



Transcript: Tuesday, May 5, 2015

SUE BELLER: My name is Sue Beller, and I am Hadassah's National Young Judea Chair. Tonight's session is entitled "The 'Z' Word: Why Zionism Makes some People Uncomfortable", and we are thrilled to have Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin, as our special guest, here at Hadassah House. This wonderful series was created by the PRAZE Division of Hadassah as a way to educate and create a respectful dialogue on concepts relating to Zionism. We invite all to join in the discussion as we create a safe space to explore Zionism from various perspectives. We welcome and encourage your participation, in the spirit of respectful dialogue. For those of you who are in our audience here at Hadassah House including Marlene Post and Janice Weinman. We invite you to write your questions legibly on an index card. Then raise your card and it will be collected. And for our many viewers around the country who are participating online we ask, if you haven't already done so, to please register with Livestream. Registering will also enable you to type your questions in the chat box on the side of your screen so that we can record your questions to ask our presenter.

Now, let me tell you a little bit about our special guest. Rabbi Jeff Salkin has a unique reputation among his colleagues. They call him an "activist for Jewish ideas." He is recognized as one of the most thoughtful Jewish writers and teachers of his generation. He describes his own life mission as: "Helping people of all ages find spiritual meaning in Judaism." Rabbi Salkin is a noted author who has written nine critically acclaimed books, published by Jewish Lights Publishing and the Jewish Publication Society. He first came to national attention with his book, "Putting God on the Guest List: How To Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah." I know I have it on my bookshelf. The editor of two Torah commentaries, he is currently working on The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Torah, a "kidfriendly" commentary on the Torah and haftarot, to be published by the Jewish Publication Society. He has also written on such topics as the spirituality of work, masculinity and Judaism, interfaith relations, Israel, and Jewish history. Rabbi Salkin is one of America's most quoted rabbis. His articles have appeared in the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, Readers Digest, and the Forward. His blog, "Martini Judaism; for those who want to be shaken and stirred," won the Wilbur Award for Best Religion Blog of the year, and can be accessed at jeffreysalkin.religionnews.com.

Rabbi Salkin has served congregations, created an adult study institute, produced religious television shows, and has served as the New Jersey director of the AntiDefamation League. He currently serves as the spiritual leader of Temple Beth Am in Bayonne, NJ. It is my honor and privilege to present to you, Rabbi Salkin.

RABBI SALKIN: It's truly a pleasure to be here and by an organization that epitomizes the meaning of Zionism and the power of women to make a difference in the world. My topic this evening is on Y the Z word makes so many people nervous and uncomfortable.

And I invented a new word recently, which is Zionphobia, because in our psychologically oriented culture, many people are accused of baseball phobic,

homophobia, which is an irrational fear and hatred of GLTB people and slam phobia but Zion phobia is an irrational hate of the Jewish state to the extent that the hater wishes that Israel simply did not exist.

I'd like to sketch out for you this evening why Zion phobia exists in the world today. And I'm going to start in some ways the most painful way of examining this. And that would be asking why there is Zion phobia within the Jewish community. The first reason is that there's the belief that Jews should not demonstrate dual loyalty. And that was the purpose of the American council for Judaism, which was a pressure group within reformed Judaism that saw within its mission a vigorous opposition to Jewish nationalism.

Now barely hidden within its agenda was the fear that Americans would accuse Jews of having dual loyalty in much the same way as Catholics had also been accused of having loyalty, not only to America, but also to Rome. Now, how do we respond to this?

To me, one of the great respondents to this accusation comes from one of the great American Jews, Justice Louie Brandeis, who often repeated that Zionism is the pilgrim inspiration and impulse all over again. He told his audience to be Americans we need to be better Jews and to be better Jews we must become Zionists and the second reason is that the Messiah has not come yet. And this is the basis for ultra-orthodox antiZionism. Any restoration of Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel would have to await the coming of the Messiah. Any state that comes before that is a heretical state and Neturei Karta that demonstrates with Palestinians has thrown their support behind Iran is one of the major proponents of this. At its core it is a sanctification of Jewish weakness and passivity. And that leads to a third objection, which is that Jews should not dirty their hands with political power.

The greatest exponent of this idea was the German Jewish theologian Franz that they should float like figures in a Chagall painting. George Steiner believes this as well. He's a professor of comparative literature who is a non-Zionist but not out of hostility to the Jewish state but, rather, because he believes it's absolutely necessary that the Jew be homeless among the nations, in order for the Jew to bring a universal message to the world. And then there is another reason why some Jews are opposed to Zionism. And it's the idea that Judaism is only a religion and not a nation, which is a typical classical reform Jewish idea.

And this idea of religion versus people is a major stumbling block when Jews speak to Christians about Israel and Zionism, because when Christians view Judaism merely as a religious creed, they find it difficult to understand why there should be a Jewish state. And we'll talk more about that a little bit later. And there are contemporary Jews who believe this as well. The most radical and the most heretical of them is Schlomo Sand who writes about the invention of the Jewish people. That Jewish people hood is a late invention.

But if you were to closely examine his words you would understand that his argument is utterly tendentious because his purpose to deny the people hood is to denigrate the entire Jewish connection to the land of Israel, which, by the way, was a topic of an earlier book. Now, you sometimes hear this argument from Palestinian leaders as well. Who would try to deny any Jewish connection to the land of Israel? And here we find an echo of Jews who say that there's no such thing as the Palestinian people. And that Palestinian nationalism is itself a relatively recent construction and to this I would say no people has the right to define another people.

This is a rather late and bizarre date in human history for anyone to have a conception that my peoplehood is better and older than yours. Now those are mostly Jewish arguments and there are others as well, and perhaps we'll get into them during the discussion. But now I must go to the arguments that gentiles but not only gentiles are likely to make. The first is they just don't like Jews or Judaism. There's a cliché, which I don't like, "haters gonna hate." I don't like that cliché, because it seems to understand that hatred is a national phenomenon, a natural phenomenon, it's something you can't do anything about, why bother. But I will say that it is rare to find someone who dislikes Jews or Judaism who has any true emotional appetite for the Jewish state.

And I would say by the way, something that I did not think I would say as recently as six months ago, which is that while theoretically it is possible to have quibbles with Zionism and to have trouble with Jewish statehood and not be an anti-Semite, this theoretical construct has gone out the window. There is no longer a firewall between a discomfort with Israel as a nation and a discomfort with Jews as a people. And I only ask that you look at what's going on in Europe and what's going on in so many campuses where anti Israel and anti Zionist sentiment has melted down into what anyone would call raw anti-Semitism.

The second reason is that they love America and Israel is not America. And this is the gentile first cousin to the dual loyalty charge. Now, we heard this from the right wing in the form of Pat Buchanan who referred to Israel's amen corner, meaning the American Jewish community. But we also heard it from the past state secretary Chuck Hagel that emerged from his candidacy when he talked about the Israel lobby. Now, in fact this particular argument no longer has currency. Because most critics of Israel now come from the left. And critics of Israel that come from the left have no particular investment emotionally or politically in saying that America is not Israel and Israel is not America. As a matter of fact, I think it is absolutely impossible to say and perhaps it is necessary to say that internationally you will not find anyone who dislikes America who actually likes Israel.

And that now goes to the next point, which is in fact that they dislike America and Israel is aligned with America and you need look no further than various Iranian leaders who have referred to the United States as the big Satan and Israel as the little Satan. And yet another argument, they don't believe in nation states. This is what I call the John Lennon imagine argument. Imagine there's no countries. It's easy if you try. The question is why would we want to try?

I'm thinking about what the Israeli intellectual Amas Rose wrote. I would be more than happy to live in a world composed of dozen organizations each developed in accordance with own rhythm all cross pollinating with each other without anyone emerging as a state. But the Jewish state has staged a long one man running show. No one joined us. No one copied the model that the Jews were forced to sustain for 2,000 years. In other words, if you want to get rid of all states, that might be an interesting idea. I happen to think it's a fearful idea because the nation state is the way that values and culture get played out in real time. But if you want to get rid of all nation states, then I would only ask that you not ask Israel to be first in line. More than that, let me put it even more boldly.

You cannot say that you're against nation states and believe that the only nation state that should exist should be the nation state of Palestine. Then there are those who believe in nation states but not those that are religious. The truth is that most nation states privilege or favor one particular religion. Many European flags contain some version of the cross. They're close to 60 Muslim nations. And while it is true that

theoretically America privileges no one particular religious culture, try making that argument on Christmas or Easter, when so many things are closed.

Now, we might say, echoing Amas Rose if you want to get rid of all states that favor a particular religion I would be down with that, but let's be fair. Let's at least go in alphabetical order. Let's start with Albania, and then after Ireland is finished deCatholicizing itself and since Israel would be next alphabetically at that point we'll be happy to jump into the conversation as well. And then there are those that think that Jews should not have power. And there are Jews who believe this as well. In Europe, this argument holds a certain currency, largely because after World War II the notion that any state might have more power than anyone else seems anathema. In particular when Jews were weak particularly after the Holocaust Europe had a miniature love affair with them.

When Israel was young the left loved them as well, a plucky demonstration of what the socialist dream might actually accomplish. But when Jews not only gained sovereignty but actually demonstrated power, the love affair ended. That is why you find such an amusing yet troubling paradox in Europe today. Klezmer music is in fashion, but Zionism is not. Which is to say the music of powerlessness and of Jewish death is somehow attractive but a state of living and powerful Jews is not. And finally the creation of Israel was bloody and violent.

Guilty as charged.

But have you noticed that other countries also came into existence in bloody and violent ways and in fact I challenge anyone who was observing this webinar to find me one country, ancient or modern, that was not born in blood. History is not a Peter Paul and Mary concert. It's bloody and it's difficult. Now, am I saying that Israel is above criticism? Hardly. For many Jews, criticizing Israel's policies is well in some cases the only aerobic exercise they get. And it's a labor of love. It is a powerful way to say that Israel should aspire to be even more than it is. It is a way of saying that Israel should do everything possible to model Jewish ideas and values. That's not only legitimate, it is necessary. But we're not talking here about legitimate critique. We're talking about something deeper.

I have a friend and colleague Jacob Herber, conservative rabbi in Milwaukee. He asks the following question: The obsessive compulsive criticism of Israel is unlike any other critique made against any other country. Like Israel, like America Israel is an imperfect western liberal democracy, like America Israel struggles with economic disparities, like America, Israel struggles with racial and ethnic divisions, yet Israel is criticized more than any other country in the world. Why is that?

So we have to ask that question.

If the only country that you criticize is Israel, if you detect yourself experiencing a savage glee in criticizing Israel, if you condemn Israel's policies in the West Bank, and find that the proverbial cat's got your tongue when it comes to the Palestinian side in Syria, if you believe that the only country that should be dismantled because of its many flaws is Israel, then you might be Zionophobic. And consider this as Ruth Wisse just recently said: How is it possible that the only national group that has a Diaspora that gets smug selfsatisfaction out of criticizing its own is the Jews? She writes Ukrainian Americans have not mobilized to urge the capitulation of Ukraine to Russia. American Greeks do not rally to force Greece into bankruptcy. Hispanics do not join the call to prevent all immigration from Mexico. Tibetans and Taiwanese in America try to expand to not

contract options for their beleaguered people. If Cuban refugees want to bring down communism or Putin's concentration of power it's because Cuba and Russia aren't liberal democracies. No other country has to argue the merit of its very existence. This is an argument that no country should ever have to enter. No other country lives with imagined asterisk after its name. Remember how China destroyed Tibet and sent the Dalai Lama and his followers into exile. No one ever says let's dismantle China.

If you remember the dark days of Apartheid you'll remember that no one ever said obliterate South Africa. If you remember the troubles of Belfast, the Sinn Fein and IRA never said get rid of Great Britain. Uganda adopts the most punitive anti-homosexual legislation in the world. No one is saying that Uganda should not exist. Now I'm not saying, by the way, that Jews should get any inner satisfaction at being better than third world dictatorships. That's a very low bar.

I am saying that we should ask ourselves why there is such irrational hatred of Israel. Now, as a way of closing, it's fair for me to share with you my own vision of Zionism. Because for me Zionism is more than land and it's more than statehood. It is actually a transformation of the Jewish attitude towards being Jewish. It is a sense that we are no longer slaves to what has been our destiny. It means that we can recreate ourselves as a unique and holy people. But it's deeper than that. I'm going to ask those who are paying attention to think back to your high school days. I'm going to ask you to think back to science class. Biology. Chemistry. Physics.

On Monday and Tuesday you sat in your desks in the classroom and you listened to the teacher. And on Wednesday and Thursday you were in lab. The Diaspora was the Monday and Tuesday of Jewish history. That's when we sat in our classrooms. That's when we created our texts and our ideas. Israel Zionism is the lab of Jewish history. It's the way we ask ourselves are these texts real. Can these ideals really live? Are these values things that are endowed with flesh and blood? And if we are frustrated at times, it is because at almost no time in our recent history were we given the tools and the texts to figure out how to run a land.

But it is that creative tension that focuses our attention and should make all of us Jews proud of what I call the Z word, because in fact if you take the word Zion, it is related to the word Mitzion which means excellence. We are a good, decent people. We are not excellent yet. But my faith in God propels me and compels me to a sense that we can make this happen. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

SUE BELLER: Excellent. So we have a few questions for you, Rabbi Salkin. The first is very simple and maybe we should have started out with this one. How do you define Zionism?

RABBI SALKIN: For me, Zionism is the belief in Jewish sovereignty and responsibility within the land of Israel and the creation of a sovereign state and the apparatus. And that's the definition of Zionism I would give as an elevator speech. My own particular Zionism is fed by the idea of Israel is a laboratory but also something else as well. It is the idea of Israel as resurrection. And for me the most powerful witness of that is the resurrection of a language.

When I go to Jerusalem and I'm hearing them chanting the ancient prayers and with the other ear I'm hearing the children praying and cursing each other in Modern Hebrew. I have a stereophonic experience of the redemptive nature of Jewish history.

And I think this should fire the imagination. As, by the way, it did before almost the first 40 years of Israel's history. And I continue to believe that we can reboot that emotional power.

SUE BELLER: Speaking of children, Rabbi, you did a wonderful job mapping out the reasons for Zion phobia. This is a special concern among our Jewish youth, especially college age and 20somethings. My role is young Judea chair, I'm always thinking about how to engage the youth. Can you share some of your thoughts and strategies for how to address this challenge as it relates to Israel?

RABBI SALKIN: It's a subject that's near and dear to my heart. For a number of years I've been creating workshops for high school juniors and seniors, helping them prepare for the Israel-related challenges that they will all be facing on the college campus. I recently said several times to groups of Jewish parents that if we send our children out into the world without an understanding of what is going on in the Jewish world, it is as if we are sending them out into the world without vaccinations. What I do when I try to prepare young people for that journey is not to give them a catechism.

My work with the Shalom Hartman Institute, where I study during the summer has taught me that we need to provide people with the skills to have a conversation, not a catechism. I try to teach our young people some basic history of how in particular the Palestinian situation got to where it is but I think it's important to teach them the emotional skills to be able to stand up for themselves and to be able to proclaim the truth of what Israel is all about.

Sadly, for many reasons, which we may not get into this evening, but which I've been thinking about, which have been keeping me awake at night, there is something unique and pernicious that exists in academic life today that is dragging many people into the abyss of antisraelism and antiZionism, and it deserves to be unpacked. If we have time I'll try to maybe sketch that out. It's not pretty.

SUE BELLER: I hope we do get to it. I'm interested. This question says many of my friends are leftist Jews but very right wing when it comes to Israel. It is unnerving dilemma we're committed to social justice AKF left tis policies in the west. How do you perceive the duality?

RABBI SALKIN: It's a great question. And in fact it really defines where I am politically and humanly. I tend to identify myself as being a very boring centrist. Boring in so far as if you try to pick a fight with me I'm probably not going to be able to get engaged in it, because I see the truth in many different ways. On Israel I'm a little bit right of center. On American social justice issues, I tend to be a little bit left of center. And what I say is that if you're looking for a country outside of the United States that embody the vision of what social justice could look like, with numerous flaws, setbacks, missteps and faux pas, we don't know enough to get into them, then you might want to look towards Israel.

I also believe, by the way, that one reason why I'm a little bit right of center perhaps on American foreign policy is that we are up against people who would dismantle liberal democracy before lunch if they could. And what astounds me is the intellectual slumming that happens, the romanticization of third world revolution which goes back to Che Guevara and beyond, I think, that so many leftists are willing to believe the worst about Israel and are willing to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the worst that is happening within cultures that have been invaded by radical Islam. From Boko Haram to ISIS and to Hamas. And last week I protested Pamela Geller's antiMuslim ads and tragically I

think we've seen how at least some of the chickens have come home to roost in that very complex distressing way.

I do not preach Islam phobia which, by the way, I think is a legitimate phobia, there are some that paint Islam with a vulgar brush, but I would say I am flabbergasted at the inability of people to actually confront the political and world dementia that goes on in places of the world and yet micromanage everything that happens in Israel. So I think Israel is with all of its flaws a classic embodiment of liberal values. In fact, what makes the news is when those values get violated.

SUE BELLER: So this next question says what do you say to your critics?

RABBI SALKIN: My own critics?

SUE BELLER: Yes.

RABBI SALKIN: Well, first of all, one of the things I do say is simply this. I'm a Jewish pluralist, which is to say I don't think anyone has a real lock on the truth here. I live by the Jewish teaching that's found in the Mishna Beitza if you find a Talid and one person says it's all mine and the other person says it's all mine, you split it. I think that's a good metaphor for truth. I listen to those people who criticize what I have to say and the truth is I learn from them and I sometimes recalibrate what I think. I'm reminded of a great story of the late lamented Arthur Hertzberg great leader, the head of the Zionist Idea. He was a student studying at the Jewish theological seminary, one of his teachers was the late indefatigable Kaplan. And after he gave his sermon Kaplan ripped him apart. He said but two weeks ago you said the same thing. Yes but I've changed since then Arthur. So I think when we talk about these dynamics, it's a constant conversation that goes back and forth.

I'm not thrown off by people who criticize what I have to say. In fact I've changed my positions on many things over the years because sometimes people have made critical comments that I have to think about. I think that's called maturity. I think it's also called Judaism.

SUE BELLER: True. Very good. I'm going to take you back to your book, a dream of Zion American Jews reflect on why Israel matters to them. I'm sure you did a lot of research and interviewed many people, could you share maybe one of the most surprising or unexpected stories you heard in doing that research from the people you spoke to.

RABBI SALKIN: A dream of Zion was published by Jewish Lights Publishing and it was a collection of essays by American Jews about why Israel matters to them. Can I tell you the origin of this book?

SUE BELLER: Sure.

RABBI SALKIN: I have a dream as a great American preacher once said, I became concerned over the fact that there are many Jewish celebrities who have yet to go public on Israel. And who are rather silent. Some of them fearful. So I came up with the idea that it will be great to get important Jews and unimportant Jews to talk about why Israel matters. So I asked academics, performers, rabbis, professors, teachers to write about their feelings about Israel.

And this goes to the previous point.

I was touched and I hope other people will be touched as well that in a dream of Zion, there can be found points of view from people who are all over the political map. So I want to say that when it comes to loving Israel and loving Zionism, we're not living in a culture where onesizefitsall. I think, as I've already said, it's possible, maybe even necessary, to have a mature critique of some Israeli policies in order to love Israel. My personal predilection is that those conversations tend to be inhouse and as my grandmother would have said, if she spoke Yiddish, she didn't, we begged her.

If those conversations were by Oonz are in other words if those were conversations that Jews had not just because I want to circle the wagons but I believe with the many threats against Israel it's important for us to have if not an absolute unified front then at least something approaching a stiff upper lip. So the way that people love Israel is very diverse. And I think that's appropriate. And I also think it's historically accurate. And I think it's what Jews have always done.

SUE BELLER: Thank you. Okay. This question says do you consider Jews who are embarrassed of Israel because it's failing with the social justice of Bedouins and Palestinians selfhating Jews.

RABBI SALKIN: I don't like the term selfhating Jew. There are Jews who are selfhating Jews. But I don't like delving into people's psychology from afar. I think its flip. I think it's somewhat vulgar. And it also shuts down conversation. There have been selfhating Jews throughout all of Jewish history. Some of whom were radically antilsrael and antiZionist as well. I'm not going to darken the webinar by mentioning some people who are so over the top in their criticism of Israel that one could be excused for thinking that they were selfhating Jews. So I don't use that at all. I just don't use that at all.

Quite the opposite.

I find that there are people who are critical of Israeli policies based on their Judaism because they love certain ideas that Judaism made popular. Outrageous ideas like people aren't made in God's image. Stuff like that. There should be no slavery. People actually believe that those ideas merit more than simply getting matzoh crumbs in your Hagaddah or spilling wine at your Seder. I'm not going to call them selfhaters I think some people trot it out promiscuously and some make it out of their critique. I wish they wouldn't, because I think it's tasteless.

But I don't like calling people selfhating Jews. I don't live within their skin. And I also don't like using the term anti-Semite a lot. I learned this from my former boss, the great American Jewish statesman Abe Foxman of the ADL who will be retiring soon. One of the things I learned and a precious lesson I got from my training at the ADL is don't call someone an anti-Semite. You don't know what's in their heart. You can say that what they're doing is an anti-Semitic act. The language they're using is anti-Semitic language. The thoughts they are projecting are anti-Semitic. But don't call someone anti-Semite. It slams the door. I don't like labeling people.

SUE BELLER: Rabbi Nachman got depressed when he thought about anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. How do you stay optimistic?

RABBI SALKIN: Well, it didn't take much to get Rabbi Nachman or Rabbi Bratzlav depressed. I think Nachman and Bratzlav could get depressed on Sukkot, which is not exactly a poster child for emotional wholeness. And I love the Bratzlaver. I don't get depressed. I get sad. If I'm going to get depressed about anything, which I choose not

to, it's not about anti-Semitism. What saddens me profoundly is the willful lack of ability that many American Jews have in actually engaging Judaism as mature people, and bringing to Judaism the level of sophistication that they would bring to anything else in their life. That is the greatest threat to American Judaism that we have today. Our inability to speak to our young people, and to say this is why this is important, and it's not just out of ethnic pride. Anti-Semitism doesn't depress me. On the other hand, it doesn't make me terribly happy either.

SUE BELLER: There are a few questions of this vein. So maybe it's kind of continuing where you just were. What are the best ways to combat Zionphobia.

RABBI SALKIN: The best ways to combat Zionphobia is for Jews to recognize it, to speak out, to speak up, to step up, to write letters to newspapers, to be engaged in the political process. But as insane and as simple as this might be, I'm going to say this: I think a Taglit Birthright has done a fantastic job in bringing -- now it must be hundreds of thousands of Jewish youth to Israel. And we're already beginning to see how that makes a difference. In fact, I wager that within ten or 15 years the overwhelming majority of American Jews will have visited Israel at least once. And we don't know what that's going to do yet. So my simplest solution to Zionphobia is to visit Israel. I wish that Jews would make Israel a priority in their vacation plans. I know there are people who would rather go to morally un-conflicted places like Guadeloupe, or the Dominican Republic, or Club Med, or whatever. But I can honestly say to you that the number of American Jews who have actually visited Israel only once is embarrassingly low. I am proud of the fact that my kids have visited Israel, and that they are literate in Israel. It is my goal to know the map of Jerusalem as well as I theoretically know the map of New York City. I think that's an emotional and spiritual goal that we can go for, that we can attain.

SUE BELLER: I love it. We talked a little bit, and we said maybe if there was time, so I'm going to get back to academic life. This question says can you share what is happening in the academic life that nurtures anti-Zionist beliefs?

RABBI SALKIN: I'm now looking at this as an enlightened outsider. So right now there are any number of people who are getting ready to line up their critiques of my answer. This is what I think is common in so much of academia today that fuels anti-Zionism. Number one, the university has fallen prey totally to the liberal critique of society. And that means the deconstruction of reality. It means cultural relativism. It means moral relativism. It means privileging the third world over first world countries. It means victim thinking. And if we're not seeing this in the classroom, then we're certainly seeing it manifest in extra-curriculars and in campus life in general. And this would not be the first time in history that happened. I remind you of Vein Reich's critical book Hitler's professors that showed that the Third Reich was nurtured by academic institutions. So I look at what is going on. I hear from college students what is going on. It's an entire intellectual canopy that has been erected that makes for this particular virus, and makes for its virulence. The best book I read on this recently, I'm happy to give a shout out, is Nora Gold wrote a wonderful novel called Fields of Exile about being in a Canadian university, and the challenges that beset a young Jewish woman who is getting a social work degree and how she falls victim -- literally falls victim to the pernicious anti-Zionism on campus. I experienced it myself when I was in college. And I see how critique of American policy, critique of imperialism and anti-Israelism walk hand in hand. It's something that Jews on campus need to be courageous about, trying to untangle those things from each other.

SUE BELLER: So many of the questions are all dealing with our youth. Maybe I'll ask you to go one step further because it seems like people are searching for the recipe.

What do you do with -- how do you get the youth to know the word Zion let alone Zionism on campuses or in their teens. If you have any thoughts.

RABBI SALKIN: We can't expect that young people are going to come to the college campuses newborns. They will have had 17 years of existence before they even pack the duffel bag. So I throw this back onto parents and onto Rabbis, Cantors, and Jewish educators, which is to say you must speak of this in your house, and you have to make this a priority within your own home. I am always troubled by how many families never give anything to Jewish tzadakat. I will tell you that in the years since I first wrote putting God on the Guest List that the spiritual of bar and bat mitzvah I've seen a troubling trend. I started my career, and kids did mitzvah projects or people made donations in honor of children becoming bar or bat mitzvah, invariably those were to Jewish causes. Planting trees in Israel for example being the most important one. Now what's happened is the Jewish causes have been back burned and many kids and families are now involved in secular causes, what I call diseases of the weak, saving the rain forest or whatever. I said to a group of Jews recently, if our kids don't give to the local symphony or the local humane shelter, someone else will. If we don't teach our kids to give Jewishly in a decade, that chain will be broken, and we will not get it back. It will take a lot of work to resouter those links.

SUE BELLER: Thank you. If Herzl were alive today what would he say about Israel and Zionism today in 2015?

RABBI SALKIN: It's a beautiful question actually. What would Herzl say about Zionism and Israel? I think in large measure recent events in the world have actually borne out Herzl's vision. Remember, Herzl came up with the idea for political Zionism when he was a newspaper reporter from a Viennese newspaper covering the Dreyfus trial in Paris, hearing the French mobs in the streets screaming death to the Jews. And now fast forward, that's what's happening again. And so we're experiencing -- I saw this last summer when I was in Israel. I didn't have to see it. I heard it. In some places I heard almost as much French on the street as I heard Hebrew. And so when Prime Minister Netanyahu says, and we can debate the taste of him saying so, that European Jews are endangered, can and should, could, would, might think about moving to Israel, making Aliya, let's not be shocked. That's why political Zionism was founded in the first place. Herzl would smile. Herzl would say despite everything else that's going on, my dream of a refuge for the Jews is still relevant today.

SUE BELLER: How can we go further than Herzl? I don't know if you had any final comments that you wanted to share with us before we close.

RABBI SALKIN: One of my favorite Israel stories is something that happened years ago. It was a Friday night, Erev Shabbat in Jerusalem and I was walking to Shabbat dinner. I was in a neighborhood that had a hill that overlooked much of the city, and God had painted all of Jerusalem purple and gold with the sun coming down. And this old woman stood next to me, and we looked at the sunset together. She turned to me, and she said in Hebrew, (Hebrew), the vast majority of people will never see this. And I think that that's a text that can be read two different ways. Number one, the majority of people don't look at sunsets and understand their grandeur. But number two, the majority of people will never see a Jerusalem sunset. And I want to thank Hadassah. For me Hadassah is not only one of the premier Zionist organizations in the world, but it is in some ways a metaphor for Zionism itself. When I think of the tsuris, if I can use the Yiddish word that you experience years ago financially how you picked yourselves up, brushed yourselves off, and just moved forward and continued doing what you do, including this webinar series. This is really miraculous. I think everyone deserves to be

inspired by this work, and by what Hadassah is able to do. Hadassah is more than that hospital, which by the way we could say echoing the Pesach text, Dayenu. That would be enough. But that you've chosen to bring this educational opportunity to so many people is truly a blessing and I hope you will go from strength to strength. I very much value being part of this experience.

SUE BELLER: Thank you.

RABBI SALKIN: You're welcome.

SUE BELLER: Rabbi Salkin, thank you so much. You were fantastic. Very thought provoking. It was really just an honor to have you as part of our Defining Zionism series. I would like to remind everyone that this session as well as all of our past sessions is recorded. They're available at any time to be watched alone, with a group, or as a centerpiece of a unit or community program. Also, we ask that you please share your feedback with us by completing the online survey which will be E-mailed to you. Your input truly helps us create programming that is of interest to you and your community. You can continue this conversation on our website at www.Hadassah.org/definingZionism, and on Twitter using the hashtag DefiningZionism. Additionally, if you haven't already done so, please register for the entire Defining Zionism series to receive updates of all of these fabulous programs.

So before we finish, I would like to give you a little teaser for the next session of Defining Zionism. Our topic title is do Zionism and democracy go hand in hand? And we will be joined by our special guest, Gil Hoffman, chief political correspondent and analyst for the Jerusalem post. This session will take place on Monday, June 8th. Please note that the time for this session is during the day from 12:30 to 1:30 pm. We really do hope that you will join us for that. I would like to thank everyone again, everybody here in our audience, and participating online. And especially to Rabbi Salkin. Thank you so much. Shalom. (Applause).