

Tensions and Grappling: What a Summer Camp Can Tell Us About the Contemporary Jewish Left in
the US

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Introduction

In *Our Genocides: Confronting a new Period in Jewish History*, Todd Hasak-Lowy writes, “The immediate period after October Seventh will be viewed, I believe, as a brief, liminal stage, in which Israel began to respond to Hamas’ genocidal attack with what proved to be a genocidal response of its own. We have now transitioned into a post-post-October Seventh period, one defined by the fact that Israel has committed genocide. This period will demand of Jews, wherever they may be, a new way of being” (2025). When I started this project in Spring 2025, it had been around a year and a half since the events of October 7th. Now, over two years since the beginning of the war, Israel and Hamas have a ceasefire deal, which involved the return of all Israeli hostages, the release of around 1,900 Palestinian prisoners, agreements on land distribution, and plans for Hamas’ disarmament and the establishment of new leadership in Palestine. Meanwhile, Israel continues to allow illegal settlement and violence in the West Bank and launch attacks on Gaza. As Israel restricts humanitarian aid and destroys health care infrastructure in Gaza, the world has been forced to grapple with the genocide in Israel and Palestine. A UN commission of inquiry concluded that Israel has committed and continues to commit acts of genocide in Gaza¹ and over a dozen countries have joined proceedings in support of South Africa’s ICJ case accusing Israel of genocide, which was initiated on December 29, 2023.²

I argue that the period that Hasak-Lowy refers to, which will “demand of Jews, wherever they may be, a new way of being,” is defined by a collective grappling and reckoning. In *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and Claims of Memory*, Ahmad H. Sa’adi writes, “How should Israeli Jews and those outside of Israel who support them cope with their messy past?” (2007, 299). Sa’adi’s invocation of a “messy past” in some ways falls short at this political conjuncture. Yet, his question, when adapted to include a messy present, is central to this moment. The action of coping, or what I call grappling, has become integral to Jewish leftist identity in the US as a consequence of the political, militaristic, and social situations in Israel, Palestine, and the United States. These situations and the fact that they are still unfolding has been the greatest challenge of writing this capstone. Deals are denied or reached, ceasefires are put in place and breached, and tragedies fade as the latest breaking news captures our attention. It is from these conditions that the urgency of this project emerges.

¹ Comm. on Human Rights, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel*, U.N. Doc. A/80/337 (2025).

² *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel) (Proceedings) [December 29, 2023]*.

Six thousand miles from the destruction and mass killing in Palestine, we, as citizens of the United States, are directly involved in the war economically and politically. For the majority of Jews in the US another layer of involvement comes from an emotional, religious, or cultural attachment to Israel and Zionism. As Jews in the US, many of us are taught that a Jewish state, and specifically Israel, is what will ensure Jewish safety. In fact, a 2025 study conducted by the Jewish Federations of North America found that 71% of Jews in the US feel an emotional attachment to Israel.³ This connection does not necessarily translate to support for Israel or its government, nor does it align with the percentage of Jews in the US who call themselves Zionist. For progressive, liberal, and left-leaning Jews, relationships to Israel can contradict or cause tension with their political views. Indeed, many progressive or liberal Jews critique illegal settlement, annexation, and occupation of Palestine, but still support the existence of a Jewish state. This phenomenon is sometimes considered liberal Zionism, but individuals who fit into this category do not necessarily use the language of Zionism to describe themselves. We can see Jewish communities engaging with Zionism through dissent, anti-Zionism, declarations of unwavering support for Israel, weaponization of antisemitism, and contradiction-filled care for Israel, among others. The tensions between the myriad ways Jews in the US are thinking about Israel and Zionism is reflective of the tensions experienced by Jewish individuals and communities in the US.

In my capstone, I examine the ways that leftist Jewish communities and individuals in the US are impacted by today's political and social context, namely the genocide following the October 7th terror attacks. I am interested in the ways that left-leaning Jews in the US grapple, both collectively and individually, with their relationships to Israel and Zionism, and how they reconcile their affective attachments to Israel and Zionism with their commitments to Jewish community in the US and leftist politics and principles today. To explore these questions, I conducted an ethnographic case study of Habonim Dror Machaneh Tavor,⁴ a leftist and Jewish summer camp in Michigan, to analyze the discourse, as well as the avoidance and discomfort, around the topic of Zionism in leftist Jewish spaces. Tavor's positioning within legacies of progressive labor Zionism, socialism, and diasporic Judaism makes it a rich illustration of the tensions within the Jewish leftist community in the US today. Through an analysis of the discourse on Zionism among *tzevet* (staff) at Tavor, I argue that the tensions that arise between affective attachments to Israel and political commitments to the left are reflective of tensions present among leftist Jewish communities in the US.

³ Jewish Federations of North America, *Survey of Jewish Life since October 7 – Zionism Findings (2025)*.

⁴ Habonim Dror Machaneh Tavor is known colloquially as Tavor. Habonim Dror (builders of freedom) refers to the youth movement that Tavor belongs to, and Machaneh translates from Hebrew to “camp.”

Ultimately, I hope that my analysis of Tavor will help us better understand how progressive Jewish communities in the US are grappling with the implications of their relationships to Israel and Zionism, especially when they contradict other political or social commitments. The work of grappling, articulation, and negotiation allows us to build communities that are more able to work through disagreement or uncertainty. Consequently, we can work towards a form of collective liberation in which our political, spiritual, religious, social, cultural, and emotional selves are nourished and interconnected.

I begin by introducing my methods, which combine ethnography and interviews of staff members at Tavor with library research on the Jewish Left in the US, and describe how this research draws on feminist epistemologies of situated and vulnerable knowledge. Relying on these feminist epistemologies, I describe my aims regarding language and audience, and I conclude my introduction with a statement of my positionality and how it informed my approach of this project. Next, I outline the role of affect and emotion in Jewish identities and communities, as well as their labor in discursive spaces and politics. Here I rely on Brian Massumi's theory of affect and Sara Ahmed's work on emotion to establish a foundational understanding, and I engage with Nadia Abu El Haj, Paula Fass, and Naomi Klein in my application of the concepts. In the following section, I trace the history of the Jewish left in the context of the US, especially relating to Zionism and anti-Zionism, from 1900 to October 7th, 2023, showing the essential and continuous nature of dissent and grappling in these communities. This historical context will situate my analysis of the contemporary Jewish left, which I define as the period between October 7th, 2023, and today, where I show the importance of this political and social conjuncture. Here I break down some challenges around discourse on Israel, Palestine, and Zionism and identify some key figures on the contemporary Jewish left in the US. In my analysis section, I analyze my ethnographic and interview research on Camp Tavor, where I posit Tavor as a reflection of the broader dynamics of the US Jewish left today. Specifically, I explore Tavor's culture of discourse and the tensions, silences, and avoidances that persist despite a collective commitment to vulnerability, critical engagement, dialogue, and debate. Finally, in my conclusion I explore diasporism as coined by Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz as an ideological and material method for moving through the tensions of this moment in pursuit of liberation. In this exploration, community and coalition building are central, so I identify some of the organizations and institutions that are involved, or that could be involved, in the diaspora movement. Here I articulate Tavor as an institution that can provide guidance and frameworks for the building of radical diasporic Jewish community.

Methods and Methodology

In this capstone, I provide an ethnographic⁵ case study of Habonim Dror Camp Tavor as a Jewish leftist community that can help us better understand some of the tensions in the Jewish left in the US at this particular political juncture. I used ethnography and interviews as my main methods of research because of how they allow for a more complex and layered understanding of community and affect in times of political tension. Tavor is a community that I belong to and know well, as I spent each summer as a camper and later worked there for five summers. Through ethnography, my hope is to help my audience better understand the complexities and nuances of Tavor's culture, paradoxes, strengths, and challenges. Tavor is a worthwhile case study in thinking about leftism, Judaism, and Zionism because of its relationship to the Jewish, Progressive Labor Zionist, and socialist youth movement Habonim Dror, its attempts at balancing disagreement and community, and its socialist and leftist commitments. Yet, despite being a community that centers debate, collective decision making, and vulnerability, *tzevet* members at Tavor describe a sort of carefulness, shyness, distancing, and sometimes denial within discourse among *tzevet* when it comes to the question of Zionism at this particular moment.

My history as a *chanichol* (camper) and a member of *tzevet* at Tavor for most of my life allows me to conduct this research as an insider, grounding my analysis in internal critique and deeply situated knowledge.⁶ The notion of situated knowledge has a long history in feminist epistemologies. The feminist science studies scholar Donna Haraway has argued that speaking from a specific and situated positionality produces better knowledge (1988). In addition, the Black Feminist sociologist, Patricia Hill Collins has argued for the “potential usefulness of identifying and using one’s own standpoint in conducting research” (1986, S16). She describes the ways that Black feminist scholars can use their personal and cultural experiences within their communities to provide rich, situated analyses of sociological paradigms, family dynamics, and oppression. She writes, “At its best, outsider within status seems to offer its occupants a powerful balance between the strengths of their sociological training and the offerings of their personal and cultural experiences. Neither is subordinated to the other. Rather, experienced reality is used as

⁵ My processes of analyzing my ethnographic research and writing the ethnographic portions of this capstone have been informed by Liliana Carrizo and her forthcoming book, *Singing with Ghosts: Musical Hauntings of Iraqi-Jewish Biographical Songs* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press).

⁶ My understanding of deeply felt and situated knowledge as a key feminist epistemology is informed by the works of Donna Haraway (1988), Alison M. Jaggar (1989), Joan W. Scott (1991), Patricia Hill Collins (1986), Ghassan Mousawi (2021), and Nadia Guessous (2024).

a valid source of knowledge for critiquing sociological facts and theories, while sociological thought offers new ways of seeing that experienced reality” (1986, S29-30). While my whiteness allows me to be less of an outsider in academia compared to Hill Collins, her methodological framework still resonates with my experience in that my insider status and situated knowledge allow me to better articulate the complexity of my community. As many feminist scholars have argued, combining lived experience and research can bring meaningful knowledge to both the communities being studied and the academic field of the research.

Ruth Behar writes in *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*, “When you write vulnerably, others respond vulnerably” (1996, 16). My desire to understand Tavor and the Jewish left, with the ultimate goal of building leftist Jewish community in the US today, requires vulnerability, especially in this moment of grappling with Israel’s genocide. In writing this capstone, I have had to enact this vulnerability. Writing critically about my own community makes our tensions and conflicts visible to anyone, including those who do not approach these topics or this community as insiders. At this political conjuncture, as I grapple with my own attachments to Israel and Zionism and the tensions that have arisen for me personally and within my communities, I am vulnerable. Of course, vulnerability is political and unevenly distributed. The vulnerability of the Jewish left, and Jews in the US in general, is mitigated by the racial and socioeconomic privileges that many Jews experience. As such, Jewish vulnerability and the vulnerable space of grappling, reassessing, questioning, admitting, and debating that we, as US based leftist Jews, find ourselves in today, are the focus of this paper. Thus, my aim in writing vulnerably on a topic that is close to my flesh is to encourage the vulnerable responses and engagement of leftist Jews in the US, including those from Tavor and Habonim Dror.

Throughout the summer of 2025, I conducted field-based ethnographic research at camp through participant observation as a member of *tzevet*. My ethnographic observations focused on both structured and unstructured discourse, especially having to do with Israel, Palestine, and Zionism. By structured discourse, I am referring to organized conversations like *sichot* (discussions), such as those during *peulot* (educational activities), while unstructured discourse refers to more casual conversations. These conversations took place primarily during *chalutz*, which is the two-week period before *chanichimot* (campers) arrive when *tzevet* constructs the space of *machaneh* (camp) both physically and pedagogically. Each day there are blocks of *avodah* (work), *peulot*, *sichot*, and planning time. Additionally, I conducted recorded interviews with nine *tzevet* members throughout the summer

and fall of 2025.⁷ I focused on *tzevet* discourse because I have been a part of these discussions and debates, which helped me establish myself as an equal to those I observed and interviewed, mitigating some of the power dynamics of research. Given the fact that *chanichimot* are minors, it was also important to me that I limit my research to individuals who are legal adults, and who know and trust me. Additionally, I believe that focusing on *tzevet* discourse on the questions of Israel, Palestine, and Zionism will help me to illustrate larger phenomena of grappling and tension in the discourse on Israel and Zionism among the Jewish left in the US today.

Language and Audience

It is undeniable that language has power, and thus it is necessary that I be intentional in my choices for naming and language throughout this capstone, especially as I discuss sensitive or painful topics like large scale violence, profound tension, and division within communities. In this paper, there are many instances when my interlocutors and I refer to Palestine and Palestinians without centering their experiences. This does not come from a lack of care or a perceived unimportance. I do not intend for this Capstone to make assertions about the relative values of Jewish experiences, Israeli experiences, and Palestinian experiences. My capstone is centered on the experiences of leftist Jews in the US today, especially in relation to Zionism which requires engagement with the question of Palestine as it emerges in the leftist Jewish space of Tavor, as well as more broadly in US Jewish leftist communities. Furthermore, this project coincides with the aftermath of October 7th, 2023, when questions of Zionism, Israel, and Palestine, have become even more central to Jews in the US. Still, it is important to explicitly name and recognize the stakes and scale of the violence in Israel and Palestine, especially over the last two years. The mass-killing and destruction in Gaza is not merely an occasion for Jews to reconsider their values and relationships to Israel and Zionism. Israeli military and settler violence in Gaza and the West Bank have resulted in loss that can be hard to grasp. So as we grapple with what it means to be a leftist Jew in the US today, from positions of privilege compared to Palestinians, we must attempt to hold on to the fact that each life lost in this conflict, the vast majority being Palestinian lives, is a whole world,⁸ and that the liberation of Jewish peoples around the world cannot be achieved without the liberation of Palestine.

⁷ When discussing these interviews, excerpts have been edited for clarity. Names and identifying information have also been excluded to uphold the confidentiality of my interlocutors.

⁸ In the Talmud, specifically Sanhedrin 37a, it is stated that to destroy one soul or life is to destroy an entire world. Conversely the preservation of one life is the preservation of an entire world.

In referring to the conflict in Israel-Palestine, I will use the word “genocide.” This is informed by scholars of the Holocaust, genocides, and war, as well as from the experiences of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. This term tends to be challenging for many Jews to accept, and my aim is not to persuade anyone that this is the only correct way of naming the situation. However, regardless of nomenclature, we must at least acknowledge the war crimes, mass killing, and restriction of essential resources committed by Israel. This acknowledgment is necessary if we are truly committed to peace, reparation, and healing.

When discussing Tavor, I will use the Hebrew terms that are used at camp, defining them when I first use them.⁹ Using the language that the Tavor community uses in its day-to-day activities and self-understanding is helpful in taking it seriously on its own terms and conveying some of its complexity. My positionality as a member of the community that I research who has a stake in the issues at hand has led me to use both first and third person when I discuss the Jewish left and Tavor. Lastly, when discussing Jews in the US, I try to avoid using the term “American Jew,” as this term further centers the United States and marginalizes other peoples of the Americas. While much of the scholarship on Jews or the Jewish left in the US use the word “American,” I will primarily use US based Jews, Jews in the US, or US Jews to avoid participating in the conflation of the US and America.

My primary audience of this capstone are Jews in the US who are grappling with their understandings of and relationships to Israel and Zionism. I write especially to those who identify as leftist, progressive, or liberal, asking them to consider, and reconsider, what they have been taught, what they believe, and the tensions that they are experiencing at this moment. Additionally, I write to my community of Tavor and Habonim Dror North America, which shaped me and which I now shape. I seek to complicate our understandings of what it means to be a Jew on the left today in relation to Israel, Palestine, and the Zionist project by grappling with the tensions, contradictions, paradoxes, and questions that emerge through this reflection. Through my case study of Tavor, I hope to offer insights and questions that will guide us as we enter a new era of Jewish history just as they have guided Jewishness historically and to this day.¹⁰

⁹ These terms will also be included in the glossary at the end of this paper and explained in foot notes as appropriate.

¹⁰ It is important here that grappling with questions leads to more questions. In Jewish religion and culture, questioning and curiosity are seen as essential to life. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel *z”l* is often quoted saying “We are closer to God when we are asking questions than when we think we have the answers.”

Positionality

I grew up in a leftist Jewish family in Evanston, IL. Evanston, and especially the public schools I attended, were racially, socioeconomically, and religiously diverse, so I was fortunate to grow up around a lot of people who were both similar to and different from me. Besides my home, I spent time in Jewish spaces like Hebrew school in Evanston and camp Tavor in Michigan. At Tavor, educational programming was engaging, relevant, and deeply impactful. As kids, we were treated as individuals who were capable of engaging with big ideas and dilemmas. At camp, a lot of kids are second or third generation Tavorniks¹¹ and many of my best friends were the children of my dad's best friends from when he and his siblings went to camp.¹² I had grown up seeing how they remained close through adulthood, which I think subconsciously made me open to, and maybe even expect, that level of intimacy in my own camp friendships. It's primarily these relationships and this Jewish, leftist community that have made me unable to imagine my identity without Tavor, returning every summer as a camper and then as a counselor.¹³

I understood Tavor as Jewish, socialist, and leftist, but it was also the place I encountered Zionism most explicitly. The education I got at camp was the basis of my understanding of Zionism, Israel, and Palestine. Even as a progressive labor Zionist camp, it was the first place I remember being taught critical narratives of Zionism. I didn't consider Israel or Zionism to be part of my identity, especially not to the extent that Judaism was, and I never identified as a Zionist, but I remember being told, and believing, that if the US ever became unsafe for Jews Israel would be there for us. My connection to, and care for, Israel came primarily from my family, some of whom live in Israel, and partially from religious and cultural Jewish communities like my synagogue and camp. Both my family and camp taught me to educate myself, be critical, and form my own opinion on and relationship to Israel and Zionism. My attachment to Israel coexisted alongside my belief in diasporic Judaism as an answer to the Jewish question. The depths of Jewish geography,¹⁴ the variations in Jewish practices globally, the commitment to being Jewish despite antisemitism and Christian hegemony, the ability to be a part of a diverse world; these are the

¹¹ Tavornik is a term to describe someone who goes to Tavor.

¹² My dad, uncles, and aunt attended Tavor in the 1970s and 80s. When I asked my dad about why his parents, my grandparents, sent them, he said, "many Jewish and Israeli families saw the need for a way to strengthen and support their children's Jewish identities and connection with other Jews... to spend two months in a Jewish environment where Hebrew is spoken, Shabbat is observed, and to bond with other Jews was for many a balm for the other ten months in American/Christian society" (Personal Communication, 2026).

¹³ Over my five years on *tzevet* I was an *ohel madrichol* (tent counselor), on *tzevet mitbach* (kitchen staff), director of aquatics, techni (technical director), and *rosh mitbach* (head of the kitchen).

¹⁴ Jewish geography refers to the ways that Jews can find people they have in common through degrees of Jewish connection. It is often played as a game where two people start with two Jewish people they know and the group tries to connect them through mutual friends or family members.

beautiful contours of my Jewish life in the US. Tavor has been a huge part of this as a space where Judaism was built into structures and routines, I belonged, I could build and dream, and I could be a part of a collective.

Lastly, the discipline of Feminist and Gender Studies (FGS) and Colorado College's faculty of feminist scholars deeply inform my attention to questions of positionality and the framework of my capstone. FGS has taught me to write from a situated place that shows what is at stake for me as a knowledge producer and takes my lived and felt experiences seriously as a source of knowledge. My understanding of the importance of naming positionality in academic work comes from scholars like Gloria Anzaldua and Cherrie Moraga (1981), Audre Lorde (1984), and Sara Ahmed (2017).

All of this is to say that I approach this capstone as a Jew; born and raised in the US, white, female, queer, upper-middle class, Ashkenazi, leftist, a student of FGS at Colorado College, a member of a progressive labor Zionist summer camp, and deeply preoccupied with a moral future for the Jewish people. My own grappling with Zionism has not been defined by a sort of "waking up" that some leftist Jews describe;¹⁵ rather it has been a lifelong process that has simultaneously become more complicated and clearer as I've learned and grown. Outside of camp, this grappling has been carried out primarily in private and with only my close family and friends. A handful of difficult experiences in Jewish and non-Jewish spaces at Colorado College ultimately led to my distancing from both Jewish and political communities, leaving a sort of void. It is these experiences and identities that brought me to, and ultimately frame, this project, along with the current moment in Israel-Palestine and the US.

Affect, Emotion, and Generational Trauma

Affect and emotion both play important roles in discourse around Israel and Zionism. Here I draw on Brian Massumi's foundational "The Autonomy of Affect" (1995) and Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004) to explain the differences between affect and emotion and the ways they are relevant to my research. First, it is valuable to differentiate emotion and affect. According to Massumi, affect is non-conscious, visceral, and autonomous. Existing outside of language and reality, affect precedes emotion and emerges in the body while emotion exists primarily in the mind. Thus, affect is raw and unprocessed while emotion is socialized and conscious. Affect and emotion are relevant here in a few ways: they help us understand Jewish affective legacies, question the

¹⁵ Many Jews have expressed a feeling of betrayal (EtHashalom 2008), indoctrination (Karcher 2019), or being told "big lies" (Knopf Newman 2011) when they reflect on their education on Zionism and Israel.

role they play in deflection or avoidance, and make clear the ways discourse on Zionism and Israel become charged and heavy.

In Jewish spaces, affect is often intertwined with generational or inherited trauma. Generational trauma can be bodily, non-conscious, and characterized by intensity, aligning with the characteristics of affective experiences (Baum 2017). For Jewish communities and individuals, it is common to inherit traumas of persecution and precarity, especially those traumas associated with the Holocaust.¹⁶ This is clear through the centrality of the Holocaust in Jewish identities and narratives of Jewishness today. Indeed, a 2013 Pew study found that 73% of Jews in the US considered remembering the Holocaust an essential part of their Jewishness. In Todd Hasak-Lowy's *Our Genocides*, he writes, "To be a Jew since the middle of the twentieth century is to know oneself, to fix one's identity, as the potential target of genocidal acts" (2025). I argue that it is this perceived precarity that informs the actions and beliefs of Jews around the world, especially regarding support for and belief in Zionism. Even as Zionism existed before the Holocaust, the need for Jewish safety in the form of a nation state became warranted by the collective claim to trauma that existed and continues to exist in Jewish communities.

The bodily nature of inherited trauma is demonstrated in Paula S. Fass' account of growing up as the child of Holocaust survivors. Fass writes, "Certain memories are so profound, so much part of the bone and marrow that they are inheritable... Even at quite a young age I became a repository of these and many other facts, as my mother passed on to me stories she wanted me to know... Although many of their memories became mine, it was always clear to me that the loss they had experienced would never be mine... Now, I have come to reclaim this other history, the history that my parents gave me in the form of memory" (2009, 2-4). Fass articulates the ways that trauma, pain, and loss become reclaimed intergenerationally. In some cases, memories of the Holocaust and the persecution of Jews can come to define one's Judaism, even in a completely different social and political context. As a result, the past, including the past that came before one was born, becomes central to understandings of one's identity and Jewishness in the present. Fass' narrative relates directly to Marianne Hirsch's theory of "postmemory," which she describes as "the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before." It is through postmemory that individuals feel connected to "experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences

¹⁶ Thank you to Paul Adlerstein for reminding me that there are complexities to this, especially for Jews whose ancestors did not experience Nazi persecution or death camps.

were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right” (Hirsch, n.d.). Here the transference of memory, and specifically affectively charged or traumatic memory, is temporal and intergenerational. Through intergenerational identity formation, affectively charged memories are kept alive and are given space to come to define one’s sense of self.

Another form of transference, which Naomi Klein calls “trauma transference” could be observed following the October 7th terror attacks in Israel. In a November 2024 episode of *On the Nose*, *Jewish Current’s* podcast, Klein describes the way that Jews with no connection to victims of October 7th experience what she calls a “generalized claiming of mourning.” She continues, “I talk about trauma transference and all of these mechanisms to take somebody’s feeling—like the loss of a sister on kibbutz, or a son at the Nova Music Festival—and transfer that feeling to somebody who didn’t know anybody there, but who has an identification, and a connection through Judaism [or] the idea of the kibbutz.” She emphasizes that she is not denying anyone’s right to mourn, but she argues that the people most directly impacted by the massacre are the ones who are most against this “top-down re-traumatization industry” (Klein 2024). Fueled by an identity formation around intergenerational trauma, US Jews’ claim to mourning after October 7th manifested in a disproportionate affective reaction. By invoking a “top-down re-traumatization industry” here, Klein invites us to see the aforementioned affective reaction as vulnerable to weaponization and exploitation, particularly in a political economic context.

Klein’s formulation was in response to a question posed by Arielle Angel, a senior editor-at-large at *Jewish Currents*. Angel brings up Klein’s piece published in the *Guardian* on Israel’s exploitation of Jewish and Israeli trauma and grief since October 7th, asking “whether there is a way to ethically mourn within this framework of weaponization” (2024). A question that should accompany, and perhaps precede, Angel’s question is that of what work is being done through the weaponization of grief. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014), Sara Ahmed writes, “As Kleinman, Das and Lock argue, ‘Collective suffering is also a core component of the global political economy. There is a market for suffering: victimhood is commodified’ (Kleinman, Das and Lock 1997: xi). This commodification of suffering does not mean that all narratives have value or even equal value... some forms of suffering more than others will be repeated, as they can more easily be appropriated as ‘our loss’. The differentiation between forms of pain and suffering in stories that are told, and between those that are told and those that are not, is a crucial mechanism for the distribution of power” (Ahmed 2014, 32). Ahmed’s description of claim to suffering and loss aligns with Klein’s theory of trauma transference. Both Ahmed and Klein connect these phenomena of

claim and transference to ideas of industry and political economy. As a result, we are given space to consider the “work” being done by trauma transference and claims to loss, as well as who might have access to these experiences of suffering and whose suffering may be commodified or even weaponized.

In her talk *Illiberal War: Trauma, Intent, and the Gaza Genocide*, given at Colorado College on September 22, 2025, the Palestinian anthropologist Nadia Abu El Haj spoke about the ways that Israeli and Jewish trauma have erased the idea of intent in the genocide following October 7th, 2023. Abu El Haj describes the dismissal and justification of language that explicitly calls for violence, and even genocide, against Palestinians. In particular, she quotes political leaders and public figures who argued that remarks made immediately after October 7th could not be interpreted as proof of intent to commit genocide because they were coming from a place of trauma. The immediacy of this trauma categorizes it as affective, in that it is raw and unprocessed, and is used to neutralize statements calling for mass destruction and killing. Relying on trauma and emotion, Israeli leaders and their defenders have denied their violence towards Gaza as genocidal and justified the continuation of such violence. Abu El Haj asks that we consider, and pay attention to, what work the invocation of Jewish and Israeli trauma has been made to do both historically and today.

Zionism is entangled with emotion, affect, trauma, fear, ideas of home and belonging, and promises of security and legitimacy. Thus, talking about Zionism can be emotional and affective. In *Solidarity is the Political Version of Love*, Wise and Vilkomerson write, “We know that opposing Zionism, or even discussing it, can be painful, can strike at the deepest trauma and greatest fears of many of us” (272). By naming the pain, trauma, and fear associated with Zionism and its opposition, Wise and Vilkomerson illustrate the importance of affect in progressive Jewish communities and in conversations about Israel and Palestine.

If we understand affect as non-conscious and outside of reality (and thus time), how can we understand it historically? By tracing Jewish affect through history, regardless of how distant or recent, there are two affective experiences occurring at once; that of the actual affect which was experienced historically and that of our affective experience in response to the history. Both affective experiences are involved in processes of transference, (re)claiming, mourning, and identity formation. Using a framework of emotion and affect to analyze the Jewish left historically and in the present, we give importance to the shapes that emotion and affect have taken over time and the places from which they have emerged. The use of this framework is an invitation for readers, especially those

with ties to Jewishness, leftism, and Israel-Palestine, to consider the roles of affect, emotion, and postmemory in the contemporary moment.

History of the Jewish Left in the United States

Affect and emotion do not emerge from nowhere. Sara Ahmed writes, “Through emotions, the past persists on the surface of bodies. Emotions show us how histories stay alive, even when they are not consciously remembered; how histories of colonialism, slavery, and violence shape lives and worlds in the present” (2004, 202). Over time, the Jewish left has grounded their organizations and movements through a conscious engagement with their history. I continue in that tradition because historical context is necessary for understanding the present and continuing legacies of political and social mobilization. This section will trace what it has meant, and now means, to be a leftist Jew since the beginning of the 20th century.

The Jewish left cannot be defined in one way or once and for all; like all traditions, the Jewish left is always subject to internal debate and multiple interpretations at different historical conjunctures. However, a deeper historical understanding of the various self-definitions of Jewish leftist organizations, movements, and individuals can help us better understand the values and views of the Jewish left today. Pew Research data from 2021 found that Jews were among the most liberal and democratic groups in the US, with 71% aligning with the Democratic Party and 50% self-describing as liberal. Of course, within that population only a portion would identify as leftist, which is an important distinction. Leftist organizations and individuals tend to be more radical, more anti-capitalist, and more open to abolishing or completely restructuring institutions. Conversely, liberal and democratic groups favor moderate change occurring through existing systems.

Rabbi Alissa Wise and Rebecca Vilkomerson, leftist Jewish organizers and former leaders of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), write that “the left seeks a radical transformation of our social systems toward democracy and justice. The left rejects capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism and opposes forces of domination including prisons, police, militaries, and corporations” (2024, 24-25). To them, and many others, the Jewish left is anti-Zionist and diasporism has become a touchstone for the contemporary Jewish left (Balthaser 2025, 119). In *Jews and the Left: The Rise and Fall of a Political Alliance* (2014), Philip Mendes writes that the contributing factors to the association of Jews and the left is due to “class and ethnic oppression, Jewish cultural values, and Left support for Jewish equality. The urbanization and intellectualism of Jews may also have contributed” (Mendes 2014, 5). The definition

of the Jewish left in the US has changed over time because Jewish social, political, and economic standing have changed.

In this section, I briefly introduce and discuss five key periods in the history of the Jewish left in the US from 1900 to today. To do so, I will draw on the works of Tony Michels (2012), Philip Mendes (2014), Rebecca Vilkomerson and Alissa Wise (2024), Benjamin Balthaser (2025), Marjorie N. Feld (2025), and others. For each period, I attempt to contextualize movements, events, and trends with information on Jewishness at the time, leftism at the time, and relationships between Jews in the US and Israel. It is important to mention that the history of the Jewish left in the US is not confined or reduceable to issues of Zionism and anti-Zionism, and that Jews in the US have always had diverse ways of relating to Zionism.

Early Immigration: 1900 to 1933

The first Jews to come to the Americas in the late 17th century were Sephardi,¹⁷ but in “the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in response to swelling violence pre- and post-World War I, the Jewish population of the US ballooned, with more than two and a half million Jews, primarily Ashkenazi, immigrating from Eastern Europe to the US” (Vilkomerson and Wise 2024, 11). According to Vilkomerson and Wise, “these Jews were by and large poor and working-class racialized minorities, making them among the natural standard-bearers for the communist party and unions, prominent in the left of their day” (2024, 11-12). While there was a widespread preoccupation with assimilating to American society, Jewish immigrants tended to live in communities with other Eastern European Jews where they could speak Yiddish, organize politically and socially, and establish a new Jewish culture in a context very different from that which many of them came from.

These communities, called *landsmanshaftn*, “were, in fact, the most widespread type of organization among the newcomers. There were some 3,000 in New York alone, with hundreds more in Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Cleveland, Boston, and other places where Jewish immigrants settled. They enrolled hundreds of thousands of members, and, when families of members are included, touched the lives of the majority of immigrants” (Sawyer 2024). Jewish positionalities as lower class, racialized immigrants made communism, socialism, and labor organizing extremely relevant to them. The Jewish left in the US before WWII was defined by organizing

¹⁷ Sephardi Jews originate from the Iberian Peninsula, while Mizrahi Jews originate from SWANA (Southwest Asia and North Africa), and Ashkenazi Jews originate from Europe.

movements and strikes, especially having to do with labor but also on an intellectual and journalistic level.¹⁸ For example, the United Hebrew Trades, an association of Jewish labor unions, was formed in 1888, and the *Der Arbeter Ring* (The Workers Circle) an organization that provided mutual aid and social, financial, and educational support to Jewish immigrant communities, was founded in 1900. Similarly to *landsmanshaftn*, organizations like *Der Arbeter Ring* provided community, but they also advocated for political causes such as workers' rights and fair housing.

In *Citizens of the Whole World: Anti-Zionism and the Cultures of the American Jewish Left* (2025)

Benjamin Balthaser writes, “As historian Karen Brodtkin tells it, socialism was ‘hegemonic’ in American Jewish life before the Cold War. Not in the sense that every American Jew was a socialist, but rather that a ‘working class’ and ‘anti-capitalist outlook’ was a familiar, even dominant political position of American Jews between the first waves of mass Jewish immigration in the 1880s and the Red Scare of the late 1940s” (2025, 7). Furthermore, according to Tony Michels, “During the 1930s and 1940s, Jews populated the breadth of the American Left, from moderate social democrats to self-proclaimed revolutionaries. Within the communist party they accounted for anywhere between 32 and 45 percent of the central committee between 1921 and 1950... The sociologist Nathan Glazer was certainly correct to point out in 1961 that ‘no detailed understanding on the impact of Communism on American life is possible without an analysis of the relationship between American Jews and the American Communist Party’” (Michels 2012, 15). The work of Michaels and Balthaser, in conversation with Brodtkin and Glazer, is helpful in understanding the importance of socialism and communism in Jewish communities, which also aligns with the presence of organizations like The Workers Circle. At a time when most Jews were recent immigrants to the US, many organizations and individuals were shaped by social, political, and economic realities of Europe, and especially Eastern Europe. For example, individuals with connections to European groups like the Labor Bund influenced the Jewish and broader US left.¹⁹

Regarding the question of Zionism more broadly, Feld writes, “At the start of the twentieth century American Jewish leaders were largely open to dissent from Zionism and engaged in substantive debate over the role

¹⁸ Interestingly, Jews were on both sides of labor strikes. Some bosses of newly immigrated Jewish workers who went on strike were German Jews who had been in the US for a couple generations and established themselves financially and professionally.

¹⁹ While Ashkenazi Jews made up the majority of Jewish immigrants and the Jewish left in the US, Devin E. Naar's recent *Jewish Currents* piece “Reclaiming the Ladino Left” (2026) recovers the legacy of Ladino-speaking Sephardic Jews in early 20th century US.

Israel should play in American Jewish life” (2024, 1). According to Feld, much of the debate around Zionism, especially before World War II, was intracommunal and centered around the Jewish experience in the US. For example, many Jews of diverse political and social views opposed Zionism because of a fear that Jewish nationalism would harm Jews in the diaspora. This harm, it was believed, would occur through accusations of dual loyalties, reinforcement of the idea of Jews as a racial group, draining of resources for diasporic Jewish communities, and the isolation of diaspora Jews as a result of Jewish immigration to Israel. She adds that the rejection of nationalism and militarism also played a role, especially on the left, along with a prioritization of Judaism’s teachings of justice and universalism (Feld 2024, 7). As Feld demonstrates, before the emergence of the manufactured Zionist consensus, Jews of all political and social views, including leftist Jews, opposed and supported Zionism.

WWII Era: 1933 to 1947

The second World War, and specifically the Holocaust, led to a significant population decrease and more widespread support for Zionism among Jews globally. The Jewish population in Europe, which made up the majority of Jewish population globally, was reduced by two thirds after the Holocaust, marking a profound emotional and material shift. Systemic and widespread anti semitism gave merit to the argument that Jewish security, and even existence, was dependent on the creation of a Jewish state. Even the Communist Party, which originally did not support “bourgeois nationalist” Zionism, decided in 1947 that the Jewish state alongside an Arab state in Palestine could be a tool of anti-imperialism and working-class internationalism (Feld 2024, 58).

Michels describes a “back-and-forth dynamic” among radicals regarding the Jewish question (2012, 15). For example, the Russian revolution pulled Jews towards internationalism²⁰ and the Holocaust, which occurred three decades later, pushed them towards Jewish nationalism. This phenomenon “reflected a deep tension between the competing ideological poles of socialist internationalism and Jewish nationalism, both of which had made strong claims on Jewish politics since the nineteenth century. Understanding the long encounter of Jews with the Left is impossible without an appreciation of that tension” (Michels 2014, 14-15). Scholars like Michels and Feld highlight the way that Zionism became inseparable from political events like the Russian revolution and the Holocaust, as well as trends in antisemitism globally. The trajectory of the American Council for Judaism (ACJ), which was

²⁰ This form of internationalism relied on the privileging of one’s identity as a worker, rather than a Jew. Thank you to Paul Adlerstein for reminding me that the USSR pushed Jews away from organizing as Jews.

founded in 1942 by a group of reform Rabbis, demonstrates the influence of antisemitism and the Holocaust on Jewish efforts to organize against Zionism. ACJ was “the only American Jewish organization ever created to fight Zionism and the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine” (Kolsky 1990, 1) and at its zenith had multiple chapters and regional offices across the US. In 1933, when Hitler became the chancellor of Germany, it was unclear what exactly was to come.²¹ However, once the extent of the Holocaust became well known and the Jewish leaders began to impose the Zionist consensus on US Jews, the ACJ lost political momentum and membership. Not only did the Holocaust influence the implementation of the Zionist consensus and increases in Jews supporting Zionism and Israel, but it also made the project more attainable by demonstrating the depths of antisemitism in Europe.

State Formation and Violence: 1948 to 1973

While the violence towards the Jews during the Holocaust led to more Zionist sentiments among Jews, Israeli violence towards Palestinians triggered more widespread anti-Zionism and critiques of Israel. Throughout this period there were multiple consequential wars and conflicts in Israel-Palestine beginning with the Arab-Israeli War, also called the Israeli War of Independence or the *Nakba*²² (catastrophe), which took place from May 1948 to March 1949. Leading up to the war, tensions between Jewish settlers and Arabs living in the British Mandate of Palestine were rising. Britain, despite purporting to be a mediator and enlightened party, betrayed the Arabs, escalated the conflict, and lost control over the region. While there was no question among Palestinians of the destruction and violence of the *Nakba*, it took longer for Jews and Israelis to acknowledge its scale and their role in it. In the 1980s a group of Israeli scholars²³ made it undeniably clear what the *Nakba* was: the violent expulsion of around 750,000 Palestinian Arabs, massacres of towns in their entirety, destruction of homes and farms, and, ultimately, a huge loss of territory.

²¹ In fact, according to Israel Shahak’s *Jewish History, Jewish Religion* (1994) some Zionist leaders, namely Zionist Rabbi Dr. Joachim Prinz, welcomed Hitler’s rise to power. Shahak discusses this as an example of alignment between antisemites and Zionists. He writes that both Zionists and antisemites assume “a permanent and ahistorical incompatibility between Jews and Gentiles” (Shahak 1994, 70). While Prinz, and the world, did not know where Nazism would lead, Shahak writes, they also did not know where Zionism would lead. Shahak identifies Zionism’s path as moving toward “a combination of all the old hates of classical Judaism towards Gentiles and to the indiscriminate and ahistorical use of all the persecutions of Jews throughout history in order to justify the Zionist persecution of the Palestinians” (1994, 72).

²² For more information on the *Nakba*, see *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (Sa’di and Abu Lughod 2007) and *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine* (Khalidi 2020).

²³ The New Historians originally included scholars like Ilan Pappé, Avi Shlaim, Benny Morris, and Simha Flapan.

In 1967, the Six Day War, or the *Naksa* (setback), and the 1973 October War, which eventually led to the Camp David Accords, further cemented the Zionist consensus. Feld describes how the appearance of a consensus on Israel elided a more complex picture. She writes, “After the destruction and horrors of the Holocaust, and especially as Israel became an essential cold war ally to the United States as well as a beneficiary of American foreign aid, tolerance for these diverse perspectives among mainstream Zionist Jewish leaders waned. These leaders created and imposed a consensus on Israel and American Zionism that they believed was essential for Jewish survival... What appeared as a consensus based on shared ideas was in fact a manufactured consensus as Jewish leaders increasingly discounted and marginalized dissent on this issue” (Feld 2025, 1). While it was true that many Jews viewed Israel favorably following the Six Day War in 1967, the institutionalization of Zionism and subsequent silencing of dissent resulted in US Jewish life taking on a Zionist character. The marginalization of dissent discussed by Feld was carried out through accusations of “disloyalty and even antisemitism” (Feld 2025, 2). Feld’s formulation of the “manufactured consensus” is helpful in highlighting the top-down nature of the consensus purported by Jewish institutions. While historians seem to agree that most US Jews were Zionist following the 1967 war, the silencing and ostracization of dissenters leads us to question the reasoning behind Jewish identification with Zionism.

These wars and conflicts directly impacted global perceptions, not to mention US Jewish perceptions, of Israel and Palestine. In the United States, leftist Jews were involved in the Civil Rights Movement, feminist movement, LGBT rights movement, and protests of the Viet Nam War between 1955 and 1972. The coalition building and increase in Jewish presence in non-Jewish leftist movements allowed more leftist Jews to interact with and learn from diasporic Palestinian activists and their allies, pushing leftist Jews toward anti- and non-Zionism. At the same time, Jewish institutional life was dominated by Zionist and pro-Israel sentiments. Consequently, “As liberal and left-wing social movements and justice coalitions came to include criticism of Israel in their platforms, the forced consensus prevented American Jewish organizations from joining these coalitions” (Feld 2, 2025). The divide between the left and the Jews caused by the Zionist consensus, along with the actions of Israel, led to the incoherence of liberal Zionism. As a result, Jewish liberalism and American Zionism drifted apart after the 1967 war, a tension that continues today (Beinart 2012, 37).

Continued Tensions: 1973 to 2005

Throughout the 1970s, Israel's government became more right-wing and maintained the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian armed resistance increased, and the 1973 October War led to the Camp David Accords in 1978. The invasion of Lebanon and subsequent war took place in 1980, along with the First *Intifada* (uprising), began in 1987, marking the largest act of Palestinian resistance. Seven years after the First *Intifada* ended, the Second *Intifada* took place between 2000 and 2005. Despite the manufactured Zionist consensus, a 1989 American Jewish Committee (AJC) poll showed that more than half of US Jews disagreed with Israel's response to the First *Intifada* (Beinart 2020, 43).

Jewish anti- and non-Zionist organizations began to emerge, such as the New Jewish Agenda (NJA). NJA, a multi-issue progressive Jewish organization that aimed to be “a Jewish voice among progressives and a progressive voice among Jews” (Mendes 2014, 263) was founded in 1980, a time when the Zionist consensus was strong in the US (Feld 2024, 160). According to Feld, NJA was the only Jewish organization where Jews could critique Israel after Zionism became widespread and institutionalized (2024, 160). Another organization, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ), which organized around labor, housing, racial justice, and Jewish diasporism, was founded in 1990 in New York City. The existence of non-Zionist organizations like NJA and JFREJ indicate that traditions of Jewish anti- and non-Zionism were not obsolete. Although dissent was silenced and often resulted in tensions with one's community, anti- and non-Zionist movements gained members following the Second *Intifada*.

Post-Intifada: 2005 to 2023

After the Second *Intifada*, non-Zionist organizations like Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) and T'ruah (then called Rabbis for Human Rights – North America) grew as more leftist Jews protested Israel's response to the Palestinian uprising. Organizations like J Street, which is usually categorized as liberal Zionist, and International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN), which is explicitly anti-Zionist, formed in 2008, and in response to the 2014 Gaza War, IfNotNow was founded as a non-Zionist organization. The Jewish left grew despite repression, leading to a landscape in which “Religious Jewish leaders such as Brant Rosen are members of DSA; DSA members belong to the temple for which he is a rabbi; classical Jewish liberals such as Peter Beinart come closer to the left; JVP consists of both rabbinical students and very secular socialists; Old Left journals such as Jewish Currents increasingly embrace religious Judaism; and so on” (Balthaser 2025, 131). Legacies of socialism remained central

among the Jewish left, especially in organization like JFREJ, and organizations continued to see membership across religious denominations build coalition across demographics.

In 2012, Peter Beinart published *The Crisis of Zionism*, which argued that liberal Zionism was becoming less possible because of the actions of the Israeli government. He wrote that “for young American Jews, more than for their elders, the policies of the Israeli government determine the legitimacy of the Zionist project. Zionism is what Israel does” (Beinart 2012, 181). The tensions of liberal Zionism always existed, but as Beinart says, the actualized version of Zionism exacerbated them. However, as many Jews became disenchanted with Israel and Zionism, the 2013 Pew Research Center’s “Portrait of Jewish Americans” showed that 69% of American Jews are either “emotionally very attached” or “somewhat attached” to Israel.²⁴ The 2013 survey also found that 43% of Jews in the US consider “caring about Israel” an essential part of their Jewish identity, while 44% consider it important but not essential, and 12% consider it not important. This is a large component of the tension that we see throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

The Contemporary Jewish Left: 10/7/23 to Today

In a 2023 study conducted by the American Jewish Committee (AJC), a Zionist Jewish institution, 45% of Jews in the US reported feeling more connected with Israel compared to before October 7th. Since then, there has been a huge surge in Jewish leftist engagement with Palestinian solidarity and liberation movements. Scholarship and journalism on contemporary Judaism, Israel, Palestine, Zionism, and antisemitism have increased in both Jewish and mainstream media. Furthermore, this increase is occurring among left wing, right wing, and centrist communities. Alongside the data presented in the AJC study, it is clear that Jews in the US care about issues of Judaism, Zionism, and Israel.

It is clear that what many of us, as Jewish in the US, were taught about Israel has normalized and justified the Zionist project and Israeli state. In part, this teaching occurs in the home or within communities, but primarily Jewish American attachment to Israel is influenced by the ways that Jewish institutions have embraced and enforced the Zionist consensus. According to Jon Danforth Appell “Today, there is no major mainstream Jewish institution that is not firmly operating as a purveyor of Zionism. Federations, synagogues, nonprofits, and the other institutional pillars of the Jewish community continue to offer material support to Israel and enforce loyalty to the state, while

²⁴ These findings are very similar to the 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey

punishing those who criticize Israel and erasing non- or anti-Zionist Jewish histories from the record” (2025). The exclusion and erasure of non- and anti-Zionist Jews leads to a schism within US Jewry, which can leave Jews who are critical of Israel or Zionism without access to Jewish community.

On the Jewish left, the questions that are being asked about Zionism and Israel-Palestine today are similar to those asked historically and this is not the first generation of Jews to experience large scale division. However, what makes our current political and social conjuncture unique is the growth in the number of Jews in the U.S. who are openly critiquing Israel and Zionism and the extent to which this critique is happening. Most US Jews understand Israel as a democratic and just state, what keeps Jews safe, and a pillar of US Jewry, yet these understandings do not align with leftist values or principles. This dissonance has led to leftist Jews in the US grappling with what they thought they knew, what they feel, and their political, religious, and cultural identities. This process of grappling is in part individual but is primarily collective because of the ways it has impacted many Jews’ senses of belonging and community in Jewish spaces and the way it reflects collective understandings of Israel as a Jewish state. Debates of morality, history, truth, politics, safety, and intent are often shrouded in deep affect, contradiction, and generational trauma.

A pillar of the Jewish left, *Jewish Currents (JC)* is a magazine founded in 1946 that is “committed to the rich tradition of thought, activism, and culture of the Jewish left.” (Jewish Currents 2025). The magazine produces a biweekly podcast, *On the Nose*, which is a space for the editorial staff to discuss current events, politics, culture, and questions preoccupying the Jewish left. Beinart, an editor-at-large for *JC* published *Being Jewish after the Destruction of Gaza: A Reckoning* in February of 2025 which was successful among liberal Jews. Beinart is an interesting figure to follow in the evolution of the Jewish left, especially in relationship to Zionism, because his own relationship to Israel has changed profoundly over the last couple decades. In his own words, *Being Jewish after the Destruction of Gaza* “is about the stories Jews tell ourselves that blind us to Palestinian suffering. It’s about how we came to value a state, Israel, above the lives of all the people who live under its control. And it’s about why I believe that Palestinian liberation means Jewish liberation as well.” (Beinart 2024)

The Jewish left has historically been characterized by socialism and communism and diverse relationships to Israel and Zionism. The Jewish left has existed through institutions, movements, journals and newspapers, and organizations. In recent years as liberal Zionism has become less viable, anti-Zionism has come to define the

majority of the Jewish left. However, Habonim Dror remains committed to maintaining their Zionist identity alongside their leftist and socialist identities.

Case Study Analysis

To frame my case study on Tavor, it is important to understand the prevalence and origins of Jewish summer camps for US Jewish communities. The first Jewish summer camps were founded at the end of the 19th century to give Jewish boys an escape from the hot summers in the overcrowded tenements on the lower east side of New York, but they quickly began to include Jewish girls as well. At first, they were meant to be tools of assimilation but after WWII they were seen as tools for cultural preservation and reproduction. In fact, many Jewish immigrants from Europe “embraced the summer camp movement, which often proudly promoted various ideological standpoints, most frequently Zionism” (Wenner 2010, 1). Jewish camps grew and became popular across the country as a tool for Jewish education and community building for young Jews.²⁵ According to a 2020 Pew study, nearly four in ten US Jews said they attended a summer camp with Jewish content as a child. Furthermore, a Foundation for Jewish Camp study found that Jewish camps engaged 198,730 youth, teens, and young adults in 2025 alone. This suggests that Jewish summer camps continue to play an important role in contemporary Jewish life in the U.S. today.

The summer camps that are a part of the youth movement Habonim Dror North America (HDNA) are examples of Jewish summer camps rooted in ideological pillars. HDNA has six pillars: Judaism, Socialism, Progressive Labor Zionism, *Hagshama* (actualization), Social Justice, and Collective Liberation of Peoples in Israel and Palestine (CLPIP).²⁶ Founded in 1935,²⁷ Habonim Dror operates six summer camps throughout the US and

²⁵ Jewish summer camps also led to romantic and sexual relationships between Jews, which was seen as valuable in preserving Jewish culture within a context of Christian hegemony. For a fascinating analysis of this, and more specifically sexual Zionism, see “How Many More Orgasms Will be Had for Zionism” (Rose 2016) and *Jews of Summer* (Fox 2025).

²⁶ CLPIP was added as a pillar in 2025 during Veida, the biennial movement-wide meeting where members consensus on proposals having to do with the movement and its camps. Another example of a Veida proposal that passed in past years was the shift to use gender-inclusive Hebrew throughout the movement.

²⁷ Habonim, an English youth movement, was established in 1929, and Dror, a Russian youth movement, was established in 1915. According to Habonim Dror, Habonim (the builders) gained 10,000 members by the mid 1930’s. From 1935-1950 Habonim spread to North America, South Africa, India, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, New Zealand, and Holland. Similarly, Dror spread throughout Europe, South America, and South Africa. Habonim in North America was born out of the 1935 Poale Zion (workers of Zion) convention and was formed on the principles of Zionism and socialism.

Canada.²⁸ According to a 2013 study, “Habonim Dror cannot produce an exact estimate of its alumni, but some observers have arrived at a figure of 40,000 alumni since the first Habonim camps opened in 1935” (Cohen and Fink 2013, 5). HDNA’s mission, as stated on their website, is “to build a personal bond and commitment between North American Jewish youth and the State of Israel, and to create Jewish leaders who will actualize the principles of social justice, equality, peace and coexistence in Israel and North America.” (HDNA 2025). The language of “bond” and “commitment” is not unique to Habonim Dror, rather it shows up in the mission statements of many diasporic Jewish institutions and organizations. In the case of HDNA, however, Zionism is not understood as contradicting political commitments to the left or their other values of social justice and equality. Interestingly, the centrality of Israel to HDNA’s mission is not exactly reflected in Tavor’s values, which they list on their website as Social Justice, Judaism, Socialism, Education About Israel, and *Hagshama*. Here, “Education about Israel” replaces “Progressive Labor Zionism,” in order to better reflect the Tavor community’s relationships to Israel and Zionism.

Camp Tavor,²⁹ located in Three Rivers, MI, is a summer camp that was founded in 1956. As a part of HDNA, it has historically been categorized as a progressive labor Zionist summer camp that mirrors the socialist, leftist, Jewish, and Zionist structure of the *kibbutz*. Each summer typically has two sessions of 100-200 *chanichimot* who primarily come from the Chicago, Detroit, and Ann Arbor areas. Usually, the youngest kids are 8 to 10-year-olds, and the oldest are 16 to 17 years old. The community is almost completely Jewish, of whom the majority are middle class and White. There are a range of relationships to and ways of practicing Judaism, but most *chanichimot* and *tzevet* are Ashkenazi Jews and belong to Reform, Reconstructionist, or Conservative synagogues.

Tzevet is usually made up of around 50 people between 18-24 years old. Most are from the Midwest US and grew up at camp. Some returners bring friends or partners from school, who are usually the only non-Jews. There are also *shlichim*, members of our sister movement in Israel,³⁰ and members of Habonim Dror Australia, called *schnatties*. *Tzevet* is thought of as one group, *tzevet gadol*, but there are also distinctions of *tafkidim* (roles).

²⁸ The six camps are Tavor in Michigan, Galil in Pennsylvania, Miriam in B.C., Canada, Moshava in Maryland, Gilboa in Northern California, and Gesher in Ontario, Canada.

²⁹ Tavor is named after *Har Tavor*, or Mount Tavor, in Israel.

³⁰ HaNoar HaOved vHaLomed (NOAL) is HDNA’s sister movement in Israel.

Tavor's values

To better understand and articulate Tavor's values and culture, I asked interview subjects how they would describe them. BT said, "It is pretty lefty. It feels really Jewish but in a unique and intentional way that is not forced upon people and is a culture we shaped. It also feels very queer." To describe Tavor's culture, subjects used words like good, vibrant, happy, welcoming, acceptance, and openness. For example,

SL: I think the biggest thing is that Tavor has a culture of acceptance and openness... and how we try to be silly and cringy for the kids because it's okay to not be cool... I also think about the way that most people at camp don't wear bras and don't shave, and I think that doing those things, especially when we're around kids who don't know what they think about those things yet, really shapes a culture of realizing that the world can be something different than what it is right now. Utopia is kind of a crazy word, but I think it's closer to utopia than the real world is.

A large part of the culture discussed by *tzevet* members is the way that caring is centered. Whether it be caring for the collective, the physical space, or our pedagogies, caring is essential to working and living in community at Tavor. GM spoke about this culture of caring in their interview, saying "it's cool that here's a culture of caring about things, and caring that we're thinking about things, and even caring that we're caring about things." The culture of care emerges from a collective value of care, which most interview subjects mentioned when asked about Tavor's values. For example, GM described Tavor's value of education as "a means of care" in which we "center learners and teachers as full people" and BT said that Tavor values "caring about each other and the world." The culture of care, according to GM, "leads to a lot of frustrating conversations but also a lot of really good and powerful relationships where we really understand what we care about." Other values mentioned include education, fun, dilemmas, talking through and about conflict, Judaism, socialism, togetherness, creativity, community, and distributed labor and leadership.

Labor, Collectivity, and Decision-Making on *Tzevet*

The culture of labor at Tavor is often discussed using the phrase "everyone has a job on the farm." The idea is to dismantle hierarchies between types of labor and to value all of the forms of labor that go into maintaining our space and community. The structures of labor at Tavor are important to understand because they are foundational to the culture and day to day operations of camp. Labor informs our relationships to the space, each other, ourselves, our Jewishness, nature, and ideology. It is essential to our experience at and investment in Tavor both physically and emotionally.

One way that labor is distributed is through *tafkidim*. *Mazkirut* (maz) are the four leaders of camp: *rosh* (summer director), *chinuch* (programming/education director), and two *technis* (technical director). *Tzevet chanichim* is made up of *ohel madrichim*, who live with kids, and *mashatzim*, who are the head of a *shikva* (age groups) and their *tzevet katan* (counselors working with one age group) and don't live with kids. *Tzevet mitbach* (kitchen staff) also don't live with kids and they are led by two *rashei mitbach* (heads of the kitchen). Finally, there are specialists of *beito* (art), *chemu* (music), *chava* (farm), aquatics, *shamash* (groundskeeping/maintenance), *machsan* (tool shed), and *tiyul* (camping trip). Other distributions of labor occur through *avodah*, *vaadot* (committees), *chuggim* (club), and *tochniot erev* (evening activities).

The distribution of labor on *tzevet* is interesting because it attempts to mitigate power dynamics and the harmful effects of hierarchy while also maintaining an organized and comfortable community, especially regarding kid care and the day-to-day labor of running camp. For example, in the case that there is an issue with a *chanichol*, the structures of *tzevet* mean that as few people as possible know the details of the situation, maintaining privacy and autonomy for the *chanichol* while also ensuring they receive care. These structures also ensure that all of the labor required to maintain and run camp each day is completed, seen, and valued. This includes physical labor like cleaning bathrooms or cooking for all of camp, as well as emotional labor of caring for kids and creating an environment conducive to fun and learning.

Another way that *tzevet* creates intentional community is through a system called *kupah*,³¹ which comes from the *kibbutz* movement and refers to the combining of money and resources in accordance with our value of socialism. Through *kupah*, every member of *tzevet* has equal resources and access to said resources, regardless of *tafkid*. The extent, or form, of *kupah* is decided by consensus, and the options are full *kupah*, partial *kupah*, or no *kupah*.³² In the five years I've been on *tzevet*, we have decided on full *kupah* every year³³ which means that when I'm at camp I don't pay for anything with my own money. The money that makes up *kupah* is technically all of our money, and it comes from our paychecks. It is completely optional to give money to *kupah*, and it is expected that

³¹ Kupah translates to "cash register."

³² Full kupah would financially cover every need of every *tzevet* member for the summer, while no kupah would mean everyone pays for things on their own, and partial would be a combination of the two. Kupah is spent on things like toiletries, replacements for lost or broken things, snacks, and anything on our weekly day off.

³³ However, this version of full kupah comes with collective responsibility. First, we don't have endless funds, so we ask that everyone be mindful in the ways they spend and that purchases over a certain amount, say \$50, be brought to the collective so that everyone is aware. Second, camp is only over the summer, so full kupah will not cover things like rent in the outside world.

everyone will only give what they can, but there is also a recommended amount based on how many *tzevet* members we have and how much people are being paid.³⁴

The discussion usually goes through pros and cons of each scenario, with most concerns having to do with the harmful social dynamics that could emerge without *kupah*.³⁵ Once we reach a point where a proposal is articulated, we attempt to reach a consensus on the proposal using our thumbs:³⁶ thumb up is “yes, this is good for me and good for the collective;” thumb sideways is “maybe, but I have questions or concerns,” and thumbs down means “no, this is bad for me and bad for the collective.”³⁷ After the consensus, we discuss thumb positions, asking people with thumbs down or sideways to explain their concerns. Any group decision made at Tavor is done through consensus, which reflects Tavor’s efforts to avoid hierarchical culture and to make decisions with those impacted by said decisions. The value of discursive spaces lies in part in their centering of questions. A structure that is especially centered around debate and questioning is *asefa klalit* (general meeting), which is when almost all decisions are made during *chalutz* and the summer. In their interview, SL described the importance of *asefa klalit* as follows,³⁸

SL: I think communal input and democratic decision-making is really big at Tavor and *asefa klalit* is a great example of that. I just started reading a book by Elie Wiesel and he was talking about how the mysticism of Judaism lies in questions and that kind of feels the same to me. It’s not really the answers that we come to during *asefa klalit*, it’s more the process of talking about it and practicing democratic decision-making that is really important.

Regardless of one’s role at camp, everyone has equal degrees of influence on decision-making, including in discussions leading up to consensus and in the consensus itself. At Tavor, decision-making becomes an avenue for

³⁴ Pay at Tavor is determined by years out of high school.

³⁵ There are also questions about what is considered a “need,” whether it would cover things like subscriptions or prescriptions that are not exclusive to camp, and whether there should be a limit on how much an individual can spend at a time without bringing it to the collective.

³⁶ There is also an option to make an “X” with your arms, which indicates a feeling of unsafety or extreme discomfort and a need to end the conversation completely. While this is a known option, it is not typically used.

³⁷ This exercise muddles the distinction between the individual and the collective because if, for example, someone puts their thumb sideways, indicating “this is bad for me but good for the collective,” we are faced with a question: if an individual is a part of a collective and is negatively affected by a decision made by the collective, wouldn’t this mean the collective is negatively affected?

³⁸ Every Sunday night, *tzevet* meets after kids are put to bed. There is a *vaad* that facilitates *asefa klalit*, but all subject matters are determined by *tzevet* in the days leading up to *asefa klalit*. The topics range in stakes and collective investment, but generally tend to be rooted in ideology, praxis, and actualization. This space has been where many large decisions have been made. For example, this past summer we discussed whether full length mirrors should be in bathrooms, whether we should stop singing songs about Israel, whether our *kupah* would cover multiple weighted stuffed animals or if we would buy one for the collective, and how to distribute kid care in ways that are attentive to gender dynamics.

building a collective that is invested in diverse aspects of the community, including programming, norms and rules, pedagogy, the physical space of camp, and shaping culture more broadly. The decision-making structures and norms at Tavor reflect its values of dialogue, caring for the community and physical space, and distribution of leadership. Furthermore, the content of these conversations and decisions often reflects values of Judaism, socialism, and education.

Tzevet's Connection to Tavor

Part of what makes Tavor a special community is that it is made up of people who want to critique it culturally, structurally, pedagogically, and politically. The rooting of critique in deep love, care, and understanding, makes change more possible. Having seen this place and these people at their best and worst, having sat through difficult conversations and conflicts, having seen structural changes succeed and fail, we understand camp as an extension of ourselves and we understand it in its complexity.³⁹ My interviews discussed some of the reasons that *tzevet* members love camp, as well as some of the things that make it challenging. Many staff members return to camp each summer because of the community, because they grew up at camp, and because they care deeply for the community.⁴⁰ In interviews, multiple *tzevet* members responded that they have “history” at Tavor and spoke of friendships, the community, and “meaningful relationships.” For example,

BT: It is truly a place where we can make whatever we want to happen to an extent. Everyone is so creative and working together to make the most magic and fun and beauty possible. People really care about each other and the community in a meaningful and important way that doesn't happen in a lot of spaces.

Tavor's values of Judaism and socialism came up in SL's interview when they were asked about what makes Tavor special.

³⁹ One of the things that makes camp difficult, SL articulates, is the inability for people outside of camp to understand it. SL said, “Going to this place that is such a big part of my life and not being able to explain it to other people that I care about is probably the hardest part... It always was complicated being part of HDNA and it's hard to be like ‘yeah I go to a Zionist summer camp’ because I know the space and the type of things that people who go to Tavor believe in, but that one word attributed to the movement, makes it hard to be able to talk about camp with other people without immediately causing apprehension. A lot of the time when people ask, I'm like, ‘oh, it's a Jewish socialist camp’ unless we have time to talk about it. Being able to talk about the Zionist part of it is really important to me because of all the different conversations that we have [at camp] but it's hard not being able to share the extent of what it feels like to live there and the things that we talk and think about with other people.”

⁴⁰ This reflects a trend among Jewish camps across the US. According to the Foundation for Jewish Camp's 2025 census, retention rates of “young adult North American staff” were at 60% across day and overnight camps.

SL: Camp is probably where I feel the most Jewish because I'm surrounded by other Jews and we have traditions in place that I don't have to work hard to be part of. Like we do Shabbat and we do Havdalah and they're already set in the schedule and I'm able to do them and feel that like sense of history and tradition and community without having to put like the extra thought into it. I think as a teenager when you're figuring out your ideologies, a lot of teenagers lean towards socialism and leftist ideologies, but don't have a good way to implement those ideas in a real way. But camp, the way that we take care of our space and each other, we live together, and we don't outsource labor, I think all of those things make camp really special... The way we use our community and our skills in order to build each other up and to keep our space strong and clean and well-run is the biggest thing that makes Tavor special.

Through these excerpts, Tavor is positioned as a place where individuals can actualize and live in accordance with their values. Interestingly, this idea was brought up as both what makes Tavor special and what can be challenging about it. When asked about the challenges and difficulties of Tavor a few interviewees mentioned the tensions between the Tavor's values, ideologies, and dreams with the actuality. For example, BT responded,

BT: I think it's an exhausting job and I often find myself losing it by the end of the summer. I think there are a lot of times when we end up not making the decision or having the politics or teaching about a thing the way we want to... like it feels like we end up letting people down, whether that's members of our community who aren't saying what they're feeling or members of our community who were anti something but changed their thumbs to consensus yes. And just ways that socialism and the perfect dream of living in complete consensus doesn't work and doesn't happen and we don't name it. I think the times that I'm most frustrated are when I feel like we're saying we're doing a thing and we're not or we're falling short and people know it and are thinking it but we're not actually working through it.

The ways we "let people down" are clear. Throughout the summer when we consensus, there is often an expectation that a proposal will pass or that a certain decision will be made. The tension between values and actuality discussed above aligns with the tensions between the values of Jewish leftist individuals with attachments to Israel and Zionism. BT's view that our politics don't always reflect our hopes or desires can be seen in the ways we talk about Israel and Zionism at Tavor. BT also touches on the ways that education doesn't always align with what we describe as our aims. They say that there are a lot of times that we end up not "teaching about a thing the way we want to," which is relevant both in *tzevet's* educational processes and those of *chanichim*.

These excerpts from interviews show us that *tzevet* feel deep emotional and affective connections to Tavor, and that these connections manifest in thoughtful critique, investment, and an understanding of Tavor as ours to shape. Seeing Tavor as malleable or as a place that provides *tzevet* with autonomy is important here because it means that frustrations are not usually pinned on an outside force or entity. When we fall short, it is us who have fallen short. In educating *chanichimot* it is our responsibility to educate in accordance with our values, and it is our responsibility to know how to do so. Thus, tensions we experience, for example between an idealized socialist community and an imperfect reality that doesn't name its flaws, are not superimposed.

Education at Tavor

Each summer, the *chinuch* chooses a theme for the summer. The theme frames an educational arc for the summer, which they articulate in a book called the *tochnit*. The *tochnit* is like a curriculum; it lists the topics of *peulot* which every age group should explore, gives ideas for methods, and describes our collective educational aims for the summer. Education is central to Tavor, as is the importance of educating *chanichimot* in age appropriate and critical ways. Almost every interview I conducted as part of my research brought up the value of working with kids, especially over multiple years and within the educational context of Tavor. For example, GM returned to camp this summer in part because they “felt like it was a good opportunity to do the type of educational work that is important to me and that I put a lot of work into the past 2 years.” They also named their relationship with campers as a reason, saying “there's kids that I've spent a lot of time facilitating a love of camp within them and it's been really rewarding to see that play out this summer.” Other interviewees touched on similar themes. For example,

SL: It feels really empowering for me to be in a position to help grow a new generation of thinkers and builders and dreamers. Especially only being 19, I don't really get the opportunity to be a leader in that sort of way very often in my life. At camp, it's really nice to not just be taken seriously but given the responsibility of a caretaker and teacher for kids.

BT: Education is so powerful and important... It's awesome to teach at a place where I am so uncensored.

It is clear that *tzevet* values education, not only in theory but in practice. Every day *tzevet* runs educational programming that they have spent time writing with care. However, as seen through *tzevet's* comments, the education at Tavor is imperfect and always evolving. If we return to BT's comment of “falling short” in educating according to our values, we see that even in a community full of a passion for and commitment to education there are tensions between values and actuality. This could be attributed to the fact that *tzevet* is writing and running *peulot* with people who may have different views than them, that *tzevet* lacks experience in educating, or that *tzevet* is experiencing tensions between their own ideologies, pedagogical goals, and attachments. If this is occurring at Tavor among young educators who are politically aligned for the most part, we can also expect to see this phenomenon in other Jewish educational spaces, which are arguably central to US Jewish life.

Emotion at Tavor

In my experience, the biggest challenge of camp is emotional. Tavor asks, or maybe requires, that we be vulnerable. We are held responsible by the practices of collectivity and the idea of *kvutzah*. *Kvutzah* can be thought

of as a group, but specifically one rooted in deep connection, collectivism, equitable distribution of labor, and a love and care that is not often asked of us in the outside world. It is a relationship of independence and interdependence. In the capitalist world, we go to school or work, we interact, we transact, we occasionally connect, but *kvutza* is rarely structural. Part of the affective charge of Tavor's physical space comes from our histories there. When I drive up the road to camp every summer, I am retracing my own steps from the year before, and the year before that, and so on. Inhabiting this space, I am the figure that I looked up to as a kid. I am the *madrichol*. I am the one comforting the *chanichimot* who are feeling big feelings, just as I had been comforted. This affective attachment to Tavor as a space of deep care, interdependence, and community is, I think, key to understanding the kinds of avoidance, hesitation, and silences that hover around the question of Zionism and Israel at this time.

In an interview with QG, she said that one of the hardest parts of camp is the way that "our emotions are ten times bigger at camp than anywhere else." In her view, this could be in part because of the way that "sometimes camp makes us feel like kids again or makes us so vulnerable with the people there and it can be emotionally taxing. And we're doing emotional labor for other people too, not just kids." For me, this shows up in a sort of feeling I haven't been able to describe. It isn't sadness, or happiness, or anger, or fear, or excitement. It is nothing I can name. For QG, "sometimes, I'm like crying every day and I'm like wait, what's going on? I'm not sad, what is happening?" This heightened emotion is intertwined with the intensity of memory, care, and vulnerability. The unique emotional charge of camp, according to QG, "is important... it feels like a way to be in touch with my emotions. But it can be challenging for sure." My own experiences in conversation with those of QG highlight the affective and emotional charge of Tavor and the ways that affect is not always translatable into words. When something cannot be named or articulated, it becomes more difficult to work with and through. I would argue that this dynamic is at play in discourse on Israel and Zionism at Tavor and that it leads to the avoidance or silences described in the following section.

Tavor as a Discursive Space and a Space of Avoidance

In my interviews, everyone stated that there are diverse opinions among staff at Tavor. Part of what makes Tavor unique is the fact that there are staff who have served in the IDF, conscientiously objected to serving in the IDF,⁴¹ organized for Palestine at their universities in the US, have family in Israel, have no connection to Israel, are

⁴¹ Military service is mandatory for almost all Israelis. Those who conscientiously object are called *refusniks*.

anti-Zionist, or are non-Jews. This also means that we are having to figure out a balance of meeting people where they're at while having hard conversations across all these differences and deeply felt topics. When asked about specific discourses occurring among staff at Tavor, GM said:

GM: There's a lot. This idea that Israel is committing genocide is a big thing that is in a lot of people's heads and I think that is uncomfortable for some people because we have a lot of connection to Israel and people who have served in the Israeli military here... When it comes to the state of discourse around it, it feels like it's progressing but it's progressing really slowly.

Lila: Do you think it's progressing towards something?

GM: I think I have a better idea of people who are my age who are on the older end of the movement and who will be aging out in a year or two... So, it's hard to know what exactly it's progressing towards, but I think sometimes I feel like something's going to bubble up and come out in this really explosive way.

This articulation touches on the perceived experience of people feeling that they can't say what they truly feel and the way that this repression creates a feeling of something "bubbling up" that will come out in an "explosive" way. GM also described a "shyness" among tzevet, which they see as contradicting Tavor's values.

GM: I think another thing that's affected me is this sort of shyness that I have observed in conversations among tzevet, and I've found that really upsetting. As I've integrated myself into this community, I've noticed that a lot of conversations around Zionism are shying away from the actual politics of it. Someone will say half of their sentence and then literally whisper the second half of their sentence. And there are exceptions to that and there are people who are not shy about what they think and there's people who are only shy in certain situations, but I think that's very specifically against the values of our community where we all are honest with each other and care about each other.

The diversity in views on, experiences with, and proximity to Israel and Palestine, both among tzevet and chanichimot, contributes greatly to the dynamics that GM discusses. When asked about where the shyness comes from or what causes it, GM responded,

GM: I think it's the product of this tension that people have a really hard time dealing with. Where we feel like we have a responsibility to educate, and to care, and to meet kids where they're at, which is really hard because this is a thing where people are at so many different places. The thing that's really stuck with me is people knowing in their morals what they think is right and feeling like saying it is impolite and feeling like they have a responsibility to be both-sides-ist. And part of that is about practical pedagogy of meeting people where they're at, and there's a carefulness that I definitely participate in. But killing people is bad, and there's all sorts of ways you can explain that it's towards a certain purpose, but it's still bad at the end of the day. And rudeness might be bad too but if it's against something worse then it is what it is.

GM described "shyness," and a feeling of needing to be "both-sides-ist," or polite. To GM, it seems that the privileging of politeness and "meeting people where they're at" leads to an ignorance, or even justification, of the genocide in Palestine and Israel's continued violence. The self-censoring that GM notices seems to lead to the culture of shyness or repression that they mentioned in other excerpts. In other interviews, we discussed this

phenomenon in other terms that emphasize distance and circularity as a means of avoidance. For example, when asked about how staff at Tavor tend to think about and talk about Israel/Zionism, BT spoke of a different form of repression.

BT: I think that it's really changed, at least in the three summers I've been on staff. I think overall people both don't talk about it at all and really talk about it a lot and talk about it in weird or roundabout ways... I think overall we talk about it very intellectually and theoretical which sometimes feels like distance from the actual experiences and lives affected by Zionism and the Israeli government... I think when we do talk about it, it always takes us a billion methods of theoretical circular things of like "well what would an anti-Zionist think about this picture of a this and through the lens of this" and it still feels sometimes like a game we're playing and like we can't trust ourselves to actually talk about our experiences and friends and family and beliefs.

Touching on similar themes, EB names a "silent majority" at Tavor. EB says that "most of the kids or other staff don't really know what [the silent majority] thinks about Israel and Zionism" and that the silent majority is critical of Israel but "they understand that their relationship with Israel and Zionism is different from Tavor's relationship with Israel and Zionism. I think that most individuals care a lot about Israel in a way that Tavor doesn't show to the kids who come to camp." The perception of tzevet's views on Israel and Zionism seems unclear, in part due to different forms of self-censorship. Self-censorship may result from a desire to "keep the peace" or avoid hurting feelings, or it may result from one's internal grappling and uncertainty.

In my interview with MB, she mentioned a sort of censorship intended to protect feelings that she noticed this summer specifically.

Lila: How do staff at Tavor tend to think about and talk about Israel and Zionism?

MB: I think this summer, among staff, most conversations were shut down to avoid hurting people's feelings.

Lila: Do you think there were some opinions being shut down more than other opinions?

MB: I think opinions that seemed to threaten "normal Israelis" were the opinions that were shut down most.

Lila: Do you think they were being shut down by specific people or by everyone?

MB: I think that the framing of the summer was done by specific people and then there were instances of them shutting it down and then I think there was a lot of self-censoring as a result.

These *tzevet* members each highlighted different aspects of the obstacles to transparency and open discourse at camp. In GM's reflection, they saw shyness as emerging from the pedagogical strategy of meeting people where they're at. For GM and MB, the opinions and individuals being silenced or self-censoring seem to be those with more critical views of Israel and Zionism. Conversely, EB described a "silent majority" of *tzevet* that may feel more connected to Israel or Zionism than other *tzevet* members. EB's comment is interesting when we consider the fact that he was often the person who *tzevet* members would talk to about Israel-Palestine and Zionism.

Unlike the others, BT did not use language of shyness, carefulness, or protecting feelings, but rather expressed their frustration with the distance that tzevet members often put between themselves and discourse on Israel and Zionism. I was struck by their use of the word “trust” here. The community we establish every summer requires vulnerability and trust, and we usually are able to provide that to one another. Yet, when it comes to Israel-Palestine, we often fall short in our ability to talk with each other without self-censorship and avoidance.

These three interviews show us that apprehension around speaking openly about Israel and Zionism does not only exist among people with particular opinions. In this respect, it is interesting to consider the positionalities of the interviewed tzevet members here. GM and BT are both from the East Coast of the US and are college students who were introduced to Tavor through friends and did not grow up at Tavor. MB is from the Midwest US and grew up going to camp every year. The three of them hold anti-Zionist beliefs and lean toward that label in describing themselves. EB is one of the Israeli counselors, who lives in Israel and considers himself a Zionist.

Put in conversation with each other, these interviews can help us to understand the experiences of leftist Jews today. Tzevet Tavor strives to create an inclusive community that centers collective responsibility, social justice, and discourse. Yet, they are not immune to the tensions that seem to be affecting many leftist Jews in Jewish communities today. Specifically, the Tavor community seems to be experiencing breakdowns in communication on the question of Zionism that are reflective of the larger Jewish community today. It is in part because of these breakdowns that some Jews have felt the need to leave Jewish communities or leftist communities in the wake of October 7th and the subsequent genocide.

Peulot

Peulot are arguably the most important structure of discourse at Tavor. During the summer, peulot happen every day for campers, and during chalutz tzevet have at least one peulah each day. For both chanichimot and tzevet, at least one peulah each summer is on Israel-Palestine and Zionism. For chanichimot, their tzevet is responsible for writing and running every peulah and can go to the chinuch for extra support. For tzevet during chalutz, the chinuch, with the help of mazkirut, writes and runs their peulot, and their Israel-Palestine peulah is usually focused on how tzevet wants to educate chanichim throughout the summer. After observing and participating in the Israel-Palestine peulot during chalutz 2025, I wrote the following ethnographic vignette recounting the experience:

I was sitting in the mitriyah⁴² for the second half of the Israel/Palestine peulah.⁴³ It was June and the sky was blue. The first half was a couple days prior, and we had run out of time. I hadn't quite figured out how I felt about the first half; it was interesting but removed our own voices and experiences from the discussion. That was the point though- it was an exercise in empathy. We had been sitting in the shade of the giant oak trees on the grassy kikar⁴⁴ in groups of eight people and we each had a slip of paper with a description of a person. We were supposed to embody that person and speak, as them, about what we were thinking, holding, and feeling. We would share 2-3 sentences from the perspective of our role, attempting to authentically capture what someone from that positionality would be experiencing since October 7th. After each round we would pass the papers and repeat the exercise until we had spoken as each role. The roles were an Israeli citizen living in Tel Aviv with their family; a longtime Israeli peace activist; an anti-Zionist Jewish American college student; a Palestinian child in Gaza; a Palestinian college student who studies in Israel; and an American who had not heard of Israel or Palestine before October 7th.

We repeated the activity a second time, this time with new roles and a focus on how we should educate on Israel/Palestine this summer. We had to think about how education would meet different stakeholders of Tavor. The roles included an anti-Zionist Jewish madrichol;⁴⁵ a kid from a Zionist synagogue; an Israeli chanichol⁴⁶; an anti-Zionist non-Jew working at camp; a chanichol from an anti-Zionist family; an alumni parent; and a madrichol with a strong connection to Israel. We were meant to approach the roles with complexity and nuance in an attempt to bridge the gap between our vastly different experiences. After that, we debriefed in the sicha⁴⁷ and ran out of time.

So, the following day we did part two and finished the peulah. We started with an introduction of dilemma-based education. The first time we talked about dilemma-based education was in 2022, when Hazel was chinuch.⁴⁸ Dalia, this year's chinuch, introduced dilemma-based education, saying "over the years we have found an educational framework that seeks to build critical consciousness instead of giving chanichimot answers. Dilemma based education brings dilemmas and gives chanichimot the resources and support to come to their own conclusions and form their own ideology. The goal is to build critical thinkers, so in 30 years when the dilemmas look different, they are still able to thoughtfully work through them." Dilemma-based education intends to meet every stakeholder where they're at by not educating towards one answer or view and providing materials and programming that promote critical thinking without isolating members of the community. In most ways dilemma-based education has had a positive impact on discourse at Tavor. The fact both Zionist and anti-Zionist parents feel comfortable sending their children to camp means that we have succeeded in making space for stakeholders with conflicting views. This could be understood as building a community that can disagree and still learn, grow, and live together or as an inability to commit to a position or view, limiting our ability to meaningfully engage with Zionism and its critique.

We ended with an exercise where we were supposed to find someone to talk to who we might disagree with. We were supposed to disagree and talk and then paint a rock and place it in a garden. Dalia said, "there are going to be times this summer when we are in debates and conversations about Israel-Palestine, when we start to question each other or our own values. When that happens, come back metaphorically or physically to remind ourselves of the core values that we share." On each rock, we were supposed to paint a core value that we share with the person we disagree with.

The ending of this peulah is interesting when we consider the unique dynamics of discourse that summer.

In my interviews with MB and QG, we discussed the unique culture of the summer, which emphasized being in

⁴² The mitriyah is a large pavilion at camp. Mitriyah translates as "umbrella."

⁴³ A peulah (translating from Hebrew as "activity") is what we call educational programming. Before kids arrive at camp, mazkirut (summer leadership) write and run peulot for tzevet (staff) that give space to think about how we want to educate throughout the summer and what sort of culture we want to create.

⁴⁴ The kikar is a grassy area in the middle of camp where we meet before many activities.

⁴⁵ Madrichol is the gender inclusive term for counselor.

⁴⁶ Chanichol is the gender inclusive term for camper.

⁴⁷ A sicha is a discussion. Often a peulah is structured with a few methods and then a sicha to talk about the methods.

⁴⁸ When Hazel brought dilemma-based education to tzevet during chalutz in 2022, we were in a different place as a movement, a machaneh, a tzevet, and as Jews. We were grappling with how to educate chanichimot in ways that align with our values and attend to our history. We underwent what Hazel called a "Zionism Process" with the goal of understanding each other's views on Israel-Palestine and Zionism and determining what we would educate towards that summer.

community through disagreement rather than setting boundaries based on our values as a community. Both interviews reference a couple of incidents with a first-year *shaliach*.

MB: I think it's been really unhelpful in the past when people are like "we shouldn't talk about anything Israeli" or "we should roll our eyes at anything Israeli" or like anything Zionist, so I think that this summer was a reaction to that, in some ways. Like okay everyone yelling at each other isn't good but then neither is people not actually saying what we think and tolerating someone saying that there can be no innocent Palestinians. And that was so much of the discussion because in order to make specifically FI feel comfortable, it had to be a thing that we're going to engage with.

When asked about how tzevet thinks about and talks about Israel and Zionism, QG described the way that the discourse has changed over time.

QG: I think it was really different this summer, in a lot of ways. When I got on tzevet in 2022, Hazel did the Zionism process for tzevet and from my perspective that like kind of got everyone on the same page. It basically showed that even if we have different labels, of like Zionist or anti-Zionist, we agree on like mostly everything. And that was basically the point of the peulah, and it did get everyone on the same page about educating about Zionism and Israel and the occupation and believing in the humanity of all people. Like yea, we want to interrogate every single thing that Israel does, and also, we don't necessarily want to just cease to exist. So, I think that that was really good and made the discussion about Israel on tzevet better, easier almost. Like yes, we can debate but at the end of the day we still love each other and also agree on these major fronts of the issue.

I think that after October 7th everything changed. People still talk about it, but they're also scared of offending people or saying the wrong thing, or they just don't know what they believe anymore, so they can't talk about it or like literally don't know what to say. And I felt that for a really long time, I was like I literally don't know what I believe anymore so I just can't talk about it at all.

QG's description of discourse after October 7th is salient in a few ways. First, she highlights the fear and uncertainty that leads to silences, which helps us identify the root of the silence and avoidance described in other interviews. It seems that there are three main roots: a fear of offending others, a fear of being wrong, and a feeling of not knowing what they believe. I would argue that these roots of avoidance are present in broader discourse on Israel and Zionism among the Jewish left in the US.

Another significant aspect of QG's comments is the ways that she engages with time. She describes 2022 as a year where *tzevet* was "on the same page" regarding educating about Zionism, Israel, and the occupation. She understood this as an agreement to "interrogate" the actions of Israel and engage in debate but maintain love for one another and investment in the existence of Jews. Compared to the summers following October 7th QG did not mention silences or avoidance. In discussing the dynamics of the summer of 2025, QG described a different culture around discourse.

QG: I think that this summer we leaned too far into the "we love each other and put our community first" even if some people believe fascist things. I think there is a line and I think that it was crossed and then those people were still accepted socially and were not pushed back against enough. It's still being talked about, and people are still thinking about how we're educating about Israel and Zionism

today, but I think that people just don't know what they think anymore in a lot of ways, and I think that makes it hard to educate kids and to know what we're educating towards.

Lila: Could you give an example of the discourse that you think went too far and should have been pushed back upon?

QG: There was one point where AV wrote an anti-occupation peulah and she was going to run it and then right before it was going to be run FI saw it and they were like in the pisher of the bayit⁴⁹ arguing back and forth and he was like, it was very tense and I was standing there, and then after he walked out I was like AV you did really good, you stood your ground. She didn't compromise and I think that was an example of her being like no we're still running this, I hear you it is a one-sided peulah but that was the intention, the intention isn't actually to give the "side" of fascists who want to kill Palestinians. So, we didn't socially ostracize them for having these beliefs that we knew they had, and that was a choice. But I think we were prioritizing protecting their feelings and their place at Tavor was being over them spreading their beliefs about Gaza and Israel. So, what's the line of like us allowing this to be at camp and kind of be an unsaid thing? When I got home, I was thinking about it, and I was talking to MB, and I was like wait why was this allowed? We never allowed this kind of thing at camp before. Like what about it was different?

The tension described here is between affective connection and political/moral commitment, but in a different way than I've argued. Throughout this capstone I have argued that for US leftist Jews tensions emerge between affective attachment to Israel or Zionism and political commitments to the left. Here, the tension is between an affective attachment to Tavor, and specifically a Tavor without conflict, and a commitment to condemn Israel's actions in Gaza, which are directly in conflict with leftist politics and, for many Jews, religious and moral obligations.

Tavor and HDNA

As previously described, HDNA is more attached to Zionism than Tavor, as seen through the fact that HDNA has a "Progressive Labor Zionism" pillar while Tavor has a value of "Education About Israel." This has led to tension between Tavor and the movement, which some members of the community want to mend, and some feel less invested in. During the summer, Tavor runs without much direct involvement from the movement, but over the year there are more interactions between HDNA and *tzevet*. In 2025 at *veida*, which is HDNA's biennial democratic decision-making seminar, a new pillar was added for the first time since Habonim Dror formed in 1982. The new pillar, Collective Liberation of the Peoples in Israel-Palestine (CLPIP), was first proposed as a replacement for the Progressive Labor Zionism pillar. When it seemed that this proposal would not pass, it was amended that CLPIP would be an additional pillar, rather than a replacement.

⁴⁹ The pisher is a room in the bayit, which means house and refers to the main building for staff at camp.

CLPIP was not the first proposal of its kind. Every *veida* since 1993 has included multiple resolutions regarding how the movement relates to Israel and Zionism. In 2019, a proposal to remove the Zionism pillar was brought to *veida* by Hazel, a member of tzevet Tavor. The proposal did not pass, but it solidified the growing distance between Tavor and the movement which had arisen because of Tavor's culture of anti-Zionism, and it led to discussions of whether Tavor should leave the movement.⁵⁰ In response to this proposal, in September of 2020, Deborah Secular wrote an email to Habonim Dror North America approaching the end of her tenure as *rakezet chinuch* (educational director). She wrote that the removal of Zionism from HDNA's values would be fatal for the movement because of impacts on funding and membership at camps.

In the Spring of 2024, when I attended Moetzet Mazkirut, the pre-summer conference for camp leadership, these ideas were still very present. In a breakout session, movement leadership facilitated a conversation with camp leadership on what it would mean to remove the pillar with a very clear argument: the future of the movement is dependent on its relationship to Zionism historically and especially in the contemporary moment after October 7th.

Across the movement, there is a general consensus that the way we relate to Zionism is important for our future, but there are different views on what that relationship should be. In Mari Cohen's article "Revising the Dream," Tavor alum Hazel Sher-Kisch discusses the consequences HDNA's inability to move past Zionism. Sher-Kisch said, "'Increasingly, [HDNA's members] feel the tension between a more reactionary, militarized Israel and leftist values and are choosing leftism over Zionism,' ... Sher-Kisch said she believes a significant number of lapsed members she knows would still be involved if it weren't for the focus on Zionism. 'Things would look extremely different today if the movement was willing to make space for them,'" (Cohen 2021). Interestingly, four years later in response to the addition of the CLPIP pillar, much of the discourse was around the fact that the pillar "made space" for non- and anti-Zionists.

The movement leadership's argument that HDNA would not be able to exist without its Zionism pillar and the funding that comes from it was in some ways validated in 2019 by the response to a petition circulated by

⁵⁰ This tension came up in my interview with EB who said, "A thing that is difficult at Tavor is how we've drifted apart from the movement. Also, people at Tavor are critical about the things that Tavor and the movement have been founded upon, but they still do all the things that they think are good... they don't realize that they choose only the good parts of the idea that the camp has been founded upon. For example, the kibbutz movement was a method of settlement in the land of Israel to create a Jewish state, and we mimic the kibbutz movement with disregard to what it actually was used for."

HDNA members. This petition called for the end of annexation and occupation of the west bank and specifically listed three goals:

1. Habonim Dror North America will immediately relocate or suspend all programming within Israel. This includes MBI (Machaneh Bonim B'Israel), Workshop, Habo Birthright, Mifgash, and Hagshama Seminar.

2. Habonim Dror North America will no longer actively encourage members to make aliyah, as aliyah made in the current political climate implicitly legitimizes the Israeli government's ongoing efforts to marginalize Palestinian rights and their freedom to self-determination. Garin aliyah (moving to Israel with your kvutza) will not be the movement's ultimate hagshama (actualization).

3. Finally, until there are no longer members of Dror Israel who live or work over the green line/in settlements (including all suburban settlements around Jerusalem), Habonim Dror North America will take the following steps to show our condemnation for their economic, physical, and ideological support for illegal annexation and occupation:

- 3a. There be no shlichol (Israeli emissary) from Dror Israel on Mazkirut Artzit.

- 3b. Members of Dror Israel will not attend any movement programming (including veidot, winter seminars, etc.).

- 3c. Machanot will not be encouraged to hire or work with a shlichol from Dror Israel, or any individual that lives in a settlement (or any occupied Palestinian territory).

With nearly six hundred signatures from members and alumni of the movement, the Jewish Agency quickly heard of the petition. The Jewish Agency is an organization that played a significant role in founding the state of Israel and now encourages positive relationships between diaspora Jews and Jews in Israel. As Jewish summer camps are one of the most common ways for this relationship to be built, the Jewish Agency is directly involved in funding (and policing) Jewish camps. In the case of HDNA, the Jewish Agency's financial support is understood by some as necessary for its existence. The Jewish Agency is responsible for connecting each camp with *shlichim* and helps fund HDNA programs. In response to the petition, the Jewish Agency sent a letter to HDNA leadership that stated,

We at The Jewish Agency urge the leadership of the movement to take firm and immediate responsibility for the serious result: the signatures of dozens of members, madrichim, and alumni are publicly attached to an ideological manifesto that is completely contrary to the values of the movement and those of Zionism is utterly unacceptable.

We request clear answers as to how you intend to uproot the boycott conversation from its core within your movement. We expect that you will make clear to members, madrichim, and alumni that anyone who holds these positions will not be welcomed as a part of Habonim Dror North America.

If you do not answer clearly and decisively, we will be obligated to stop supporting the activities of the movement, through shlichim and other programs.

HDNA did not “uproot” the conversation, or if they tried to it didn't work. Last spring, I spoke with the *mazkir* (leader) of the movement about the ways our need for funding is in tension with our moral, political, and religious values and responsibilities. It seemed that he agreed with me but felt that there was no way out of the situation that would allow us to exist in the way we have. The feeling of “stuckness” here is interesting because it

brings up a tension: Tavor, and the movement in general, are full of creative problem solving, collective imagining of a world otherwise, and agency over a space and culture. Yet, when it comes to Zionism, we seem to feel that we are stuck at an impasse. As I hope to have shown through my research, this feeling of stuckness is generating silences, avoidance, breakdowns in communication, a sense of dissonance, self-censorship, and vulnerability that go against Tavor's values. So, what can we learn from the dynamics observed at Tavor? How can this case study guide us in continuing to build the Jewish left in the US?

Conclusion: Where do we go From Here?

We find ourselves as Jews, and especially leftist Jews in the US, at a point of reckoning with two issues: first, the genocide committed by Israel in the name of Jews, and second, the US Jewish institutional and individual response to the genocide, along with what Shaul Magid calls lack of "adequate diasporic-identity alternatives" (2017). In this context, the organizations, institutions, and individuals who shape the Jewish left today are unable to fully meet the needs of their community. Jews who seek non- or anti-Zionist Jewish community have options: organizations like JVP, INN, and JFREJ can provide political community, synagogues like Tzedek Chicago can provide religious community, and the Conference on the Jewish Left can provide intellectual community. Yet, the Jewish left is weakened by their lack of connection through a shared institution and framework. To me, the strongest Jewish left is one where institutions and organizations are connected and in conversation with one another, the full humanity and needs of community members is considered, and there is collaboration with other marginalized groups. In some ways, the history of the Jewish left can be a sufficient guide in this process, but through my research I have found that we can learn from Tavor as well. In this final section, I would like to explore a few questions in the context of building and strengthening the Jewish left: 1) How can diasporism serve as a framework? 2) What can we learn from Tavor's structures and community? 3) Where do we go from here?

As an alternative to existing structures and paradigms, I am advocating for diasporism as a way of uniting a new Jewish left. Diasporism, as coined by Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, is a feminist and anti-racist politic which allows for coalition-building and strengthening of Jewish community in the diaspora. Part of the value of diasporism, in my opinion, is that it makes space for people and organizations who are at different points in their relationships to Zionism or those with attachments to Israel. Most of all, diasporism offers an alternative path towards Jewish safety and flourishing and allows us to think of new possibilities for the future of Israel-Palestine.

With an alternative path towards Jewish safety, we are more able to let go of the idea that Zionism and Israel as an ethno-state are our only option for security. Thus, we can prioritize support for democracy, justice, peace, and reparations in Israel-Palestine, rather than a Jewish majority or Jewish nation-state. Diasporism doesn't deny that we have attachment to the land and history of the land, nor does it deny the existence of the state of Israel and the significance of Zionism for some Jews. However, diasporism also acknowledges that Palestinians have rights to the land, just as they have rights to peace, self-governance, cultural preservation, self-determination, and flourishing communities. Rejecting the paradigm of Zionism without intentionality could result in avoidance or a reproduction of "big-tent" Judaism. However, when this rejection is followed by the claim of diasporism it does not deflect responsibility or a need for clear values and boundaries. Diasporism will not meet every US Jew, but the Jewish left can still grow and get stronger through claiming this framework.

The most important aspect of diasporism is that it places the focus on support for Jewish communities, social and political mobilization, and coalition building in the US specifically. In considering the possibilities of diasporism, Tavor's successes and challenges are helpful. Tavor has succeeded in building Jewish community that is nourishing politically, intellectually, religiously, spiritually, socially, culturally, and emotionally by taking seriously youth education, empowerment, and leadership. *Tzevet* at Tavor take seriously the potential of the space, programming, and culture, and thus they do everything with intention and investment. Tavor shows us that with intention (which can come from clearly articulated values and goals) and investment (which can be a product of organizing within one's) we can build movements that create meaningful change and communities.

However, we have seen the challenges experienced by *tzevet*, and there are limitations of Tavor as a model for diasporic community. The limitation I find most relevant here is the fact that Tavor is a youth movement, meaning that there is a point in which members "graduate" or "age out" of the movement. Historically, the only path to *hagshama* after graduating from the movement has been *garin aliyah*, which means making *aliyah* with one's *kvutza*. Last year at *veida*, a group of *maapilimot* (movement members) brought a proposal to amend our understanding of *hagshama* and educate towards *hagshama* within the US. This group was working on a project called Garin Aliyah Chicago 2026,⁵¹ a plan to move to Chicago in 2026 and start a commune. The movement's recognition of the legitimacy of living in *kvutza* regardless of location is significant for movement members, and

⁵¹ This plays on the language used by Jews immigrating to kibbutzim in Palestine/Israel. Garin, meaning seed, is used to refer to a group that immigrates together to Israel; Aliyah, translating to "rise" in Hebrew, refers to immigration to Israel.

the desire of movement members to establish an alternative path of *hagshama* in the US is significant in considering the possibilities of diasporism.

So, where do we go from here? First, we take stock. We collect data and testimonies from US Jews on the forms of community that they have, the forms they wish they had, what they value most, and how they imagine the future of the Jewish left. We identify our skills, our allies, our resources, our values, and our goals. We imagine and dream and then we build and create. We assert that diaspora can help us center coalition building and solidarity, especially with other diasporic peoples, that our privileging of the local exists alongside an investment in the global, and that Jewish existence is not contingent on the existence of a Jewish nation-state. For Jews, and especially leftist, liberal, and progressive Jews, this is a call to action. Consider the communities that sustain you and the communities that you long for. Talk to others who may have a stake in these issues and those who have experiences in their own communities. Lastly, seek out the communities that do exist and support them however you see fit.

The significance of this capstone can be thought of in two ways. First, this project aims to make space for grappling with tensions in identity, ideology, and community. Specifically, the tension I explore most directly is between affective attachments to Israel and Zionism and political commitments to the left. Second, at this political juncture, I believe that Jews with a relationship to Israel, such as myself, must confront reality, even as it can evoke affective responses, guilt, shame, and hopelessness. Here our affective responses do not dominate processes of grappling, and we attempt to mitigate their weaponization. These two ideas are closely related, but the way that I differentiate between them is that the first makes space for centering ourselves and the tensions that we exist within, while the other makes space for decentering ourselves and imagining a decolonial future.

Glossary

ACJ: American Council for Judaism.

AJC: American Jewish Committee.

Aliya/Aliyah: Immigration to Israel.

Asepha/asefa: Meeting.

Asepha Klalit: General meeting.

Bayit: The house at the center of camp, used as a camp office and meeting space.

Chalutz: Construction. The time before camp officially starts during which madrichimot set up camp and plan out the upcoming summer.

Chanichim/ot: Campers.

CLPIP: Collective Liberation for Peoples in Israel and Palestine.

Deconstruction/Decon: The time after the chanichimot leave when madrichimot evaluate the summer and help shut camp down until Fall Seminar.

DSA: Democratic Socialists of America.

Hagshama: Actualization.

HDNA: Habonim Dror North America.

IJAN: International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network.

JC: Jewish Currents.

JFREJ: Jews For Racial and Economic Justice

JVP: Jewish Voice for Peace.

Kibbutz: A communal settlement in Israel associated with labor Zionism and agriculture.

Kupa/Kupah: The system of sharing at Camp Tavor. Kupa is a way of binding camp together and sharing our emotions and learning, in addition to physical resources like money and flip-flops.

Kvutzah/Kvutsah: Literally translated to “group”. At Tavor, Kvutzah means much more than group. It usually describes the close friendships you form with the other campers your age, and the welcoming and open feeling being with your shichva brings.

Maapilimot: College age movement members.

Machaneh: Camp.

Madrichol/Madrichimot: Gender neutral term for counselor/s.

Mashatz/im: Age group leader(s).

Mazkirut: Leadership team. Includes a Rosh Machaneh (summer director), a Chinuch (education/programming director), and two Techni (technical director).

Mitriyah: Literally translated to “umbrella”. The gazebo located at the bottom of the Chotrimot shetach. Often used as a peulah space.

Moadon Madrichim/Mo: Tzevet lounge. A meeting space for tzevet (staff) that is one of few camp spaces not available to chanichimot (campers).

Nachshonimot: High school age movement members.

NJA: New Jewish Agenda.

Peulah/Peulot: Activity/Activities or programming. Usually educational and done by age group.

Shlichol: Gender neutral term for Israeli emissary. These madrichimot usually come from our sister movement, HaNoar HaNoved V’HaLomed.

Shetach: Living area. The area in which a specific group lives.

Shichva/Schavot: Age group/s. Also spelled Shikva.

Tafkid/im: Role or Job.

Tzevet: Staff. The counselors at Camp Tavor.

Vaad/ot: Committee/s.

Veida: Biennial democratic decision-making seminar with all of HDNA.

Yom: Day. A regular day is called a yom ragil, and a special day is called a yom meuchad.

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