

FINDING MY SOURCE OF STRENGTH

Tap into our textline of wisdom



A common sentiment among Jews right now is an amplified sense of fear, and for good reason. There's plenty of footage of students on campus ripping down signs of hostages, professors legitimizing Hamas's 'resistance' and Jewish students experiencing physical threats and violence. This palpable feeling extends far beyond academia and is being experienced by teens in school, adults at their workplace, families in their community, and more.

Sarah Hurwitz, a renowned author and speechwriter for Michelle Obama, recently spent time on campus to investigate how students are managing. Read the following excerpt from her piece *To Jewish College Students Who Are Scared* and [click here for the full article](#):



"...You spoke with nuance, care, and precision... I couldn't get over it—and I couldn't figure it out. How had you turned out this way?

But I think I get it now. Because your feelings are often dismissed, you've learned to seek out facts and get them straight before posting on social media, and you understand that feelings are not a substitute for critical thought. Because you know your classmates will relentlessly question your arguments, you've learned to question them yourself. Because your stories are often decentered, you spend a lot of time listening to others' thoughts, emotions, and opinions, and they inform your own. You have learned to hold these opposing viewpoints, to wrestle with them."

Sarah identified five sensibilities that help students relate to others in such a fraught time. Which of these reflect your approach and how have they shown up? Which would you like to be able to practice better? What would you add to this list?

- ◆ You've learned to seek out facts and get them straight before posting on social media.
- ◆ You understand that feelings are not a substitute for critical thought.
- ◆ You've learned to question your arguments yourself.
- ◆ You spend a lot of time listening to others' thoughts, emotions, and opinions, and they inform your own.
- ◆ You have learned to hold these opposing viewpoints, to wrestle with them.

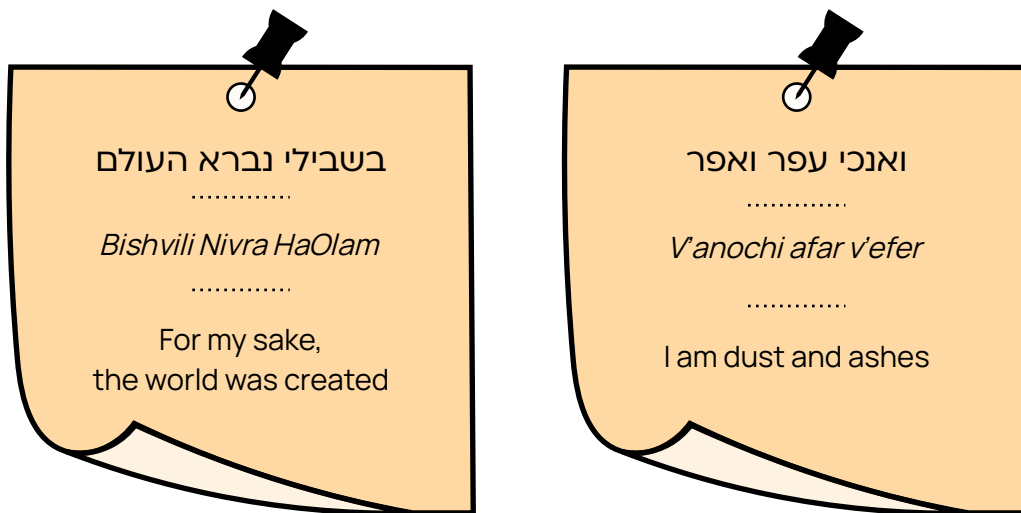


NOT A BLOODLINE...BUT A TEXTLINE

Grit and resilience are core to the Jewish experience. This isn't the first time we've been oppressed, and we're fortunate to be able to cling to Jewish tradition in the face of hardship. Sarah continues to write:

"This is all so deeply Jewish. It's the very process of Jewish tradition. As Amos Oz and his daughter Fania Oz Salzberger wrote, **Jews are "not a bloodline but a textline."** For thousands of years, we have been questioning, debating, challenging, and wrestling with our sacred texts – agonizing about what it means to be a good person, live a worthy life, and serve something greater than ourselves. We've held fast to these texts, carrying them with us across the globe, living proudly by their wisdom, and enraging so many people for so many centuries with our stubborn refusal to disappear."

Jewish text as a source of resistance traces back centuries. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, the founder of the Breslov Hasidic movement, practiced a custom of carrying two notes in one's pocket just like those below to maintain a balanced perspective on life.



The first verse encourages a sense of personal significance and purpose, reminding individuals that they have a unique role in the world. The second verse promotes humility by acknowledging human mortality and frailty. The practice of carrying these notes serves as a tangible reminder of these two perspectives, helping individuals navigate the complexities of life with a balanced and mindful approach.



WORDS OF WISDOM

Jewish wisdom has been captured in texts spanning from the ancient Bible and Talmud to the modern State of Israel and Hollywood. Review the following texts and consider how they can serve as a mantra as you navigate this challenging reality.

Ethics of the Fathers 1:14

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"

Talmud Taanit 21a

"Gam zu l'tova. This too is for the good."

The Bible (Micah 6:8)

"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Golda Meir

"Make the most of yourself by fanning the tiny, inner sparks of possibility into flames of achievement."

Elie Wiesel

"The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of beauty is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference."

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

"Prayer is meaningless unless it is subversive, unless it seeks to overthrow and to ruin the pyramids of callousness, hatred, opportunism, falsehoods."

Anne Frank

"I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart."

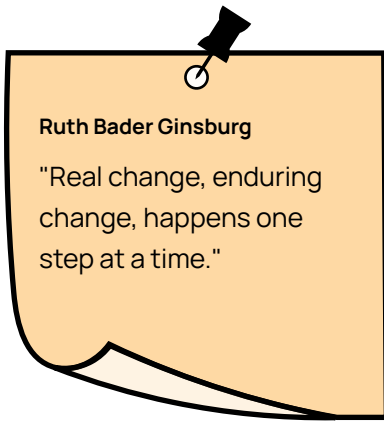
Yehuda Amichai

"Don't stop after beating the swords into plowshares, don't stop! Go on beating and make musical instruments out of them."

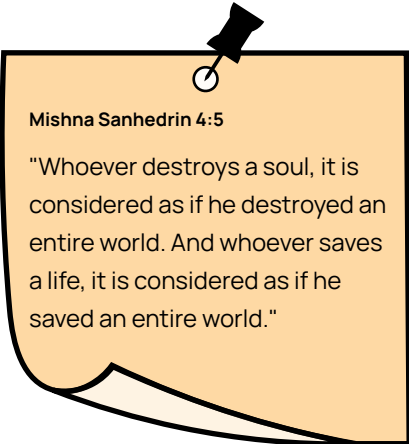
Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk

"It is not as a result of miracles that I believe in God; it is as a result of what I see in the world."





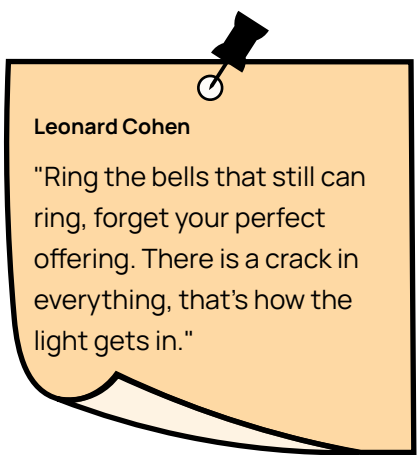
Ruth Bader Ginsburg
"Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time."



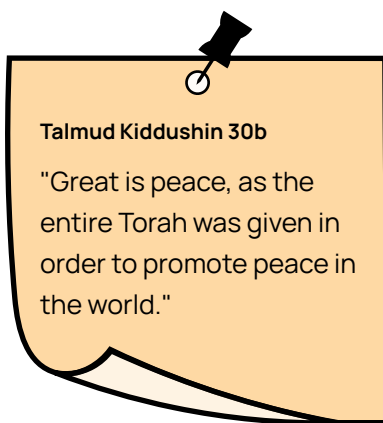
Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5
"Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world."



Mayim Bialik
"I live my Judaism every day. My Judaism is in my activities, in my interactions. I don't hold back, and I don't hold back because I'm proud of my heritage."



Leonard Cohen
"Ring the bells that still can ring, forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in."



Talmud Kiddushin 30b
"Great is peace, as the entire Torah was given in order to promote peace in the world."

◆ **What text would you like to put in your pocket, on your desk or in your backpack?**

What can serve as a source of comfort to remind you you're not alone? Feel free to adopt a quote as is, adapt it for your needs, or find an alternate quote altogether and then write it on the note below.

◆ Next to the quote, include an image that reflects your intention. It could be the image of a person, an event, a piece of artwork, or more.

