

## Are We Shooting to Make It? A Basketball Lesson for Israel Education

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James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits*, recently included a question from one of his readers named Mac that made me stop in my tracks as we think about education since 10/7.

*My dad and I love basketball. We used to play hoops in the front yard almost every day when I was growing up. He was also my coach for many years. One thing that always stuck with me was him saying "shoot to make it." I think there's a lot of moments in basketball and in life where we are just "throwing a shot up" and hoping it goes in. How I interpreted his mantra was to have intention. If you are going to take a shot, take a good one and take it to make it.*

In the Jewish education world, are we shooting to make it?

Since 10/7, everything has changed and nothing has changed. Nothing has changed insofar as good education remains good education. Good education requires an educator who (whether in the classroom, the university, the trip, or on



YouTube and TikTok) respects the learner, who shares passion and compassion, who is committed to viewpoint diversity, and allows for a constructive approach that demands the students grapple with their questions.

And yet, everything has changed. For educational institutions that were not spending time teaching about Israel, 10/7 was a clarion call to carve out that time "*instead of*" and not just "*in addition to.*" Some educational institutions were forced to look in the mirror and ask how their students (and teachers?) were ill prepared for this moment, and vowed to incorporate Zionism and Israeli history into their educational settings.

Two years from now, will these same institutions remain as committed? What's at stake is Zionism and Jewish identity. For this generation, *this* is the moment. In the last century, the Jewish world has had a few major moments, which inspired a revolution around them. The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the Six-Day War in 1967, the Free Soviet Jewry campaign through the 1980s, and now 10/7.

Will we take our shot or will we pass it up?  
Will we remember the words of Carl Sandburg,  
winner of multiple Pulitzer prizes, who wrote in  
*Remembrance Rock*,

“We know that when a nation goes down and never comes back, when a society or civilization perishes, one condition may always be found. They forgot where they came from. They lost sight of what brought them along. The hard beginnings were forgotten and the struggles farther along.”

But, literacy alone is not enough. Psychiatrist Dr. Rollo May, in 1979 asked,

“Where in this is the adventure of thinking, the joy of stretching the mind? Indeed, the student’s urge to explore is lost under the compulsion to acquire.”

With regard to Israel and Jewish education, what does it mean to explore instead of merely acquiring?

I am grappling with: What will our shot look like? Julia Galef divides reason-making into the soldier mindset or the scout mindset.

The soldier defends and the scout mapmakes. The soldier seeks evidence to fortify their beliefs while the scout seeks out evidence that makes the map more accurate.

Since 10/7 and since this group’s trip together, I have had the fortune to interact with hundreds (thousands?) of young people who are wondering what they can ask about and what is out of bounds.

Regardless of where we all stand, now is the time to act and engage.

We need courageous educators.

We need thoughtful content.

We need young people to be graduating from their educational institutions knowing a lot more, being much more confident and competent. Let's shoot to make it!