

REIMAGINING ISRAEL EDUCATION



*"THE WALLS DID NOT FALL... BUT THEY DID NOT
STRAIGHTEN... AND THEY STILL REMAIN LEANING."*

TEACHING ISRAEL WHEN THE WALLS ARE FALLING IN

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Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia 59b

חזר ואמר להם: אם הלכה כמותי – כותלי בית המדרש יוכיחו. הטו כותלי בית המדרש ליפול. גער בהם רבי יהושע, אמר להם: אם תלמידי חכמים מנצחים זה את זה בהלכה, אתם מה טיבכם? לא נפלו מפני כבודו של רבי יהושע, ולא זקפו מפני כבודו של רבי אליעזר, ועדין מטין ועומדין

Rabbi Eliezer then said to them: If the *halakha* is in accordance with my opinion, the walls of the study hall will prove it. The walls of the study hall leaned inward and began to fall. Rabbi Yehoshua scolded the walls and said to them: If Torah scholars are contending with each other in matters of *halakha*, what is the nature of your involvement in this dispute? The Gemara relates: The walls did not fall because of the deference due Rabbi Yehoshua, but they did not straighten because of the deference due Rabbi Eliezer, and they still remain leaning.

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The Challenge:

STUDENTS LEARN FROM THEIR COMMUNITIES, NOT ONLY FROM THE CLASSROOM

What should be taught about Israel and what should not be taught? What attitudes towards Israel should the Jewish educator aim to inculcate? What can be addressed inside the classroom and what must be shut down or avoided?

These questions about educational “red lines” cannot be addressed in isolation. What the student learns and what the student is directly taught are often two different things.

It may be challenging to teach solidarity with Israel after October 7 in the classroom if the Jewish Community Center refuses to display posters of the hostages in public.

If a congregational educator is teaching teens about the Nakba while evocative music from the movie “Exodus” plays in the synagogue corridors and the beloved Israeli *shaliach* is running Yom Ha’atzmaut celebrations, it is unlikely that the discussion of the Nakba will go very far.

A community’s partisan social media campaigns might undermine the most nuanced educational strategies.

John Dewey describes these types of disconnects as “collateral learning” and noted that when we give public expression to what we believe, we are teaching it. Thus, whatever is outside the classroom is teaching the student as much as what goes on inside it. Dewey went further, suggesting that this incidental learning of what is “caught, not taught” may be more significant than any curriculum. “Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned” (1916). Explorations of adult discourse and student curriculum cannot be separated, since the former is collateral learning for the latter.



When the movement “If Not Now” was born, it emerged with the idea, “you never told us” in its mouth. Many respected Israel educators reject the notion that they “never told” their students about the conflict with the Palestinians (Davis and Alexander, 2024)¹. These educators maintain “they just weren’t listening.” But it could be said that they were listening all too well. They heard the words of these educators through the mood music permeating the rest of the adult community. Indeed, perhaps these educators themselves were singing to the same subdued soundtrack². Students may have been “told” of Palestinians, but at the same time, their collateral learning may have taught them never to speak of the subject again.

Any conversation about a community’s “red lines” is also a conversation about students’ learning; learners observe and reflect on how a community manages its red lines in public. We must find an educational approach that aligns with the community/whole school/family in which it is presented. Alignment is imperative.

¹ The 2024 research of Davis and Alexander points to how teachers now deliberately educate about the Israeli Palestinian conflict in reaction to the “you never told us” campaign. This new approach from teachers could equally be undermined if the community itself offers a different message.

² “Even educators who may be prepared and demonstrated readiness for engagement in controversial topics are far less likely to do so when the environment doesn’t support this kind of ‘risk-taking.’” Fraiman, 2025).

Legacy of a Stuttering Discourse: Communal Silence or Exclusion

Yet alignment to what? The discourse on Israel's place in the lives of American Jews has always stuttered. While the symbolic significance of the State of Israel has inspired generations, the details of its development have struggled to make an impact on curricula. The State's struggles—between Ashkenazim and Mizrachim, Haredim and other Jews, Settlers and Green line dwellers, religious and secular Jews, and Jews and Palestinians—to say nothing of international affairs and enemies, have sometimes been taught but only in a strange parallel universe over which the inspiring symbolism of Israel continues to shine. Educators reach for euphemisms for political realities, calling Israel “complex”. Until recently, most of the Jewish community in America has treated this complexity as a bug rather than a defining feature.

As a result, the discourse regarding Israel has grown awkward. Never clear if or how the symbol might be damaged by teaching the reality, many communities have opted for what historian Teresa Bejan calls “civil silence” (2017). This approach acknowledges that a community comprises people with very diverse views on Israel. Rather than risk airing these differences in public, a community chooses never to talk about them. And the students in the community learn the unspoken lesson (that silence is preferable to conflict).

Other communities have, consciously or otherwise, adopted the approach that Bejan called “civil charity,” in which views on Israel become the limiting factor on community membership. For example, imagine a community in which the tacit expectation (and assumption) is that all members see themselves and others as more or less Zionist, everyone knows that Israel is a good thing that occasionally does bad things (a bad thing is a bug, rather than a feature),



and anyone with different views on Israel knows to go elsewhere and find a different community. Within this carefully curated population, community members can entertain many disagreements and arguments about Israel while remaining pluralistic and open to debate, mainly because the people involved in the discourse already share fundamental areas of

agreement. At the same time, in the other ideological direction, civil charity will emerge in the increasing number of anti-Zionist synagogues. In practice, civil charity is a form of ideological gerrymandering. **The classrooms of civil charity were always committed to free exploration, albeit inside a beautiful walled garden.**



...many communities have opted for... “civil silence”... This approach acknowledges that a community comprises people with very diverse views on Israel. Rather than risk airing these differences in public, a community chooses never to talk about them.

...Other communities have... adopted... “civil charity,” in which views on Israel become the limiting factor on community membership.



The Broken Walls of Zionism

Over the past two years, however, the walls around Israel discourse have come crashing down. Maintaining silence about Israel has become impossible. Everything is just too loud. Israel's unprecedented influence on Jews' lives in the United States has become iconoclastic. Jews have been isolated and attacked for Israel's crimes, both real and imagined. Indeed, Israel's actions in the past two years have stretched American Jews' moral and political identities to breaking point, and Jews' security in the diaspora and in Israel has been threatened. Out of this cacophony emerges a realization that the current shape of our red lines is broken.

Moreover, more young Jews than ever before are questioning the Zionist project altogether (BSG Consulting, 2024, p. 15).³ The taboo against airing one's dirty laundry in public has disappeared in the wind. Indeed, the differentiation between public and private, or within the community versus outside, has been erased by entire generations who live on social media. Cancel culture has become a swinging sword used by everyone against everyone else—the Zionists will cancel the anti-Zionists and vice versa—and its overuse increasingly blurs its impact.

All accuse the other of antisemitism, by supporting Israel's enemies or Israel's government, and Israel itself does not seem to be helping. The humanistic rabbinic Judaism that resonates across denominations across the United States is challenged by the more Biblical isolationist tones emerging from Israel's cabinet.

While some once have regarded Zionism as a connecting force between Jews and Jewish communities, it now, more than ever, creates a dividing line.

This essay uses terms such as “Zionist” and “anti-Zionist,” and the very use of these terms suggests clear definitions. In truth, the situation is much fuzzier, as explored in For the Sake of Argument’s 2026 research.

This crisis is real and will not pass swiftly. We cannot duck for a couple of years until the whirlwind has swept by.

In such a situation, we would caution against jumping for the first solution that comes to hand. Many believe we must not jettison Jews from the community because of their stance on Israel, and at the same time reject jettisoning Israel from the Jewish community for the sake of inclusion.

The bare truth is that we do not yet know what to do. This is why we believe we must—in the meantime—keep talking together, keep arguing with each other, hold on to the disagreement, until a new path emerges. We aspire to healing, but perhaps such healing happens only after we have held together through our searing differences and emerged from the other side. This essay is written imagining this kind of dialogue and work.

During 2025, I have heard countless stories about communal rifts over Israel.

A senior Reconstructionist educator took offense when a colleague called the violence in Gaza a war instead of a genocide.

A community on the East Coast fell apart over displayed posters of the Israeli hostages, because some regarded the posters as part of a propaganda campaign justifying slaughter.

A significant congregation in the Midwest lost congregants when some knelt on the ground as the rabbi recited the Prayer for the State of Israel.

A Zionist Jewish advocacy group was ostracized on campus for promoting the two state solution: “progressives” saw the group as too Zionist, and Zionists rejected the group for seemingly supporting Israel’s enemies.



³ When a definition of Zionism is shared with 18-40 year old American Jews, 48% say they are anti-Zionist or non-Zionist (BSG Consulting, 2024). Similarly, 41.3% of Jewish American teens believe that Israel is committing genocide, and 36.7% sympathize with Hamas [Mosaic (2024, September) “Teen Israel survey: Antisemitism and attitudes post-October 7”].

Three Response Strategies

We are fissured over Israel, and these fissures are exacerbated by forces far beyond the ken of the educator or community leader. The fighting in the region, the suffering of Gazans, the suffering of the hostages, the rifts within Israeli society, the antisemitic demons that have been released through the internet, and the polarization throughout American society are all stacked against us. This crisis is real, and will not pass swiftly. Jewish educators cannot duck for a couple of years until the whirlwind has passed.

The moment educators are liberated from trying to paper over chasms and instead embrace the challenge they face, they will come up with many creative approaches to our predicament.

Here, I sketch out three different approaches with the expectation that many more will arise or are ready to be elevated.

The first approach suggests working from the “red lines” of the adult community and extrapolating down to the educational syllabus.

1

The second approach suggests a pedagogy that can be embodied throughout ages and levels of development.

2

The third approach begins from a renewed educational framing.

3

The latter two are areas I have worked in extensively and can point to specific examples of application in the field. The first approach has not yet been tried. Or at least, not in the past 1500 years or so.

APPROACH #1

The *Halakha* and *Aggadah* of Red Lines

Background

A voluntary community cannot survive without civil silence or civil charity.⁴ Without a defining edge, a community can offer little sense of belonging or commitment to those inside it. We must have walls of shared meaning: An educational system certainly cannot function without them. Author Ian Leslie (2025) pointed out that a cohesive community “of any kind depends on selectivity: on keeping people out as well as welcoming them in. Clubs, universities, political parties, actual parties, all operate on this principle. A book club that admits people who never read becomes useless to everyone... Clear entrance criteria, strictly enforced, create space inside the club for freedom, equality, and fellow feeling.”

The challenge is that the US Jewish community writ large—and many individual communities within it—find themselves in a double bind. They know that circumstances require some dividing edge around attitudes to Israel, yet they have always prided themselves on their inclusivity. Now, they are uncertain where this edge should be. While the imagery of red lines and walls suggests inflexibility, when a community is mapping out its stand, it needs something far more flexible, porous, or even temporary.

Jewish tradition offers us an approach that might allow us to have our cake and eat it, to make a clear distinction while simultaneously undermining it. The implication is that unambiguous, explicitly worded laws cannot stand the test of time. People change, situations change, and so in order for a judgment to maintain its relevance, it needs to remain open to ongoing interpretation.

In Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 4:2, Rabbi Yannai says: “If the Torah had been given cut [and dried] it would not have a leg to stand on.”

אָמַר רַבִּי יַנַּאי. אֵילוּ
נִתְּנָה הַתּוֹרָה חֲתוּכָה
לֹא הִיְתָה לְרַגְל עֲמִידָה

⁴ This was a point emphasized by Teresa Bejan in my interview with her for this project (May 2025).

The Talmud imagines a different time when an issue may be litigated again in a different court, where the dissenting voice can offer an alternative direction for the court to take with authority. As Ruth Bader Ginsburg is credited with saying in 2002 about the US Judicial system: "Dissents speak to a future age."

Mishnah Eduyot 1:5-6

וְלָמָּהּ מִזְכִּירִין דְּבָרֵי הַיְחִיד בֵּין הַמְּרַבִּין,
הוֹאִיל וְאִין הֶלְכָּה אֶלָּא כְּדְבָרֵי הַמְּרַבִּין.
שָׂאֵם יִרְאֶה בֵּית דִּין אֶת דְּבָרֵי הַיְחִיד
וְיִסְמַךְ עָלָיו

And why do [the rabbis of the Talmud] record the opinion of a single person among the many, when the *halakhah* must be according to the opinion of the many? So that if a court prefers the opinion of the single person it may depend on him.

Similarly, the Sages' stories, *aggadot*, weave their way in and out of legal edicts, complicating them and sometimes undermining them entirely. The Mishnah of Yevamot 64a insists that after a decade in a childless marriage, a man must either divorce his wife or take another.

Mishnah Yevamot 64a

מִתְנִי' נָשָׂא אִשָּׁה וְשָׁהָּ עִמָּה עֶשֶׂר
שָׁנִים וְלֹא יִלְדָּה — אִינוּ רֵשָׁאֵי לְבַטֵּל.
גִּירְשָׁה — מוֹתֶרֶת לִינָשָׂא לְאַחֵר. וְרֵשָׁאֵי
הַשָּׁנִי לְשָׁהוֹת עִמָּה עֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים. וְאִם
הִפִּילָה — מוֹנֶה מִשְׁעָה שֶׁהִפִּילָה

If a man married a woman and stayed with her for ten years and she did not give birth, he is no longer permitted to neglect the mitzva to be fruitful and multiply. Consequently, he must either divorce her and marry someone else, or take another wife while still married to her.

Immediately after this Mishnah is stated, the Gemara reports on as many exceptions to this rule as it can, beginning with Jacob and Isaac. Shir HaShirim Rabbah 1:4 relates a delightful folk tale where the great Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai advises a couple to divorce, but in such a way as to lead them to commit to each other even more than before. Here, it seems that the Talmud has its cake and eats it: The childless marriage should be ended after ten years, except when it should not.

Suggestion

What if a community applied this approach when attempting to draw up its red lines about Israel in these disputatious times? **Jewish textual tradition has a record of laying down the law, and attaching to it stories and explorations of how the law could be otherwise.** What if a community did the same?

As we have established, on the one hand, a community must be able to make a decision, to "cut" as Rabbi Yannai describes. Yet, at the same time, it wishes to give respect, space, and future hope to those who disagree with the decision as it has fallen.

Our suggestion would be that every community that gathers to decide on its red lines should deliberate over two matters: What is the rule, and **what are the "aggadic" texts that must always accompany this rule?** Whenever the rule is referred to or applied, the three texts must always be discussed for "dissenting context of the future," so to speak. These aggadic texts might be from traditional sources, or emerge from the community's deliberations, or stories or anecdotes chosen for their applicability.

Applications

For example, one can imagine a community that rules against the involvement of anti-Zionists in its leadership roles. Alongside this ruling might be the text of an interview with a woman who proclaims that she can relate to an ideological critique of Zionism as a form of settler colonialism. Yet at the same time, she cannot identify with people whose anti-Zionism is often expressed in openly anti-Jewish terms. She also loves Israel, travels there at least twice a year, dreams of making *aliyah*, and says that Israel's warm yet direct culture is where she feels most at home.

This contradictory, inconsistent, deeply human perspective should be studied alongside the ruling that excludes those like this woman.

A community that rules that Zionism is contrary to their Jewish values might add appendices that nevertheless center the land of Israel at the heart of their own Jewish tradition. For example, they might attach an extract from the book *The Jew in the Lotus* (Kamenetz, 2007) where R. Yitz Greenberg explains to the Dalai Lama the place of Israel in Jewish ritual practice:

"...At the end of every wedding, we break a glass. Why? To remind people they cannot be completely happy. We are still in exile, we have not yet been restored. When you build a new home, you leave one little place unfinished. Why? As beautiful as the home is, I am not at home."

The Dalai Lama listened with great attentiveness, nodding thoughtfully, and then responding, softly, almost to himself, "Yes, Always remind." Remind the people that they are in exile and they must return.

The Pedagogy of Argument

Background

Israel is an embodiment of ongoing disagreements crucial to the Jewish People, both in its conflict with Palestinians and the Muslim world, but also in its body politic as challenged by religion, race, and history. Much of the Jewish community in the US is roiled by ongoing disagreements about its relationship with the State of Israel and its place in Jewish identity. The following approach recommends leaning into this current state of disagreement and making an educational virtue out of a sociological reality.

Rather than avoiding our disagreements, this educational approach should seek them out and raise them up at the heart of our work. There is no shame in inviting the learner inside of the conflicts that the adults of the community have not managed to solve; indeed, this inclusion can be empowering for the student. Argument can be learned for its skills and for its subject matter. Ambivalence can be addressed as the energizing clash between certainties rather than as a source of paralysis.

As Keren Fraiman noted in her influential research “Barriers to Entry” (2025), “Learning how to handle a conversation that has “spun out of control” or creating environments conducive to empathetic listening across differences are crucial skills for educators and increase the chances for successful engagement”. Several educational organizations whose work can be emulated already embrace aspects of this “unity of disagreement.” Makhloket Matters, Pedagogy for Partnership, Resetting the Table, and For the Sake of Argument⁵ have all been swimming in these educational and social waters. They are a ready-made resource for any community or educational system to develop the skills Fraiman calls for.

Suggestion: Teach Israel through Healthy Arguments

The subject matter is controversial⁶, and so the pedagogy should, in turn, embody engagement with controversy. “Here form is content, content is form” (Beckett, 1999). Teacher education should include training in how to teach healthy forms of disagreement. At the same time, the Israel curriculum should address Israel and its relationship with the Jewish world in the form of a series of interlocking arguments.

⁵ In their research paper “Cultivating Understandings, Skills, and Emotional Resilience” (2024), Rosov Consulting showed that For the Sake of Argument workshops led to significant increases in participants’ abilities to gather new perspectives and hear opposing opinions, as well as increases in participants’ confidence in engaging in disagreement as well as “strong gains in knowledge about issues in contemporary Israel and in participants’ interest in learning more.”

⁶ A maximally controversial topic has four features: It is disputed; it is a matter of public concern; it arouses strong emotions; and “a reasonable case can be made on each side of the question” (Robertson & Zimmerman, 2017).

For example, in teaching about the early days of Zionism, the desperate arguments over the rights and wrongs of the Uganda Plan in 1903 should be centered. The connection between the Holocaust and the State of Israel might be best addressed through discussing the riots that erupted when Ben-Gurion accepted reparations from Germany in 1952. Students can thereby learn Zionist and Israeli history as a series of principled disagreements and human choices. The hope is that this thread of internal conflict and human agency will resonate with students and inspire.

The curriculum will also embody skills, following the “Hess 20% rule”. The research of Diana Hess discovered that the graduates who become most civically engaged are those for whom their classroom experiences included at least 20% of their time in peer-to-peer discussions. Accordingly, students should spend at least 20% of their Israel classes arguing about Israel and building their skills in healthy ways to disagree.

“What Should We Not Argue About?”

Though I would love to give you my answer, it may not fit every North American Jewish community. Each community will need to ask itself this question and see how far it can push itself. The Orthodox community where children have made *aliyah* will have a very different set of limitations than the anti-Zionist synagogue down the road. The key is that each community learns, teaches how to argue, and tries to stretch its own comfort zone as much as it can.

Applications

Students can engage in exploring the story of the *Altalena*. In small groups they can passionately debate the right to bear arms, responsibility for coercion, and the nature of unity and dissent. They would emerge with deep knowledge of the perspectives of David Ben-Gurion, Menachem Begin, and the nature of the early State’s struggles. They emerge with a sense of the pluralism and agency at the heart of Israel’s early leadership along with a positive and energetic experience of argument.

Moments of controversy—for example, a visit from Israel’s Finance Minister Smotrich—can be opportunities for education. With a teacher trained in recognizing essential questions at the heart of controversies, the teacher will encourage students to lean in to questions of loyalty, solidarity, racism, and the challenges of Jewish peoplehood. They might even argue over a story written by For the Sake of Argument (for example, see [“A Visitor Comes to Town”](#) that addresses these very questions), and emerge with a deeper understanding of communal decision-making vis-à-vis Israel, developing personal opinions about these issues, experience and skills in arguing about maximally controversial issues, and something to talk about with their parents later that day.

The Four Hatikvah Questions

Background

In a world where clear answers no longer fit, we should instead lead with questions. Where the meaning of modern-day events are presented as fixed, we should lead with inquiry. **Israel can be framed as an entity attempting to implement the best answers to four fundamental questions that are common to the entire world, not only to Israel.**

- 1 How can we maintain our security in the face of wars, pandemics, terror and violence?
- 2 How do we create or understand collective identity when national, ethnic, and sexual identities are so fractured?
- 3 How do we maintain or attain our liberties when freedoms of expression, and movement, and even voting rights, are uncertain?
- 4 How do we relate to our territory, when the location and permeability of borders are challenged by emigration as much as by carbon emissions?

These four essential questions draw upon the work of Wiggins and McTighe (2005). They can be applied to issues in North America, and they can also be understood in an Israeli context with four Hebrew words: “to be,” “a people,” “free,” “in our land.” These words come from the penultimate line of *“Hatikvah,”* Israel’s national anthem. As a sentence, these words act as a summary of most liberal nationalisms. Written as four interlocking questions or challenges, the words provide a unifying way for us to consider our profound differences about Israel.

This approach of inquiry might insist on the following red lines:

- **Anyone who rejects any one of the four ideas is not a Zionist.**⁷ (This does not necessarily mean they must be shunned or shamed, just that a conversation with someone who is not a Zionist will have different parameters and expectations).
- **Teaching about Israel for all ages will spiral around these four questions** that both explain Israel’s aspirations and invite critique and involvement in its current answers.
- Irrespective of communities’ preferred answers, **all four questions must be taught.**

⁷ For example, someone who sees Jews as a faith with no element of peoplehood or shared solidarity; or someone who rejects the idea of Israel as some form of a democracy; or someone who rejects the idea of Israel in some part of the biblical land of Israel; or—of course—someone who rejects the need for Jewish safety.



Suggestion

A community might review its current Israel curriculum to improve its approach to the four questions. A left-leaning community might find that it rarely addresses Israel’s security threats or connection to the land, and choose to boost this area. A right-leaning community might find that the curriculum rarely addresses the rights or freedoms accorded to Muslims and Christians under Israeli control. A supplementary school might find it has been more comfortable addressing the diversity of people in Israel and the spiritual history of the land, than the current security and political challenges of the State.

The four questions can also be used to create a spiral curriculum that first addresses each question in isolation for younger students and then encourages students to understand how answers to the questions overlap and influence one another as they develop more critical thinking skills.

Educators can also be trained to see Israel through the lens of these four questions. Current affairs that seep into the classroom can be parsed accordingly and taught as part of the ongoing Zionist journey—finding better answers to the Four Hatikvah Questions (4HQ). As they grow older, students can be encouraged to differentiate between their own answers to 4HQ and the answers that Israel or Israelis seem to be offering.

Ever since Makom introduced this framework in 2015 it has been adopted by educational leaders across the United States. The Qushiyot program of Jewish Education Project trained some 100 New York educators in this system; between 2019 and 2024 Moishe House (now Mem Global) ran annual retreats and trips to Israel structured around 4HQ; Hebrew Public commissioned a full curriculum for Middle School structured around the 4HQ system. In short, there are many educators and leaders in the US who are familiar with its contours.

Applications

The 4HQ trip to Israel

Each day's theme is centered around a different question. The "Freedom" day might involve a visit to the Knesset and Supreme Court; The "To Be (Security)" day might include a trip on the Gazan border; "In Our Land" might be explored through a tour of East and West Jerusalem. A trip to the West Bank/Judea and Samaria could be themed as addressing all four questions together. 4HQ might be used as the debrief framework at the end of each day.

The 4HQ early childhood Yom Haatzmaut celebration

On Yom Haatzmaut and for younger learners, the question marks can be replaced with exclamation points. There might be activities in four corners of a hall: one exploring water and sand (In Our Land), another Israeli dance (Free), another with a mock-military obstacle course (To be), and a fourth corner featuring the tasting of foods from different Israeli communities (people). At its core, this approach is about young children experiencing Israel through its four aspects.

The 4HQ school

A poster of the four questions can be displayed on the classroom walls and referred to throughout the year. The spiraling curriculum could teach the four questions at different stages, through specific reference to elements of Israeli life and history. The school and the community together could speak the language of 4HQ.

The 4HQ sermons

Remembering that the rabbi's sermons form part of the fabric of the students' collateral learning, the rabbi could see, interpret, and opine on Israeli current affairs through the prism of 4HQ. In particular, anything to do with Palestinians could be parsed through these questions of how Jewish security is enhanced by Israel's actions, to what extent these actions can be seen to align with Jewish values, and how much freedom can be enjoyed while denying freedom to others.

Conclusion

In Bejan's fascinating book (2017), she posited that rather than defaulting to either civil silence or civil charity, a third kind of "civility" might be embraced: **"Mere civility" is the form of disagreement coined by Roger Williams that places honesty above tact.** In mere civility, what is important is that nothing is off limits, there are no red lines, and all must be said and argued.

In my conversation with the author while preparing this piece, Bejan emphasized a crucial characteristic of mere civility: While mere civility might be an important tool for discourse in open society, a **voluntary community cannot survive for long with ongoing principled mutual condemnation.** A voluntary community must aspire to some form of shared agreement in order to continue to exist. In this sense, our Jewish communities must work on forging a new set of mutual understandings in their relationship with Israel, in the awareness that they do not currently exist.

As we have seen, the red lines of Israel education should ideally be aligned with the red lines of the community in which it is taught. Yet, we are living through a period in which our understanding of what must not be addressed or said is broken. Between communities and within communities, current red lines of acceptability are no longer applicable. In this situation, educators together with community leaders must develop an educational approach that nevertheless teaches during this liminal period in our history, and develop skills and techniques to prepare us for when we are ready to talk together once more.

The three pedagogical models offered above are by no means exhaustive or mutually exclusive. If we move forward with a clear, honest understanding of the challenge ahead, adaptations, innovations, and solutions will arise for the good of us all.

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