A new Jewish vision cannot remain a sermon or an abstract declaration. It must become a global movement for peace, conscience, and responsibility that continues the spirit of the great teachers who understood Judaism as a moral calling rather than a tool of domination. The spirit of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, who rebuilt the people out of ruin not with a sword but through study and reflection. The spirit of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who marched for civil rights in America and said that his feet were praying. The warning of Hannah Arendt, who saw how victims can become perpetrators. The insight of Albert Einstein, who feared nationalism as a dangerous substitute for universal ethics. The yearning of Simone Weil for a

faith connected to the world rather than withdrawn from it. And the courage of Rosa Luxemburg, who demanded freedom also for those who think differently.

These figures stand for the moral Judaism that must now be renewed: not a Judaism of superiority but of repair, not a Judaism of victimhood but of responsibility, not a Judaism of walls but of bridges. Such a movement will affirm that between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea every human being is entitled to equal rights and freedoms, and that peace must rest on mutual justice, on trust, and on recognition of both peoples' right to self determination.

The new Jewish vision seeks to heal the distortion of a Judaism that became drunk with power. It aims to reconnect Jewish history with universal ethics, national memory with human responsibility, and the power we hold with the justice we claim to embody.

The renewal of Jewish life will not come from politicians or systems of government but from conscience. It will be born anew when Jews around the world begin to define themselves not through fear or siege mentality but through moral courage, openness, and a sense of universal purpose.

This is the moment to decide what we wish to bequeath to those who come after us: the Judaism of survival or the Judaism of repair. The first was born of fear; the second must be born of responsibility. The true meaning of the words "never again" is not only that we will never again be victims, but that we will never again become perpetrators. No more injustices in our name, no more domination in the name of imagined security, no more humiliation of one human being by another.

The new Jewish vision is a call to renew the covenant between Judaism and humanity, between conscience and justice, between a past worn down by the addiction to power and a future built upon the courage of repair. It calls upon Jews everywhere to stand again where Judaism has always belonged on the side of life, peace, justice, and of equality.