Twitter Thread by Jeremy Slevin



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As Jews we are told from a young age that our identities are intrinsically tied to the modern State of Israel.

It is taught to us in Hebrew School, in services, and is a deeply held belief by many of our parents, grandparents and family members.

It is reinforced by media and politicians who repeatedly link Jewish identity with the State of Israel.

The flip side of this message is that criticism of Israel is a negation of our identity.

Even if not explicitly anti-Semitic, the thinking goes, those who criticize Israel must be doing so because they harbor some anti-Semitic attitudes.

This conflation of religious/communal identity with a far away nation state is reinforced constantly and repeatedly.

Palestinians do not even factor into this story. When reality forces us to reckon with their existence, we are told they are terrorists—warmongers who hate the Jews and are violent by nature (this is Islamophobia btw).

The story of the Nakba—the mass expulsion of Palestinians from their ancestral land in 1948–is left out entirely. 1948 is merely the year Israel gained independence. Who knew Palestinians were part of that story?

Needless to say, the constant conflation of Jewish identity with one state's politics is not Good for the Jews.

It reduces the personal to the political. It strips Jews of the ability to define their own relationship with their identity.

For non-Jews it signals that if you support Israeli policies, then you can't be anti-Semitic and that if you are critical of Israeli policies you therefore hate the Jews, both of which are lies.

It can be very difficult to unlearn.

For years I understood that Netanyahu and settlers were bad actors, but my sensors would go off when I heard people talk about boycotts or divestment.

Israel may not be perfect, the thinking went, but grassroots efforts to change those policies *must be* antisemitic.

In truth, Israel is a state, like many others, founded on the displacement of others.

Its Jewish exclusivity is predicated on the exclusion of millions who continue to live on that land.

Political exclusion based on religion, by definition, leads to hatred, repression, and eventually ethnic cleansing.

Jews should know this more than anyone.

That is why it is so deeply important for Jews in the diaspora to speak out, to reject an ideology that reduces Judaism to political support for Israel—and reduces support for Israel to Jewish exclusivity.

To recognize that Israel is a state, like others, that oppresses and dispossesses the powerless.

And that the only way to end that oppression is to give those people equal rights and self-determination—just as we yearned for as Jews.

Since lots of folks are sharing this, I'll just say there are real historical reasons for all this (centuries of pogroms, the Holocaust, the centrality of the land in our texts). And none of them justify permanent occupation and dispossession of non-Jews.