

DAY 5

The theme of today is Lihiyot, to be. The questions of who has a right “to be” and with whom and when and where.

Lihiyot-What is an existential threat? How can you fight for your life without losing the values for which you live for.

Text study with Chaya.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Baba Mitziah 62a.

If two are traveling on a journey (far from civilization), one has a pitcher of water, if both drink, they will (both die), but if one drinks, he can reach civilization, -the Son of Patura taught: it is better that both should drink and die, rather than that one should behold his companion’s death. Until R. Akiva came and taught: that they brother may live with thee: thy life takes precedence over his life.

The questions that came up from the text were...

How do we measure life?

If you kill someone, something changes in your soul.

Is this killing passively by making a decision that one person lives and another dies?

Is there something more important than your individual life?

The text in the end favors R. Akiva.

We then met with Helit Barel, executive board member of Israel’s Peace and Security Association in Tel Aviv. She explored What is a threat to Israel? What is an existential threat and what threatens defeat without annihilation?

Below are a few thoughts that came from that discussion. There are not always existential threats existing to make us question the right to be. Even if there is no capacity to threaten the existence of Israel, we still ask these questions.

Things around us are shifting all the time politically, militarily and the answer is not, you do everything, and it is not you will do nothing. Is there a middle ground?

There are 100,000 Jews that live over the green line and not in the major settlement blocks. When discussing what would happen if there was the removal of those people The speaker references when the military took out 2,000 from Gaza and the trauma surrounding that. She stated the need to put strategic planning in place to ease the transition of relocation. If the government is building more and more over the green line then you are saying that you are not in negotiations.

Foreign issue-Are we a Jewish State or a Democratic State? Can you have both?

After 9/11 we have learned what it means to give up civil liberties for a “greater good.” There are many different opinions about whether this is for the “greater good.”

Internal issue-What would the Jewish State look like? Who has the Jewish voice? 12 seats for the Arab party in the last election.

Remain a Jewish Democratic State only if we work towards a 2 State solution. But it will be a pragmatic slow process.

Iran a menacing presence, the question is how you manage it. Nuclear war, you might die, but so will they. That is the stabilizing notion. Fear is the tactic and deterrence. Yet can't go overboard. Need a viable and credible nuclear deterrent. It is all about keeping your finger on the pulse of it all.

If Israel had nuclear deterrents.

Nuclear dyad-two nuclear rivals. You and your opponent need to learn the same thing at the same time.

She left us and we continued the conversation around War, Ethics and Israel. What is the cost of fighting? What is the cost of not fighting? Are we fighting the bad guys? Are we fighting like good guys?

We defined pacifism, realism and just war. We looked at elements of a just war. We explored the issues behind asymmetric warfare. We explored Jewish text that wrestles with these questions.

We divided up and wandered around Sarona market. In the heart of Tel Aviv, a hip shopping, food and outdoor space. It was host to a terrorist attack almost two years ago. We were supposed to engage with people in the market and ask about their feelings if security. After some great food choices, Roman like pizza, fruit frozen yogurt, chocolate humantashen and some dried fruit tea, I did speak to some people. The consensus is that as an Israeli they feel safe here, and if they didn't, what other choice do they have. They need to make the choice to live their life or not.

I took some time to watch the Chabadniks trying to get the secular Jews to lay tefillin. Within the same range of sight was the entrance to the market and the guard to the entrance. It was interesting to see the profiling each group engaged in. And the fact was everyone was very respectful, even those (which was most) who wanted nothing to do with laying tefillin. Both the guard and Chabadnik ended each interaction with Shabbat Shalom!

We debriefed as a group and the same sentiments were found by others. People are living their life. Daily fear is not what drives their existence. Many said when the other person found out they were from NY, they expressed that our country is way more dangerous than Israel.

We went to Bet Tefila Yisraeli for Kabbalat Shabbat. It is where we went with the December 2017 trip for services in Tel Aviv. A little bit of a different vibe because the leader was different. I missed all of you that were in Israel with me!!

Aaron met us for Shabbat Dinner at the Hotel with the group. Aaron and I walked the city after dinner and we marveled how closed down it was. I bought an ice cream but they wouldn't take my credit card, so they didn't let me take it, disappointing, but Aaron brought me marzipan from machne Yehuda ♡.

Shabbat Shalom!!!
Jodie