During the recent conflict between Israel and Hamas. Some 90 rabbinic students representing nearly 20% of the next generation of non-orthodox Rabbinic leadership of the Jewish communities of Canada and the United States wrote a letter accusing Israel of “violent suppression of human rights” and “aparthied” toward the Palestinians.

The letter was widely published in Jewish and western media - you can read it online. In eloquent, sermonic prose the letter spoke of heartbreak and tears, of “fires burning on the hills of Jerusalem and buildings smoldering in Gaza. Violence spilling onto the streets of Lod and Haifa”.

It continued to condemn Israel’s conduct, but made no mention of Hamas, of the fact that Israel was under attack or of Hamas’ explicit intent to destroy Israel.

These future rabbis wrote of Israeli Aparthied and drew a direct line between the “racial reckoning” in North America and how Israel and by extension all Jews, because of Israeli policy and actions are thus complicit in “racial violence”.

Agree or disagree, and I vehemently disagree with the letter; but do not dismiss it.

Do not dismiss the 90 future leaders of Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Renewal congregations that wrote it. Their views are not detached from the generation of Jews they come from - rather they are reflective of them.

A recent PEW study shows that Jews under 35 are far less likely to support Israel - yet this is precisely the generation who has arguably had the most opportunities to visit Israel, meet Israelis, learn Israel's story. This is the generation of Birthright Trips, Israeli staff at summer camps and the popularization of Israeli art, music, food and culture. The results should have been the opposite.

What is going on? When did we lose Israel, or when did Israel lose young North American Jews?

The criminalization of Israel has moved from the fringe and is now a mainstay of progressive discourse, including progressive Jewish discourse; drawing direct lines between Black Lives Matter and Palestinian Lives Matter. For many in the Jewish community there’s an ever-growing sentiment that Israel has lost its place in the dreams and aspirations of the Jewish people. HaTikvah the hope of 2,000 years to be a free people in our indigenious land has been lost and with it, the next generation of Jews.

The fatalists say that nothing can be done. The attacks on Israel are a part of a larger western progressive battle against particularism, national identity, and white power as principled forces for evil and injustice. And in this context Israel is cast as the villain in all of those stories.

Some see a deliberate campaign to attribute the worst qualities, those acts that the younger generation regards as the most loathsome and apply those to the Jewish state and to do so in, in a singular way, in an obsessive way.

Some see classic antisemitism - the placing of blame for all of society's ills upon the perpetual scapegoat, the Jewish people.

Some see a revolt against particularism, exceptionalism and power; an intentional effort to roll back and rewrite the post Holocaust Jewish success story, and restore us to the condition of powerlessness; put the Jew in it's proper place. To take our foundational story and reverse it from one of the most inspiring sagas, not only in Jewish history, but in human history and turn it into one of the most sorted evil episodes of modern times.

There's something in the story of the state of Israel, for many of our critics, that is a betrayal of who we were supposed to be after the Holocaust, we were supposed to be a light to the nations. We were supposed to be the ultimate victim people. And instead we turn around and become victimizers. And so our sins are magnified because we should have known better. We cannot ignore the deep echoes of classic Christian antisemitism in this indictment.

If the criminalization of Israel was coming only from antisemites and Jew Haters - we could deal with it as such, but its not, its coming from within. Its coming from those 90 future rabbis, and as a follow on study to the PEW survey found its not just Jews under 35,

A survey of all American Jewish voters found that - 1/3 of American Jews believe Israel is an apartheid state; 1/4 American Jews believe that Israel is commiting genocide of the Palestinians.

Racial Violence, Aparthied, Genocide - how have we come to associate those acts with the Jewish State, with the Jewish People?

It is one thing to hear those accusations thrown at us from others, from the outside, from antisemites - but these are our own people, our children, our future rabbis and leaders. This is family!

So what do you do when you have family members who see things so fundamentally differently than you do? It's not a hypothetical question of course, we have been living with these fissures in our social fabric for years now. Left vs Right, Progressive vs Conservative, Trumpers vs Never Trumpers, Climate Change vs Climate Hoax, Vaxxers and Anti-Vaxxers. Our society has become so polarized; it's easier not to talk to each other than to listen, let alone try to reason.

In school, on social media, at work, we just avoid the explosive topics or we cancel the opposing view, walling ourselves off from what we consider infuriating or lunacy.

But you can't do that with family. I mean people do, I've counselled couples who have broken up over their disagreements on those issues. Are the Jewish people divorcing each other? Are we breaking up? We have clearly already broken apart.

It wouldn't be the first time. Our tradition teaches us that the greatest calamities that have befallen our people were the result of sinaht henam, our senseless hatred of each other, infighting. Greater than any existential threat to Jewish existence; except the Shoah has been our internal conflicts.

The Golden Calf and rebellion against Moses and Aaron. The destruction of the first and second temple

I am reminded of the lesson of the four children at the passover seder.

You remember it; you probably read the story.

Our haggadah reminds us that there are four children sitting at our seder table - even on zoom, even if there are no actual children; they are there inside each of us.

The wise child - the one who asks details about the specific meaning of the laws of Passover observance. This child gets it, understands the seder and all its complexity. We are taught to answer them with further questions, to study with them and go deeper to find understanding and insights.

The wicked child - This is the child that removes themself from the passover story and asks "What does this seder mean to you?" They are not part of this, maybe they are there for the gefilte fish but they do not care about the seder. To this child we are told to issue a rebuke; remind them of the importance of not separating ourselves from our community or from traditions that might seem uncomfortable or foreign to us, but rather to engage with them in ways that enable us to connect with our community.

The Simple Child - asks "What does all this mean?". To this child we are told to give a straightforward summary of the story; explaining things as you would to someone who has never been to a seder before. This child will hopefully become wise, but may for a variety of reasons disassociate and one day be the wicked child; all we can do is try to lay a foundation for connection and interest.

The fourth child is the real challenge - we can answer to the other three with facts and figures, but the fourth our tradition refers to that child as "*Ayno Yodeah L'shol* / "the who does not even not know how to ask".

To this child we are instructed to "open it up" and explain, "It is because of what God did for me when I went free from Egypt" (Ex 13:8). You don't answer this child with the laws of when to eat

matzah, or the story of rabbis sitting at night in bein barak debating how many plagues happened to pharaoh and the egyptians. You certainly don't get angry at the child for not knowing how to formulate the question for something they don’t understand and have never experienced. This child you answer with personal stories. We are taught that to this child we tell our own story of connection to the seder; hoping they will find the meaning that we have found. The key of course is that we have to have found meaning for ourselves. You can’t sell what you yourself would not buy.

but we have come to a generation that doesn't even know how to ask the question