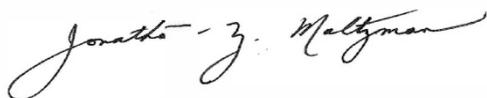


Kol HaRav

Abraham was called *Ha-Ivri*, meaning “the other,” because he stood alone when the rest of the world stood on the other side. There is nothing wrong, in fact there is everything right, with standing at Israel’s side, even when, and sometimes especially when, it makes decisions we ourselves would not make. Given the choice of defending a sovereign and imperfect Israel or enjoying the moral purity of exiled victimhood, I would choose the former over the latter any day, and so should you. In school, on campus, on Capitol Hill, the coming generation of American Jews must be given the tools to be resilient, self-confident, and able defenders of the real, not imagined, Jewish state. However, let’s remember that American Zionism is not a substitute for American Judaism.

The problem with post Six Day War Zionism was that for far too many Jews, support for Israel became a vicarious faith, a civil religion masking the inadequacies of our actual religion. The only way Israel will learn from, listen to, or care about American Jews in this fractured world of ours is if American Jews show that we will live energetic Jewish lives. We mustn’t pin our concern over Jewish continuity on the politics of Israel. That’s not fair. A strong American Jewish identity can weather policy differences with this or that Israeli government and withstand the slings and arrows of campus culture – something a paper-thin Jewish identity cannot do.

One hundred years ago, Louis Brandeis asserted that to be better Jews, we must become Zionists. Today, we know that to be good Zionists, we must be better Jews. If you are interested in the future of American Jewry’s relationship with Israel, then make sure in the year ahead you do that one thing truly in your power to do: live a vibrant Jewish life. Build up your own Jewish identity and that of your children and grandchildren, and do everything in your power to support those individuals and institutions committed to nurturing and sustaining the American Jewish community as well as the State of Israel.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jonathan Z. Maltzman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Rabbi Jonathan Z. Maltzman