

It goes against my general philosophy to take to social media to present my feelings. Who am I to tell you what to think, how to feel, or what facts to look at? Realistically you have absolutely no reason to take the time out of your day to read my thoughts, and I don't blame you for not wanting to.

That said, I have reached a point where I do feel the need to share my thoughts, whether the reason is due to the need for an emotional release or in the hopes that someone will benefit from reading this, here it goes:

The entire foundation of my identity is built upon the fact that I am Jewish. My father is a clergy member; my mother is a trained Jewish educator (and much more). I went to Jewish Day School, attended multiple Jewish camps (both as a camper and staff member), spent a gap year before college in Israel, and was a member and president of a Jewish fraternity. And what I have always found to be the entire cornerstone of my Jewish identity is that two of my grandparents were survivors of the Holocaust. There is a very distinct generational trauma that is inherited as a result, and many Jews have familial connections to those who have narrowly escaped death due to antisemitic pretenses and will tell you the same. This is not unique to the Ashkenazi Jewish experience, many of my Jewish friends of Sephardic, Middle Eastern and North African descent will tell you the same. Make no mistake, had Israel been around one hundred years ago, millions of Jewish lives would have been saved.

Over the course of the past two weeks, I chose not to keep up with the trend of posting Instagram stories about the most recent chapter in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict because I personally feel that it is an ineffective vehicle to impart what knowledge I have. This is not to criticize those who posted on either side, but I feel as though the majority of the time people who post "stories" about issues such as these are either preaching to the choir or yelling at a brick wall. If someone is going to build or solidify their stance off of what they "learned" from an infographic then that is not someone I want on my side nor is it someone I want to argue with. In my opinion, there is no substitution for a verbal dialogue accompanied by independent research. The other day a friend asked me about what was going on with the conflict, and my response over text was literally over 1600 words (I checked with word count). Mind you, I was only talking about the current chapter of the conflict. Simply put: there is no way I could fit that into an infographic or tweet. If anyone cares to ask me about my thoughts and opinions on the conflict, please feel free to reach out to me and we can talk.

To be clear: I am a proud Zionist and am wholeheartedly for Palestinians' right to self-determination, and pray for a two-state solution. I will not apologize for my concern for my family and friends who spent the past couple of weeks in bomb shelters due to Hamas' desire to kill all Jews (which can easily be found in their charter, as well as copious declarations captured on video), by way of indiscriminate rockets. I will not apologize for the miracle of the Iron Dome Defense System that has saved countless Israeli lives. I have many criticisms of the Israeli government, but protecting its people from terror attacks is not one of them. My heart truly breaks for the innocent Palestinian and Israeli civilians whose lives have been taken by this ongoing conflict.

To be a Jew on social media has been quite lonely over the past couple of weeks. On numerous occasions this week, Jewish friends of mine have told me they don't feel safe on social media and many of them went as far as to deactivate their Instagram accounts. As I've stated before, I really do not care whether or not you post Instagram stories or retweet tweets in favor of Israelis, or Palestinians, or Jews, or anything for that matter. It is your social media, do whatever you want with it. I do, however, find it to be troubling to find the grossly antisemitic rhetoric being used when referring to Israel accompanied by mindboggling allegations about Israeli society that are simply untrue. Not to mention the attempt to apply American racial and social constructs to a vastly different society in the Middle East. It is arrogant to truly believe you can view this conflict, which has evolved over thousands of years, through a privileged American lens. And it's an insult to everyone's intelligence to suggest the conflict is not complex. I also find it quite disappointing that the same people who have posted about the prejudice that many different marginalized communities have faced, seem to never to post about antisemitism. And trust me, there is plenty of antisemitism to post about. There has been a 438% (and counting) increase in antisemitism in the United Kingdom over the past 10 days. There has been an over 50% increase in the United States over the same amount of time. And you can be sure there is a correlation between these spikes and the narrative surrounding the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Random Jews are being physically assaulted in Toronto, New York, Los Angeles, and many other cities that were once unthinkable locations to witness such occurrences, and in broad daylight no less. Before the most recent events between Israel and Hamas, an Israeli Jew was murdered in Baltimore because he was Jewish. This past week, fireworks were thrown at Jews in New York. Where is the media coverage? Where is the condemnation from politicians?

Again, as a Jew, I understand this is nothing new, and I don't ask for any sympathy, but rather I ask, why there is a different standard applied to us. Quite frankly, I do not expect this to change, and honestly have become quite numb to it. We are the same people who were accused of killing Jesus. The same people that were accused of killing Christian babies and using their blood in our matzah. The same people accused of the Black Plague, of controlling the media, controlling the banks, controlling the government, and the list goes on and on. The fact of the matter is we have survived all this and will continue to survive. That is the Jewish way.

The Roman Empire tried to take us down and convert us, there is no Roman Empire. The Babylonians exiled us, there are no more Babylonians. Nazi Germany tried to exterminate us, and they too fell. We are not going anywhere. In the face of all of this adversity and much, much more, people have the audacity to ask why we feel the need to have Israel, our ancestral homeland. Some people even want to invoke the Holocaust in criticizing the Jewish Nation for finally having the ability to defend itself from the dark manifestations of antisemitism once again. Israel exists and there are no two ways about it. Israel and its neighbors must find a way to coexist.

In the words of Menachem Begin, "I am not a Jew with trembling knees. I am a proud Jew with 3,700 years of civilized history. Nobody came to our aid when we were dying in the gas

chambers and ovens. Nobody came to our aid when we were striving to create our country. We paid for it. We fought for it. We died for it. We will stand by our principles. We will defend them. And, when necessary, we will die for them again, with or without your aid.”

עם ישראל חי