

A second instalment to
Beyond Tribal Loyalties:
Personal Stories of Jewish Peace Activists
(BTL-2)

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Invitation to participate and Guidelines for Contributors
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The story of the original book

Back in 2010 I decided to edit a book with stories of Jewish peace activists and their journey out of Zionism. The original idea of editing a book of personal stories came from the format of Kenneth Ring's book *Letters from Palestine*.

Beyond Tribal Loyalties was published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing (CSP) in England in 2011-2012, first in hardback and later in an updated paperback edition. It took CSP several years to finally place the book on Amazon Kindle.

Because of my lack of experience with the publishing industry I didn't consider that CSP as an academic publisher wasn't suited for the kind of book that BTL is. I intended it for the mass market but CSP priced the book too high, as they do for academic texts, and were not able to offer much by way of marketing or publicity. As a result, the book did not get the exposure that it deserved.

Some exposure came from sources other than the publisher. Ilan Pappé (who is a contributor to the original BTL) referenced the book in one of his texts saying that it was an invaluable primary source for historians. In 2012 a group of Australian activists invited me to go on a month-long book tour around Australia. It was well organised and all the events were well attended.

A few months ago, I terminated the contract with CSP and they returned the publishing rights to me. I then decided to publish a new edition of the book with a new introduction and chose to go directly to Amazon. Self-publishing isn't ideal but it has its advantages. For BTL-2 I will consider a mainstream publisher but failing that, I will probably publish on Amazon once again.

BTL-2

The publication of the 2nd edition of the original book has already been generating some interest. I have been invited to record a podcast in London about *Beyond Tribal Loyalties* and my personal story for a project called 'Life Changing Stories' run by Neil Shah and Suzy Beaumont later in July. This will be a good opportunity to announce the new project.

Events have continued to unfold in Palestine in the past six years since the original publication. Israel has become more brazen in pursuing and pushing forward its settler-colonial project. The BDS movement also continues to gain momentum and it seems to me that the interest in the topic of Palestine has been growing. There are many out there who are just learning about the issue for the first time. There are also people who are just realising for the first time that not all Jewish people around the world agree with Israel.

I believe it is a good time to edit another collection of stories of Jewish people who have moved out of Zionism. We all know this isn't a simple matter of changing your mind and the stories are always fascinating and involve a great deal of inner turmoil. I am hoping that as people read the stories in the book they would feel more supported and encouraged in their own journey. One particular story or the whole book might even be the catalyst for someone who is still sitting on the fence or is just starting to question.

What Does It Mean To Be An Activist?

In the original title I used the word 'activist'. It will in the title of the new book, but it might be worth saying a few words about activism just in case.

My definition of an activist is anyone who sees something wrong in some area of life and decides to dedicate time and energy to do something about it.

Activists and activism come in many forms. Please do not think of activism *only* in terms of rallies and demonstrations, fundraising, setting up groups, olive picking, or people chained to trees or lying in front of bulldozers. Activism can also involve things like collecting data on an issue, writing, talking to people, making art and writing songs. I know the term 'keyboard activist' is used in a belittling way often. But I think that those who use social media to share thoughts, feelings and information are also doing their bit.

Activists are people who are prepared to express how they feel and what they think about an issue because they feel strongly enough about it, because they want to protect others and make people's lives better or perhaps because they feel personally responsible in some way. They often do what they do against the mainstream and pay some price for the stand they take. Some activists work alone and others in groups.

Invitation

If you are from Jewish background, living inside or outside of Israel and are involved in some way in the struggle for Palestinian rights and for an end to Israel's settler-colonialism, I would like to invite you to contribute your story to the 'sequel' to BTL. I am interested in people who have made a transition out of Zionism to a new way of thinking about Palestine, Israel and about themselves and their own identity.

Being from Jewish background means that you are considered Jewish, born to a Jewish family, follow Jewish religion, and so on. We all know that the definition of Jewishness is tricky and complex, so in your story it would be good if you could say something about that what makes you Jewish, how you see this, etc.

I am interested in your personal experience, not in debating opinions on Palestine. There is plenty of political analysis available out there and this book isn't about that. This book is about the personal journey that each contributor has been on to come out of Zionism to where they are now. These stories are important and they need to be heard.

Below is some more information about this project. There are also guide questions for contributors to give you a clearer idea of what I have in mind. I am interested in your personal story, your intellectual process, your feelings, or in short, the story of how you came to question Zionism and leave that mindset. Contributors are invited to share *only* what they are comfortable sharing. However, the more personal the narrative, the more interested, captivated and moved the readers are likely to be.

I am fluent in Hebrew so if you prefer to write your piece in Hebrew, I can translate it. I am interested in reading people's stories in their own words and their own style, and work with them as their own unique creations.

***Please be mindful that I do not promise that any given contribution will be included in the book. I reserve the right to edit the stories as needed. Any editing will be handled with respect and care and without changing the overall meaning.*

About Me

I was born in Tel Aviv (1964) and grew up in Bat Yam, just south of Yaffa. I served in the Israeli army between 1982-1984. During my service Israel invaded Lebanon for the second time (first time was in 1978) in its ill-fated attempt to create that infamous 40km buffer zone. At age 25 I went to Bar-Ilan University to study at the Combined Programme in the Social Sciences. My majors were in Political Science, Economic and Sociology.

I left Israel in 1991, aged 27, and migrated to Australia. I finished my BA with Honours in Politics at Macquarie University in Sydney. I later went on to complete my degree in Psychotherapy at the Jansen Newman Institute in Sydney. In 2001 I renounced my Israeli citizenship in protest. I have been an activist against Israeli settler-colonialism in Palestine, and for Palestinian rights ever since.

I lived in Australia a total of eighteen years and then in January 2010 I moved to the Scottish Highlands where I live and work. I am a psychotherapist in private practice, a clinical supervisor, trainer and writer. My own story is included in BTL.

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You are welcome to PM me on FB but I prefer contact by email. I can take time to notice messages on FB.

I hope you would accept this invitation and I am available to discuss your story and support you as you work on it. Where possible we can have Skype meetings to speak in person or we can correspond by email.

Thank you for being who you are and for the good work you are doing.

Avigail

Guidelines for Contributors

Project details:

Editing a second instalment / a 'sequel' to *Beyond Tribal Loyalties: Personal Stories of Jewish Peace Activists*.

Suggested Titles:

- *Out of Zionism: Jewish Journeys*
- *The Journey Out of Zionism: Personal Jewish Stories*

Objectives and purpose

- To provide a forum for more personal stories, experience, wisdom and reflections of Jewish and Jewish-Israeli activism.
- To explore the question of what makes some people take a stand as opposed to so many who do not. I am interested in the experience of people who are not prepared to remain bystanders, and who have the emotional resilience and integrity to put the welfare of their fellow human beings (in this case the Palestinians), ahead of their tribal, cultural or societal loyalties.
- To encourage readers to evaluate their own belief system and their position in relation to wrongs that they are aware of in their own societies and communities. Although my focus or context is Palestine, the theme of this book is universal. There is enough that is wrong in the world, and I am interested in what makes some people take a stand, even at great personal cost, and what makes others (the majority) choose the position of bystanders.
- To explore the question of what is so strong or unique about Zionism that makes it so seductive and that makes it so hard to leave. How can it be that some are so blind to the suffering of the Palestinians, or otherwise don't care, while others — the minority represented in the book — look at the experience of the Palestinians as an opportunity to examine their own values and sense of belonging?
- To explore what makes it possible to leave a 'tribe' and what are the complexities involved in this process.

Guidelines for contributors

Please note that the points below are just guide statements and questions. Please read all of them before you start. I don't want you to 'answer' them as if you are filling out a questionnaire or a form. The questions certainly do not have to be addressed in any particular order, although saying something about yourself and your background at the start will probably be helpful. The questions are meant as a guide and a framework, and also as a way of encouraging you to reflect on what you would like to say. You can ignore some of them or go beyond them. It's up to you. However, I am looking for a coherent narrative and I want to know in particular about your journey of leaving or going beyond Zionist thinking.

I would like your story to flow as freely as possible, and for you to be spontaneous and real. Please feel free to include letters, journal entries, poetry or prose that you have written if you feel that they enhance your story, and help people see or understand you better.

Word limit

The word limit is 2500-4500 words but I can be flexible depending on how things unfold.

Timetable

There is no deadline at the moment. I don't like to generate artificial stress unnecessarily and don't like to do this to others. I would give it about six months to have all the stories in and another two or three months for editing and putting the book together. But we can be flexible.

Guide questions/statements

- Say something about yourself: Where are you and your family from, where do you live now, where did you attend school, university etc., and what kind of education did you have? What kind of a family did you grow up in? If you didn't grow up in a family, in what kind of environment were you raised? What do you do for a living? And... anything else you wish to say about yourself that you think is relevant to your story.
- What do you do as an activist and what particular area of activism work are you passionate about or involved with? Why have you chosen (or not) to do these activities in particular?
- If relevant, talk about your beliefs about Israel, Zionism, Jewish identity, and the situation in Palestine. What can you say about the personal journey you have been on that's relevant to this topic?
- Have your beliefs evolved or undergone a change and if so, how have they changed?
- What caused your beliefs to evolve and change?
- Have you paid or are you paying a personal price of some kind for your beliefs and activism?
- Were there any events that are particularly significant for your journey, something that happened to you or that you witnessed that perhaps encouraged you to choose the direction you are choosing now?
- Was there a turning point on your journey? If so what was it, when was it and what prompted it? Why was it a turning point for you? Did you see, read or hear something that started you on your journey? If so what was it and why was it significant?
- Have there been any significant figures (positive or negative) that influenced you or inspired you to take the position you are holding now? Was there someone who

infuriated you into action, who changed your mind or who guided you, taught you or pushed you along the way to being where you are now? Was it a personal encounter or something that person said, did or wrote?

- Most people prefer to not get involved and it is certainly easier not to. Why did you choose to become involved in the way that you are?
- Reflecting on yourself, what do you think it is about you specifically that made you decide to not remain silent?
- And... anything else you feel you would like to say or share including letters, poetry, prose, journal entries etc.
- Remember, there are many readers around the world who are curious about the journey of Jewish people in particular, and who would like to read about it. Sometimes writing can be more energetic and alive when we can think of the people we are addressing. Of course, we cannot choose who will read the book but if you could, who would be your preferred audience? Who are you writing to? Is it yourself, members of your society, your family, school friends, the Palestinian people, Jews, Jewish-Israelis, your peers, people in your neighbourhood, your synagogue or youth movement, anyone etc.? What message would you like your readers to take from your story?