



JEWISH FEDERATIONS OF CANADA - UIA  
הפדרציות היהודיות בקנדה - UIA  
FÉDÉRATIONS JUIVES DU CANADA - UIA

Monday, March 27, 2023

**Note:** *Developments in Israel are shifting, minute by minute. Below are my personal reflections, written throughout the course of the day.*

If you don't know how to fix it - please stop breaking it!

This is how I feel today.

It's a strange and disorienting day for people like me, lifelong Zionists, immigrants with an oftentimes agile political identity and, at the same time, with a deep and unequivocal passion for this place I call home.

I'm 46 and don't recall the feeling of living through a snowball effect of such national proportions, like the one Israel is experiencing now. Suddenly, intransigence has become the solution to a situation that has spun entirely out of control. Suddenly, perceived capitulation - as opposed to noble courage - seems to be the only option.

I am sensitive to spin, rhetoric and cataclysmic speech and have been holding my breath for a while now in the hope that calm, like a cool blanket of snow, will fall on the hot political landscape of this country. I now am filled with the distinct unease that I may have been wrong, that this country has been faltering for a while now, and I fear life may look different here in the days to come.

In 1992, a young Canadian, by the name Severn Cullis-Suzuki, raised her own money to fly from her hometown of Vancouver to address the United Nations. Suzuki, barely 12 years old, in what became an iconic speech about the tragic consequences that would unfold in her lifetime if the adults in the room continued either tacitly or explicitly endorsing the industries harming the environment, demanded: "if you don't know how to fix it - please stop breaking it."

And that is how I feel this morning. March 27th, 2023.

There are fights in families where wrongs have been done and the roadmap for return is clear. ("Say you are sorry Sarah," was a frequent mantra from my own

childhood.) And there are rifts in families where we ask how we got here, and one gets the niggling and terrifying feeling that one doesn't know the way back.

I bumped into a famous Israeli poet last week. Flustered in an alley in Jerusalem, she was desperately searching for her newly adopted orphaned dog who had escaped from her yard. As I looked into her fear-struck eyes and tried to help, she whispered, "Everything feels like this. We are all so uncertain; we are losing something we don't know will come back."

We collectively can't afford to not know our way back. We neither have the luxury of time, nor the geopolitical security, to squander time searching for ways to re-find ourselves after this.

What cultures, what social environments will we leave our children?

And so right now, as the train charging forward begins to come to a halt with the pause in the reform and we all have collectively met our own edge – pushed to the brink of our very understanding of ourselves and the futures we want to birth for our children – it is the time to be brave. To choose something different.

There will, I am sure, be much written about the ethics of the media in times of crisis and their amplification of, and contribution to, that very crisis. My invitation is to look where the light is currently not shining, not only at the extremes but also upon the quieter people of Israel, the social and geographic peripheries of Israel, many of whose voices have been unheard over the last six weeks.

Israeli society is strong and beautiful. It is persistently hopeful. We have no other choice. And we know how to recover. Our long history and scar tissue have taught us nothing, if not how to recover. Now, again, is the time to do so. Even if we are now largely a confused, dismayed and beleaguered populace, we need to find our voice – as a people – who care about a Jewish and democratic state, which the vast majority of Israelis do. Finding our way back means to reaffirm a core truth for Israel and Israelis, namely: we can hold alternative imagined futures about how this country will evolve and not pull each other apart.

Inaction is not an option. Each one of us can fix this, talk to people who think and act differently, fortify our stomachs for diverse opinions, focus on a greater collective purpose that supersedes our immediate loyalties. Whoever wins or loses this battle will be insignificant in the longer scheme of history.

I want to believe that history will ultimately tell the story of a people – as hot-headed and cacophonous as we can be – that found its way back to repairing and rebuilding.

A week or so before Passover, this is our emergence from our oppressive moment in time. We can come out of this emboldened, expressive, and more powerfully engaged in the act of society and nation-building than before. Our acts of defiance will not be succumbing to the pulls of polarization. We will commit to talk to one another, to hold steady and to push for a new era of restoration and healing.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Sarah Mali'.

**Sarah Mali,**  
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