



HADASSAH

Defining Zionism IN THE 21ST CENTURY

AN ONLINE SPEAKER SERIES

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>> Ellen Hershkin: Shalom. Erev Tov. Good Evening. Welcome to Hadassah's Defining Zionism in the 21st Century: An Online Speaker Series. Hadassah is the Women's Zionist Organization of America, and the proud convener of this monthly series. I'm Ellen Hershkin, the Coordinator of Hadassah's PRAZE Division, PRAZE which stands for Programming, Advocacy, Zionism and Education.

These are the intangibles that help us develop a strong connection to each other, our beloved Israel and the Jewish People. It is by crafting and delivering a wide variety of programs that we instill in our members, potential members, Associates, donors and communities a bond - - a link - - to Zionism - - and for each of them to determine how it resonates with them as an individual!

We invite all of you - those here with us in the audience at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue – Including our Chief Executive Officer, Janice Weinman and Naomi Brunnlehrman, Director of the PRAZE Division - - and those of you participating from your local communities, to join us in creating a safe space as we explore Zionism from various perspectives. We certainly may not all agree on any one definition of Zionism - - but we must agree to respect each other's right to their opinion. We offer you the opportunity to listen to our guest speaker and to ask questions in the following manner.

For those of you with us in the Synagogue, PLEASE turn off your cell phones. We ask that you write your questions on the index cards that were provided at the registration desk. Please write legibly and in large print - - raise your card and it will be collected. For most of you, our viewers. At home online, if you haven't already done so, please register with Livestream to 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. Please frame your questions in the spirit of respecting each other's differences.

So who is our presenter: We are honored to have with us this evening, Gil Troy, who is a Professor of History at McGill University and a Shalom Hartman Engaging Israel Research Fellow in Jerusalem. Gil received his bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. degrees from Harvard University, where he taught history and literature for two years. He is the author of eight books, including Moynihan's Moment: America's Fight against Zionism as Racism and the bestselling, Why I Am a Zionist: Israel, Jewish Identity and the Challenges of Today.

Gil writes regularly for the Jerusalem Post, Open Zion, the Jewish Week, and the Canadian Jewish News. He has been an occasional contributor to the "Campaign Stops" section of the New York Times and has been widely published and quoted in the American and Canadian media. Gil has been extensively involved in the Jewish community, and the worldwide fight against the delegitimization of Israel. As an expert in informal Jewish education, he is chairman of the Birthright Israel International Education Committee. Gil is the former mazkir - - translated as Secretary - - but functions as

>> We call the president, makes us feel good.

>> the president - - of Queens

>> Queens. Local respect here and was a long-time merakez programmer and educational director at Camp Tel Yehuda. He also attended Machon - - a leadership summer program and Young Judea's exemplary gap year program - - Year Course, both held in Israel. I am extraordinarily proud to I feel like his mother, to introduce Professor Gil Troy - - who all of us in Hadassah - - and especially those of us who have a direct connection to Young Judea, consider one of our own. Gil.

[APPLAUSE]

>> Gil Troy: Thank you Ellen. Thank you for coming out tonight. And hello America and North America. Canadian. For a kid from Queens to play Manhattan is very exciting. Because we were never allowed in such fancy synagogues when I was growing up. The older I get, the feel the dumber I get because the world just seems so hard to imagine, so hard to explain.

Right now, in Israel, there's an election campaign going on. And there's a big debate about what Zionism is. And we have an even block that's calling itself the Zionist camp. I've been looking at this saying wow, this movement is alive and not only is this movement alive but this movement is democratic making it part of a very small number of movements in the world, national movements in the world, in the globe, there's an article we have to speak in Canadian but I think you'll understand has Zionism passed its expiry date, expiration date.

How do you watch what's going on in sis real, this intense, dynamic, sometimes polarized sometimes partisan, but doesn't that happen in Washington too, debate instead of saying it's still alive look how democracy is infused with the spirit, they're like two strands of DNA you can't separate them, you walk away saying, no, it's all over. The only way you can come to that conclusion is if you're swimming in a sea of delegitimization.

The only way you can come to that conclusion, singling out Israel in the way it's being singled out and singling out Zionism the way it's been singled out is by absorbing all this negativity where there's one country in the world and one national movement in this world that is systematically singled out and has its very national identity, its very national assumptions, it's very right to exist questioned again and again and that's Israel and that's Zionism. And I don't understand it. How could it be that one of the few democracies in the world is so unpopular? Has become such a whipping boy? Now, clearly there's that piece called Anti-Semitism, and that smell of that ugly, ugly disease that's still there.

And so ironic, of course, the Christian world after the holocaust went through a major tecune, maybe reptition seeking ab solution and as the main Christian world was going anti-Semitism, the two most anti-Christian forces in the world Islam, fundamental Islamist, they came and attacked that central Christian doctrine. Again, how do you explain this?

I start with this, and I start with the negative I'm sorry for that. Because it explains the central question that's going on even in Hadassah. How do we call ourselves Zionists, why don't we just call ourselves supporters of Israel. We run away from the term Zionism, from the Z word, because it's gotten a negative stench. We are all, every single one of us, from left to right in this room, religious, nonreligious, Israel, non-Israel we're all traumatized by living in the age of delegitimization, what I want us all to do in this room and at home, cleansing breath.

[Breathing]

Let all the negativity leave I don't want to spend tonight talking about the negativity. I have to acknowledge it and point it out. We have to be furious at it, we have to be aware to the degree which we all internalize it. And so we're so addicted to the negative. And instead let's celebrate the positive. Let's celebrate the joys of this democratic Jewish state. Let's celebrate the fact that there is a free election going on. And we start with the assumption that the country isn't perfect, because I hate to break it to us, no country is perfect

[Whispering]

No country is going to be perfect but what we have in Israel and the United States we have this perfect mechanism with all its headaches called democracy, which is a built-in self-corrective mechanism, free election, free press, free speech, free academics, annoying newspapers, are all part of that process, that cleansing process, and that allows us to take whatever problems we have and to solve them peacefully on the whole.

But let's talk about the real issue, which is Zionism. And it was interesting, in your introduction, Ellen, you talked about the individual. I think one of the things we lose when we talk about Zionism, we get so lost in the big mass guilt trip, what are you doing for Israel that we forget the still small voice which is only, the real place where Zionism is going to live, and I like to say this because I'm an American historian and I love John F. Kennedy. So just as John Kennedy said: Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country, all too often we just ask that Kennedy question. And I want to flip it around. I want to ask: What can your country do for you? How do we all benefit by living in an extraordinarily miraculous time the era of the Jewish commonwealth the ever free Jewish democratic state. We start with the first fundamental Zionist building block. We are a people. And that's actually a radical statement.

Because in the United States of America, we've been so beautifully welcomed and so beautifully embraced by the Christian world, everybody talks about the Judaic work and compares it and we see the churches and synagogues and we say it's all the same, we miss -- and this is no disrespect to Christianity, we miss the fact that we're somewhat different.

We miss the fact that we have this peoplehood thing going on. We miss the fact that we have the phenomenon that is called bageling, you know what that is, traveling, trying to mind your own business and somebody -- both my business walk around with it, and it happens, they start doing the Jewish comment, kosher one, you know that, the sense of ethnicity and culture and civilization that goes way beyond being part of the faith group.

And especially in this age.

In this day and age when so many Jews are no longer religious. No longer build their identity based on God, the Zionist notion that we start with peoplehood, Makes sense. So again when I look inside the Jewish world I'm also confused. Why is it that we don't hold onto Zionism and say Zionism is the peoplehood platform. Zionism is the way in for us to feel Unified. Zionism is the way for us to build a big coalition from left to right from Ultra Orthodox to what's now the most popular group when they do birthright surveys, unaffiliated.

Right?

But we're all even when you say you're unaffiliated, you're actually showing that you're somehow engaged and you're part of it. Even when you're embarrassed and ashamed by what the Jewish community does and the state of Israel does, you're connected. I'm not ashamed about what Syria does, because I've read them out of my space. My safe space. But I feel connected. I feel caring. So I first throw out to you, the first Zionist assumption that we are a people. And that peoplehood power is something that's kept us together for so many years, that peoplehood power is something that I think can answer our individual challenge. Which I'll get to in a moment.

From the peoplehood place, we then go to sovereignty. We then go to the notion of: Okay, I get it, makes sense to me. I've got that tribal thing, I like being bageled but why go to the next step? Why do I need a Jewish state, especially we're living in the United States of America. We're in New York. We're proud. We're free, we're democratic here. What do you need that extra place? What do you need that extra dimension. First of all, as a historian, I say it is so it is. Right? But it's more than that.

If we actually go back to Jewish history and we see the cost of statelessness, the cost of homelessness, that's in the negative. But more positively, if we look over the last seven decades, even in the United States of America and see how much we have gained as a community and as individuals by having a Jewish state, our political skills, our political pride, our political power, in this country has been enhanced by what we've learned and what we've gained and what we've been able to maneuver from having this relationship with the state of Israel.

Culturally you can't go to a Jewish wedding, a bar mitzvah. It doesn't serve just as the [indiscernible] as our enny am Is but our friends. We have the furrowed brow and the problem in Israel. But there's problems in Israel but also in the United States. Why is it always about the negative? Why do we always deal with the problems? So we should tap into the sovereignty thing as a way of saying, wow, we have an opportunity to express ourselves not just as a people but as most names want to, 192 forms of nationalism in the United Nations and for someone who lived in Quebec forms of nationals that aren't fully expressed through a nation but when you have the opportunity to fully express your nationhood through power, through law, through sovereignty, what a bonus, what a plus.

And it's a reality check on us. It was easy when we were stateless. It was easy when we were homeless. It was easy when we were powerless to wag our fingers at everybody else. But now we have the challenge of statehood. We have the blessing of statehood,

challenge of statehood we have to take our ideals and our values and we have to live them, collectively. And yes sometimes we'll fight it out but that's also part of the fun. And so from that we go from peoplehood to sovereignty. We then get to a notion of a culture of responsibility.

We know the typical pre-Zionist image of the yid, the Jew, passive hunch back Jew it was an Anti-Semitic stereotype and lived by the Jew, Goncha the silent, now we have an opportunity to turn that turn around and take responsibility and stand tall wherever we live in the world.

And to exercise the muscle of people hood and to exercise the muscle of sovereignty and to exercise the muscle of individual responsibility. And from that chain we get to what's perhaps the most important piece, and it's often the most missing in the conversation.

Zionism originally started with the movement of Jewish nationals. Because we're a people it's a people we have collective rights. And not just a moment of Jewish nationalism it was a movement of Jewish liberation to free us, it was a critique of history to free us what we had been and bring us to a new place. And pre-1948 Zionism was about establishing the state of Israel exercising Jewish rights. Coming to that ultimate culmination of Jewish peoplehood.

People in Toronto are now saying you did that you're past your expiry date. But no, now the hard work has begun because it's one thing to establish a state. Zionism is about perfecting that state. Zionism is about taking what is, dreaming about what can be, and trying to forge that gap.

And that's the greatest anomaly. Both internally within the Jewish conversation and externally. Because if you truly understand what Zionism is, there should be people who say I really hate the state of Israel, I'm really felled up with the state of Israel, I'm really giving up on the state of Israel because the state of Israel is a political entity that sometimes does things that people myself dislike.

But Zionism is the movement of Jewish possibility. Zionism is the movement of human potentiality and democratic mechanism for change. So when you say I hate Zionism, when you repudiate Zionism, first you're repudiating the notion of Jewish peoplehood and repudiating our right to exist and have national rights exist in a state. But third and most foolishly, especially when I talk to the supposed idealists of the far left, you're short-circuiting, you're cutting off, you're giving up the great corrective mechanism. The great dream machine. The great Zionist was Theodore Hertsle and his famous line, there is no dream.

So Zionism is about dreaming. And then Zionism becomes what you're talking about which is this big broad spectrum. In the old days, when I was at Camp Tel Yehuda and they're trying to explain to 14, 15-year-olds the Zionism of the late 19th early 20th century, what do you do? Well, somebody goes and puts on a black beard says I'm Theodore Hertsle and there is no dream and political Zionism.

We would have a work camp go find a pitch fork say HG Gordon this is socialist Zionism, labor Zionism. And you'd go and find somebody with a white beard and they say religious Zionism Ralph Cook. And then my cousin Jill had given me the greatest gift.

She gotten tired of her 1994 gas guzzling Camaro. She gave me this sleek white vehicle it had hubcaps we'd take the hub cap out and we'd say the Jewish people are a wheel. What does that mean? That was a hadaam that was the great cultural Zionist we were the people the center and the spokes coming back and forth. We had this little game, cultural Zionism and political Zionism and social labor Zionism. We need that today.

Because what was going on in the 19th century and early 20th century, people cared deeply about Israel about creating the state of Israel. They cared deeply about Judaism and they had visions. They linked and fused their personal vision with their Zionist vision. And the more we do that, the more we have skin in the game. So I want a big, broad conversation. I want an ethical Zionism and a liberal Zionism and an environmental Zionism and a Cyber Zionism.

I want us to take the things that we care about and a feminist Zionism. I want us to take the things that we care about and fuse them and see that Israel, which is, I don't know if you noticed because it always seems to loom so large, but it's a lot smaller than the United States. It's a lot younger than the United States, which means that it's a lot more malleable than the United States. So use Israel as the vehicle for expressing all these different human concerns and Zionist Jewish concerns and what will happen it will stop making that artificial distinction, because when you're in Israel it's all one, it's all wrapped up.

And when you come to Israel and you see the thumbprint of, I don't know, some random organization like Hadassah where you can't go five minutes in any direction in Jerusalem without seeing a Hadassah medical center where people have been born or helped by Hadassah. And then you get the notion active, why? Why? Peoplehood. Connection. Why? Statehood. The platform, the place where we can do it. Why? Taking responsibility.

But also having that potentiality that ability to shape history and that ability to join history. Not to be passive. It's so easy to be a wise enheimer and it's so easy to sit back but to roll up your sleeves and sometimes make mistakes, to take responsibility, that's living. And that's a real humanistic Zionism. So how can I be a support in the state of Israel without Zionism is actually one of my questions.

But when I start building a vision, I actually need to have Zionism front and center. And I need to go to the college campuses, and I do this and I say you're internalizing the hatred of others when you say I'm okay being -- I'm pro-Israel but I'm not Zionist.

No.

And, yes, we made it complicated, because if things had been easy and Jews always make it complicated, but if it had been easy and if we had, when they started the Zionist movement the movement of Judaism, and I don't say it because I'm a Young Judea, I say it because it was Judaism. The national movement.

What is Zionism, we could have called it Judaism. And then in 1948, when they had this big debate what should we call the state of, the Jewish state, we could have called it Judea, and people wouldn't have made all these distinctions because they would have realized what we actually do understand conceptually, which is that Judaism infuses the

Jewish nationalism and the state of Judea. We have all these different things and we get fragmented. The whole notion of Zionism is to pull things together. The whole notion of Zionism was to have an integrated vision. That's what you get in Israel. You link the past, the present and the future.

You link the, quote/unquote, secular side with the, quote/unquote, religious side. We read in the newspaper about how the religious and the secular are at loggerheads. We miss the fact that there's a whole new story going on in Israel today. Especially led by the Spartans don't fill in the same boxes of religious and nonreligious. And more and more people are simply traditional. They don't use that language. But they -- and I love I go to my friends who say I'm secular. I say great let's go out to dinner on Friday night. My mother would kill me. They have to be there for Friday night for Shabbat dinner and God forbid there's a funeral they'll put on their kaput and mourn in a Jewish way and they speak Hebrew. There's a liveness and nature.

We in United States we increasingly have a fragmented nature. Ultimately while I'm closing the notion of Zionism's critique not only the critique of the Israel that is, and says we have to make Israel better and of course we have to make Israel perfect. Even if we'll never quite get there. But also, this has been missing lately, the notion of Zionism is a critique of the United States. And of American jury.

To what extent are we cut off? To what extent are we not involved? To what extent are we not taking responsibility? To what extent are we not being leaders, and can we use the Zionist vision as a healing mechanism for America?

And for American jury, but most important of all, for our souls. I don't worry that much about physical safety. I worry about the existential crisis that most students I meet are going through. The psychic crisis that most students I meet are going through. In college campuses, these kids come and they're the walking psychologically wounded. Our university health services are overrun by 18, 20, 22-year-olds who are lost, who are struggling. It's because we failed to give them the keys to happiness. You know, Israel with all its problems, on the scale, emerging as one of the happiest countries in the world, because their sense of community, because of the sense of mission, because of the sense of passion.

So we need to learn from Israel how to get some of that. So in summation, I'm talking about a Zionism of peoplehood. I'm talking about a Zionism of sovereignty. I'm talking about a Zionism of responsibility. I'm talking about a Zionism that doesn't just take care of Israel but also heals our own souls.

If we had time we'd open up and start asking what are my central existential threats and my Jewish concerns and we would see how having this Jewish platform this miraculous place called Israel and this extraordinary vehicle we have here called Hadassah how can that help us, and since Zionism doesn't become just about them and doesn't just become about rolling up your sleeves and helping out it also becomes about healing your soul.

And so I end with the four Mems that are the pillars of my Zionism. Which I also shared in Las Vegas. And I apologize for repeating. But I learned from my father that education

is repetition. So the more we say it again and again the more maybe somebody will once remember it.

So we start with Masoret tradition. Human beings want to be rooted somewhere and a part of something. Human beings can't just float around in cyber space. The second Mem from tradition is Molemet home land, the space. We've seen what Hadassah does. Gives us an opportunity to fill out our ideals, to live out our ideals.

To make the tradition come alive and to make it truly what Theodore Hertzl called it an old new land go from tradition to home land, the third Mem is Musar, an ethic. We have a Zionist ethic, we have Zionist morals and we hold our army to those morals. We hold our leaders to those morals, even if they don't measure up Zionist is without democracy and Zionism without peoplehood, central to the Zionist mission. And the fourth, we have Masrah and Homeland and we have Musar ethics and the of course is family.

Without that sense of love, without that sense of connectedness, without that glue, where are we, who are we?

And so for me it's always fun to speak to my Hadassah family, because from the time that I first stumbled into Camp Tel Yehuda, you've been a central part in shaping my identity and in making me feel a part of this tremendous tradition, which is making our home land better, which has a strong sense of ethics which is truly mine.

[APPLAUSE]

>> Ellen Hershkin: I don't know about you, but I'm exhausted.

>> Gil Troy: Cleansing breath.

>> Ellen Hershkin: Just to let you know, that if you think you're the only people that had the opportunity to listen to Gil, we have over 300 people on line watching this presentation. So thank you, thank you, and thank you. Okay. Gil. Q&A. We are not going to let you know who is asking the questions, we're just asking the questions. So Gil, it says.

>> Gil Troy: Yes.

>> Ellen Hershkin: I'm an educator.

>> Gil Troy: I'll think of an answer.

>> Ellen Hershkin: I'm an educator and published Zionist writer. Is there a birthright for adults? Please make my day.

[LAUGHTER]

>> Gil Troy: You know, birthright is this amazing gift from one generation to the next generation. And one of the things that birthright has understood from the start is the danger of mission creep. Birthright does a brilliant job and Hadassah and Marlene Post is sitting here so central in shaping birthright. When people started birthright, if we get

20,000 Jews it will be a miracle we're pushing what 450,000. Extraordinary, life changing. Why? Because you give people the gift of Israel but not just the gift of Israel. Because it's not just, it's not just a plane ticket to go to Israel.

You go with 40, with 39 others. You go on a bus. You get the gift of community. And you have a Moradera, an educator, we call them. Tour educator who tells you the Zionist story and tells you the Jewish peoplehood story and you have most important of all, the notion of no strings attached there's no demand after you sign on the dotted line you go left, right, center, religious or nonreligious. That mix is extraordinary.

So as far as I know there isn't yet a birthright for educators. But I know how much money writers make and so maybe this person wants to donate his or her royalties and create a birthright, because Zionism isn't just about saying what are you doing for me, it's about taking responsibility.

>> Ellen Hershkin: Thank you. Even committed American Jews are too often discouraged. How do you, how do you -- okay, how do you recommend we keep their Zionist spark burning ever brighter?

>> Gil Troy: You know, these are really depressing times, economies, problematic. We have big debates over immigration and how do we keep out illegals. We have crime -- I'm talking about the United States of America. Right? Countries have problems. But there's some crazy thing that goes on and I call it, it's the delegitimizing escalator, in the United States we have problems we move on. We don't deal with them. In Israel we go I'm discouraged disillusioned. The first part it's all part of the delegitimization thing we buy into the notion that Israel is only acceptable to us if it's perfect. That's a standard I hope to achieve but I never want to use for the basis of my love of country and my engagement.

So first piece is to sort of work through our own stuff. And see the degree to which our conversation about Israel is unduly defensive on the right and unduly hypercritical on the left and all in this whole thing of this existential fight. Not every conversation about Israel should be about whether Israel should exist. Not every conversation, not every criticism about Israel is going to destroy the state of Israel. We're a lot stronger than that. A lot stronger than that. And we need to have that strength to absorb a vibrant conversation. But the second piece is what I just was talking about.

Remember the dreaming piece. Remember the perfection piece. Remember the joy in Zionism not just the Oy in Zionism. Remember we're lucky to have this, the more we look at Israel and Zionism as a solution to our existential problems, the more, first of all, we won't be discouraged because we won't be able to be discouraged because we'll need it.

What I got from Hadassah and Young Judea is that Israel was so much a part of who I am that I can't take it out. So much that I could not live there anymore, and I'm living there now. But I speak as an American Zionist because I think you have to start as an American Zionist as a Canadian Zionist. And from there once you've internalized the importance of it, then you can go wherever you want. But the important thing is to have that sense of engagement. That sense of belonging.

>> Ellen Hershkin: So here's one for you. Aren't you just saying that to be a good Zionist you need to be a good Jew? What's the difference?

>> Gil Troy: Very good question. There's definitely an overlap. But there's two ways of thinking about this. One is, I don't know if you noticed, but the winter has been pretty rough. And all my years in Canada, I learned that there's this amazing thing called snow tires, because I lived in West Mount, a hilly area. And I first came had to use these all-season tires and I'd go up and go down, go up and go down, and finally I got big proper Canadian snow tires and all of a sudden had traction.

Zionism is like the snow tires of the great Jewish people vehicle. Zionism gives us traction in this world. Zionism understands what I said in the beginning there's a distortion in the Jewish vision of the modern world reduce Judaism just to a religion and Zionism fills out Judaism some in ways Zionism is a Xerox of Judaism. But what it's saying in this modern world we need to emphasize the peoplehood part. We need to emphasize the statehood part and emphasize the personal responsibility part and then we get the snow tires, and then we get the traction and of course we get to Jewish fulfillment.

Once upon a time the way into being Zionist is was by being a religious Jew. Now I would say that actually a way into deeper Jewish engagement is by having that peoplehood platform, that peoplehood portal, the connection as a Zionist and you often end up going into a deeper Jewish path. But they work one with another.

>> Ellen Hershkin: I have never heard Zionism compared to a snow tire, never.

>> Gil Troy: Because it's more usually about deserts.

>> Ellen Hershkin: So tell me, why are Israel and Zionism so unpopular?

>> Gil Troy: You know, as I said at the beginning, I'm just not smart enough for this question. And I get stupider and stupider as the world gets uglier and uglier, I call myself a Daniel Pearl Jew, because like Daniel Pearl, the Wall Street Journal reporter who was kidnapped and ultimately beheaded for being a Jew.

I grew up in the '60s and post holocaust and post Auschwitz in the era of no more Semitism we learned our lesson. I was a proud American. Daniel Pearl was a proud American. Went to a fancy school Stanford I went to Harvard. He became a journalist I was a professor. We felt protected, with that sense of protection people judge me by my Americanism and my profession I can go and I can report a story in Pakistan. And then, of course, he was kidnapped as an American shortly after 911, but he was murdered as a Jew.

And that to me was the moment where I realized that I, living in Technicolor as they like to say had decided that Anti-Semitism was a thing of the past. But when you see try to ask how is this one single country is singled out how is it that we ignore the fact that there's millions of people, as many as 10, 20 million people in China in reeducation camps and labor camps and we continue to have business with China.

How has it been that there hasn't been one rally on any college campus against the slaughter going on in Syria. Give me one. I say maybe there's proportion. I'm sure somebody of you saw the video that made the rounds, I'm so old it was a YouTube clip, not a video.

It was the person waving the ISIS flag and way cool and as soon as he started waving a blue and white flag he got shouted down. Israel has become the Jew of the nations. And the hatred of Judaism that Zionism was supposed to solve has been transferred on I'm to say to Israel Jewish people I can't tell you how heartbreaking it is and it's even more heartbreaking the younger the audience is. And that's the reality. And I was in false consciousness. And I learned it the hard way.

Unfortunately -- fortunately as hard as Daniel Pearl but I learned it after being traumatized after 9/11 and just seeing the massive Anti-Semitism in the world. I hope that's not the last question because I want to end on a high note.

>> Ellen Hershkin: No, no, no. Give us an example of how we can get our kids to focus on the positive side.

>> Gil Troy: Excellent question.

>> Ellen Hershkin: How old are your kids?

>> Gil Troy: I have a 12-year-old and a 14-year-old, an eight-year-old and a 20-year-old.

>> Ellen Hershkin: Help.

>> Gil Troy: I've always said that for me my Zionism is a pragmatic Zionism. I actually don't know how to raise kids without being a Zionist. For me personally. I'm not arrogant enough to say that's the only way but I use Zionism in a utilitarian way. As I said earlier what most scared me as a parent particularly was the kind of the sense of loss that so many kids I see have.

And I wanted to give my kids traction. I wanted to give them snow tires. What were some of the snow tires? Some of the snow tires -- my question was how do I insulate them from my me me, my my, and more more I tell them stories about the McAfees and Hertsel we go into the hospital, not a Hadassah hospital but a hospital with connection from all over the world people in the United States of America spend their time and their money and Shamma saving someone who they may never have met.

So through all these little examples I'm able to give my kids some sense of a world that's not just about the latest trend and the latest sale. And there are many other traditions and many other cultures which also can do that. Again I'm not saying that ours is the only way. But it's mine. I'm a part of it. It's convenient. It's for me the low-hanging fruit. So part of it is our own education. Our own reexamination. If we are just stuck in the Israel guilt trip, if we only relate to Israel as this advocacy thing, if we only relate to Israel as the central headache of the Jewish people and it's my burden, then our kids, because we live in happy camp most of us, fortunately, in the modern world, especially in the United States of America. We'll run away from it.

But if it's intertwined, if it's part of the family celebrations, if it's part who we are, then you can't get away from it, because it's a part of your identity. It goes to -- I'll touch on the hard test question in the Jewish question today, the intermarried question. We're in openness and democracy and such freedom that you can't say that you can't intermarry, it doesn't work. What has to happen we have to raise a generation that says I could not intermarry because of my own goals to raise a Jewish family, because of my own goals to be rooted in a certain kind of tradition because of my own goals to express myself in a certain way. It's about that internalization. It's about the "I" in Zion or the sense of real need and an existential piece.

>> Ellen Hershkin: BDS.

>> Gil Troy: BDS it's a stupid title and that's good we're always stuck on our bad PR. They sometimes make mistakes. BD is boycott divestment sanctions. And one of the problems with the movement is not just from a Jewish perspective. Let's talk about it from a Palestinian perspective. If the Palestinians want to have progress with the Jewish people, if the Palestinians want to push the Jewish people into a compromising position, does it make more sense to normalize, to reach out, to have people-to-people conversations or does it make more sense to demonize us, to boycott us, to cut us off? If you know anything about human psychology, let alone Jewish psychology, let alone post holocaust scarred psychology let alone Zionism you should understand if they want to make progress they should respect and mutualality, let's put it aside. We have to be more effective in naming and shaming. We need to understand two things. The BDS movement there's actually 2-B DS movements.

There's what my mother using technical language the [indiscernible] languages which is the core, the very, very small core of people who are often funded by mysterious sources take advantage in universities abilities if you sign up in one course you're a student for 10 years and somebody pays your tuition again and again and you become quite expert in mobilization.

I was at York University in Toronto had a terrible BDS problem for many years. And I was there Yahoo! two years ago year before it had been a quiet year why because the person had gone off for a year and then came back. So those people, the first thing we have to do is we have to stop arguing with them stop talking to them. We have to ignore them as much as possible because we're never going to convince them. And we all too often spend so much time reacting to them that we miss the bigger picture.

The bigger picture is two pieces. One is the second group of people, who are lazy BDSers, who are just sort of the enablers, who finger to the wind see that Israel is unpopular, who finger to the wind have now learned in the great French philosopher Bernard pointed out in the wake of the Soviet Union and communism the glue far often in the far left the glue all too far often to the far left is Anti Zionism. How do I prove my leftist credentials bash Israel it's a way in college campuses it's a way of signaling who I am. I put on the [indiscernible] those are the people who have to be named and shamed and people to be called out and who we can have a conversation professors all academics agree and we don't agree on much, but the one thing take it away and that's our expertise.

Except when you take Israel and you make it simple. Then you call them out on their bigotry. Because when I single something out in a -- either it's so extraordinary or I'm actually implicitly passing on a certain bigotry. I use a word like racism and I apply it to Israel with the conflict in Palestinians is a racial conflict and Apartheid, a formalized system distinguishing between people between skin colors we have light and dark skinned Palestinians not a formal piece of legislation in Israel that deals with race in any way.

So we call out the soft BDSers on their hard bigotry. But the most important thing we have to do is we have to avoid this conversation dynamic where we get stuck in their physics always pulling us up into their negative. Then we have to have this series, I don't know who organized it but we talk about Zionism in a different way where we start celebrating Zionism and saying what is this about because we start talking about it because if more of us come to college campuses raised by parents who care about Zionism who come to the campus understand what Zionism rather than running away when it's bashed will stand up for it and the best way to stand up for it is by singing and dancing and embracing, not by marching and yelling and getting into a shouting match with people who are never going to be convinced by us.

>> Ellen Hershkin: This is a very personal one for you. How have you changed your views since you wrote, *Why I am a Zionist*.

>> Gil Troy: Interesting question. So I wrote this book why am I a Zionist back in 2001, and one of the things, I don't know if it's an negative inspiration or inspiration one of the things that propelled me was going to the GA. The general assembly of the Federation. They had this book displayed that was Barnes and Noble. Jewish books, there wasn't one book on the table that used the Z word in a positive context. We saw a book about the tragedy of Zionism, book about the problems of Israel but not a book about Zionism in a happy way.

My impulse was how come there isn't a book like that? At the same time, I started getting involved in this amazing crazy insane notion of bringing Jewish kids for free to Israel and giving them a taste what that could do to a jump-start to their Jewish identity. And so I felt as an educator you can't just send kids to Israel but you have to give them something. And so I started writing an open letter to the Montreal Birthright kids. Students. And the two things came together and I wrote this book called *Why I'm a Zionist*. And the idea was to simply jump-start the conversation.

An older person going on to the younger people who also this was the very start of the second wave of terrorism. I don't like to use the N word, because that's their language of the noble uprising. It was a war against Oslo. And I saw more and more college students who were saying: I'm embarrassed ashamed by Israel. I don't want to be a Zionist. It was an attempt to jump-start the conversation.

My dilution was I would write a book and other people would write a book and 10, 15 years later my book would be forgotten because there would be other books out there. The depressing thing is that there just aren't that many other books out there, because many people didn't pick up the cudule. When I wrote that book I very carefully kept two words out of the conversation, the A word and the G word. God wasn't a central

part of my vision because I was trying to speak not to religious Jews, not out of disrespect, but because the crisis is really with nonreligious, with more secular Jews.

So it was too easy to kind of use the God way. And I realized that God-talk doesn't invite secular Jews in. I also didn't use the A word, the aleal word, because I know how many Zionist conversations have been cut off by the Allea guilt trip T you come together. You finally arrive in Israel how come you not move to Israel.

I just got here. Give me a break. Zionism has to start with where we're at right here. Zionism has to start with our issues here. Zionism has to start with the vehicle and there might be some people who go in what my teacher called the Ladder of Zionism. And then it has to be a more natural thing.

When I wrote the book I had never had an idea that I was going to end up as an Israel i. I had no idea that my daughter would graduate from officer training, or any of my kids in Israel. My goal was to create an idea about Zionism in North America. Over the years, I think if I were to write it again, I probably would be more sober about the extent of Anti-Semitism in the world. I think I still had that pre-Daniel Pearl naivete. I think I would be more traumatized by the Gaza disengagement and the by the failure of the south Lebanon every time we've pulled out we've ended up with bombs or guns or terrorists or tunnels coming after us, and I think in that book I still have more faith in the peace process.

But I think also I'd have just 10, 15 years more examples of how amazing Israel is of the extraordinary miracles of everyday life in Israel, of the amazing peace one feels in Israel. When I sit in host groups in Israel, I always go like this. Listen. I need you to take that back home. Because nobody believes me. I know many of you have been here, have been to Israel in the last couple months or had kids in Israel in the last couple of months. And that sense of peace, that sense of tranquility and joy is missing because everybody expects tanks and CNN reporters and challenge on the street. I jogged every day through the Jerusalem and I see religious and nonreligious living in a harmonious way and that doesn't in fact make the headlines.

>> Ellen Hershkin: I have a lot of questions and not a lot of time. I'm going to ask this one there are two questions I'll put together. Was BB's call for all Diaspora Jews to make Aliyah helpful why or why not and shouldn't Jews decide to make Aliyah out of love for Israel rather than out of fear for Anti-Semitism.

>> Gil Troy: I feel very, very strongly in a world where despite my concerns about Anti-Semitism, certainly the bulk of Jews live in free countries and free democratic countries like the United States of America. And a Zionism that's based on Theodore's assumptions about being afraid of it of Anti-Semitism Zionism is going to fail. The Zionism I was trying to articulate of today was the Zionism of positive identity building.

A Zionism of why I needed internally existentially, because I think the greatest threat for us as moderns, and I say this when I speak to Jewish audiences and non-Jewish audience is identity conflict existential conflict who am I and what kind of quality of life can I have not in terms of cars and houses and yachts, but in terms of true values.

So I definitely think that -- and even if Trask called the BB out on this, the big push for Zionism has to be a positive push. T Zionism also has to play the role, Israel has to play the role of being the refuge for those who are oppressed, because that was the historical role of Zionism.

When we talk about 21st century Zionism it has to be positive. And it also has to be in general a vision. I mean, I'm a post holocaust Jew. I don't want to be scarred. I don't want to just define my Judaism in reaction to Hitler. Manheim said don't let Hitler win. The 16th command, if we make Judaism only a negative a response to Anti-Semitism, then it's not meaningful.

Our commandment has to be, I think it's actually one of the 16 -- choose life. Go back to the Torah and choose life. Go back to Zionism and choose life. I don't need guilt trips from the prime minister or guilt trips from the held of the community of France. I need love trips. And that's what Birthright is about that's what Hadassah trips are about.

>> Ellen Hershkin: One last question, and if we didn't get to yours, we apologize, but time is running. So Gil, there are so many people debating whether or not to use the Z word. Especially when reaching out to younger people. Most of us can understand and support being an American Jew who supports Israel. But why do you need to call yourself a Zionist?

>> Gil Troy: It's a very important question. I'm glad you asked that, because I've been in meetings where people say Zionism doesn't pull well so let's abandon it. And I say is that who we've become? I can't abandon Zionism just because it's unpopular with Islamists and in the UN and even on the college campuses, I'm sorry.

I'm a Zionist because I'm a proud Jew. I'm a Zionist because I understand that Judaism is about this nation religion thing. I'm a Zionist because I love the state of Israel. I'm a Zionist because I understand that Israel is the fulfillment of our collective aspirations and our collective sense of responsibility. I'm a Zionist because I want to be a part of this story. I'm a Zionist because I want to celebrate this story. I'm a Zionist because I understand that Zionism is a movement to perfect the Jewish people and to perfect the human soul and to perfect the state of Israel. And so I want to sing that song and invite you all to sing the song along with me in your own voice and with your own melody, but also to figure out a way for us all to harmonize together. And if we do that, then we won't get questions like this. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

>>Ellen Hershkin: Thank you, Gil. I want to remind everyone that this session, as well as all our past sessions, has been recorded, and may be watched alone, in a group, or as the centerpiece of a unit's or Community program. You get to watch this again. Also, please share your feedback with us by completing our online survey which will be emailed to you. Your input helps us create programming that is of interest to you and your communities. Continue this conversation on our website at www.hadassah.org/definingzionism and on Twitter using the hashtag #definingzionism.

Additionally, if you haven't done so already, please register for the entire Defining Zionism series to receive updates about all future programs. In addition to this series, we have another online opportunity - - our Virtual Conversations: A Book and Author

Experience, a joint program presented by Hadassah & Hadassah/Brandeis. The next session will take place Tuesday, March 3rd at 7:30pm At Hadassah House.

Author Joy Ladin, once a husband and father, discusses her memoir of gender transition, *Through the Door of Life: A Jewish Journey Between Genders*. Whether we agree on any one definition of Zionism or not, we can agree that the word conjures up in people a wide variety of emotions and responses.

Gil, we appreciate you taking the time to be with us to address such a timely and sensitive subject in such a straight forward manner. "Why I call myself a Zionist and not just a lover or supporter of Israel" is an imperative to the future of Zionism and our connection to the State of Israel. A special thank you to the volunteers and staff who have been involved in the Defining Zionism program without whom, these presentations wouldn't be possible. Thank you again to Gil Troy for his participation, validating our Defining Zionism in the 21st Century series. And of course, thank you for being with us this evening - - whether you are watching at home or with us in person. It is vitally important for us to remember, Hadassah supports Hadassah the women's Zionist organization of America, supports the democratically elected government of Israel which will be conducting elections in a few weeks. The connections between America and Israel are evidenced in many arenas.

Hadassah enables US, as Americans, the ability to be supporters of Practical Zionism - - an endeavor we began more than one hundred and three years ago. Next week we will celebrate Purim, the season in which Hadassah was created. This weekend in synagogues across the country, we will be celebrating Hadassah Shabbat Zachor. We encourage you to contact your local Hadassah unit to find out when and where the celebrations will take place and feel free to go to our website and download the Hadassah Shabbat Zachor material. It is not too late to ask your Rabbi to include something about Hadassah in the service this weekend - - Friday night or Saturday - - as we all wish Hadassah a very Happy Anniversary!

And in conclusion - - The next Defining Zionism will take place on March 24th at 7:30pm featuring Eric Fingerhut, President and CEO of Hillel International at Gallaudet University in Washington DC. To all of you at home and to those of you here: Lila Tov - - Good Night.

[APPLAUSE]