

I'm having a nightmare, can you please wake me up? I'm dreaming that they fooled the Jewish people to do the bidding of western imperialism. To feed their tech, their fascism, their bank accounts, their global death squads for the expansion of empire. That us Jews wiped out villages and stole indigenous land, maintaining 75 years of genocide. All I see are pieces of G-d's dead children in plastic grocery bags—can you please wake me up?

You—who squat in stolen homes and kidnap children. You—who rape, murder, mutilate, humiliate, then take a photo. You—Israel. You are not me, you never were. My Judaism spans thousands of years. My Judaism is expansive, righteous, boundless, rooted. I am a miracle of Jewish diasporic vision that could never be contained by a military state. I have no love for you or your fascism, Israel. I don't know you and I never did.

I wish we had time to ponder what this all means for the soul of Judaism. But it's Shabbat and the wheels of genocide are already turning. And my beloved Jewish people are driving this bus off the cliff. Can you feel this empire of dust crumbling to the ground? Is bombing really a balm for your crushed spirit?

Have you ever wondered why the nazi soldier didn't lay down his weapon? I have. What idea, what nation state, did he believe in so much that he could mow us all down and laugh? What could have made him see that we deserved to live? That Palestine deserves to be free?

As I write this, the wheels of genocide are turning.

As I write this, I am preparing for Shabbat. When I see Gaza, I see my own people languishing in concentration camps. I see a world that has turned its back on us, letting us be slaughtered en masse because we aren't quite human enough.

I am having a nightmare, can you wake me up? I'm dreaming that the Star of David is not sewn onto our clothes but affixed to the genocidal soldiers who bomb hospitals, schools, and churches with no regard for life. Who round up entire communities and shoot kids dead in the street.

I remember there was talk of Tikkun Olam and Tzedakah—is our humanity buried somewhere under the rubble? Is anyone still breathing under there? I scour bombed remnants of residential buildings for shreds of Judaism's soul. I thought it was still here. I thought so many things that evaporated in the dust of an air strike.

We built institutions and monuments to “never forget” but look at us now. It seems we left our humanity outside the door of the holocaust memorial museum. Jews are a diasporic miracle trapped in a nation state of lies. Israel has sacrificed our humanity at the altar of nationalism.

Kaddish for the Soul of Judaism: Genocide in Palestine



by Amanda Gelender

There's no anesthesia in the hospital but can you bear the pain a bit longer, Palestine? We would help, but our hands are already covered in blood.

I want to invite all of Gaza to Shabbos dinner tonight—is there an evacuation route you won't bomb, Israel? And when the Shabbat candles dim, can my friends please use the keys around their necks to finally return home?

Perhaps one day we will pull a Gazan child's diary from the rubble and ash. We will dust off the casings and gun powder. Will we be able to read her words under blood-soaked paper? Did her dreams die in the phosphorous gas dropped on her head? Our grandchildren will ask us about the Palestinian genocide and why the world didn't intervene. Was she too brown or was it just "too complicated?"

Did you hear about the boy from Gaza who took his own life this week? Who saw hell on earth and chose to leap into the unknown instead of being murdered by an airstrike? Lay his body on the pile too, please, next to the shoes at Auschwitz. My ancestors from Mount Masada will protect him—they too chose to die by their own hand rather than suffer the indignity of slaughter by the tyrant. Things fall apart.

A pregnant Palestinian woman was blasted dead by an Israeli air strike this week. Doctors tried to deliver her baby from the mother's dead corpse. I don't know if the baby lived. If she did, can she sit under our sukkah next year so the sun can grace her face?

Can you hear me recite the Mourner's Kaddish for every soul killed in Gaza? It may take me a moment, I have to say thousands of prayers, and each person has a name. I will sit Shiva for a million lifetimes. I leave a stone on each martyred grave to root the dead back into the earth, but I can still hear the screaming and I'm trying to pray.

I want to turn back the clock. Can you please unburn the houses and re-root the olive tree groves, Israel? Can you drain the concrete you poured in the water springs? Can you unlaunch the bombs you dropped on the hospitals? I can't hear you at the bimah because the air strikes are too loud.

Does it make you feel strong, Israel? To be the one wielding the gun as children cower? Are you healed now, do you know peace? You are a coward, dropping bombs from the sky making vapid platitudes for peace. I want to reach for Jewish wisdom but I cannot read the Talmud, it's covered in blood.

Gaza is starving, can she eat at our Seder? Can you jump on the tracks before this train arrives at Bergen-Belsen? Can you distract the guard and dump the Zyklon B? Can you poison the commander or throw a rock of resistance at his tank? Can you see a Palestinian as human before you turn on this deadly gas? It's all quite unpleasant and distracting me from prayer.

I'm wailing at the wall. I need challah for Shabbos but Israel bombed the last bakery in Gaza. Palestine is hungry for justice and the dehydration is setting in.

Palestine will never forget. The world will never forget. My Jewish descendants and I will never forget. And who are you in this moment, my beloved fellow Jew? Are you waving the Israeli flag as entire lineages of Palestinian families are wiped from the public record? Are you partying at the edge of a concentration camp? Has the guilt crept up your spine yet? And how many dead children will make you feel safe? What's the number? When you kill that many, will you stop?

When I see Gaza, I am the Palestinians. I do not see myself in the face of an Israeli soldier—why should I? Because we are both Jewish? I see a colonizer, an occupier, a violent settler. I see someone willing to keep their boot on the neck of Palestine until she dies in the street.

Tell me the story again, Zaide. Of David and Goliath, of Palestine and Israel, of a stone vs a tank. Tell me again who you are and tell me the truth this time.

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