



From the
Beit Midrash of
Rav Julius



Joshua, Covenant, and the Ethics of Nationhood

Last month I delivered a sermon on how the State of Israel has used Biblical texts, especially the Book of Joshua, to support its political and military aims since 1948. I discussed how Israeli leaders soon after Israel's founding employed these texts to unify Jewish immigrants came to Israel who after the Holocaust and as justification for settlement policies following the War of Independence, during which many Arabs left the region.

Some of you requested that I reprint the sermon in the VOICE for those who missed it. Below is a revised version, edited to read as a prose essay rather than a spoken sermon.

The sermon also announces an upcoming class to be jointly organized by Beth Jacob and Park Congregational Church, led by Pastor Erica Avena. The course, planned for late winter or spring, will focus on the Book of Joshua and link its themes to contemporary issues such as Jewish Nationalism in Israel, Christian White Nationalism, and White Supremacy. Park Congregational began exploring this topic last year with discussions of ideas raised by Amanda Tyler's *How to End Christian Nationalism*, making the Book of Joshua a logical next focus for their studies.

Further details will be shared soon; classes are expected to start in late February. If you would like to help Rav Julius develop this program, email RavJulius@gmail.com with "Book of Joshua" or similar, in the subject line.

And below you will find a reduced version of my Yom Kippur sermon.

I have long avoided discussing Israel's military and political issues from the pulpit, as these topics are widely covered in the media. Lacking formal expertise in international relations, I question whether adding yet another opinion is helpful and sometimes feel the abundance of commentary may hinder more than resolve.

Courts wisely sidestep religious issues like sin or worship, respecting First Amendment protections. Similarly, clergy know to keep politics out of the sanctuary.

Yet there are moments when politics trespasses into the sacred. When that boundary is crossed, clergy must respond. That is why I speak now—perhaps as an unexpected voice, but one that may be needed and that remains firmly entrenched within my lane.

I want to address the possibility that the Gaza War's aftermath could threaten the legitimacy or existence of the Jewish state and discuss ways to prevent or reduce these risks.

Throughout history, some have challenged the legal foundation of Jewish claims to the land of Israel. In contrast, supporters frequently reference the Bible as a source for their spiritual or covenantal connection to the territory.

One such occurrence was in 1937, when the British Peel Commission was reviewing the respective Arab and Jewish claims to Israel, it noted that Arab negotiators were born in Palestine with Ottoman land deeds known as "Kushans," while Jewish leaders came from Eastern Europe without formal land documents. In response, David Ben-Gurion raised a Bible and affirmed his claim.

"Here is your Kushan. It is the world's most highly respected book, and I believe that you British regard it with much respect, too."

This invocation of divine promise -- -- "God gave this land to us" combines nationalism with biblical storytelling and was influential in forming Israel's ideology.

To understand this mindset, it's important to look at the intellectual influences on Israel's early founders. Zionism, especially in Eastern Europe, was shaped by 19th-century European nationalism, which held that each nation is defined by climate, education, custom, and heredity -- ideas that laid the groundwork for Zionism.

One of Israel's founding myths was the use of spiritual and cultural ties -- rather than theology -- by secular, socialist leaders to unite the Jewish people. Religion served primarily as a means of nation-building and social cohesion, not as belief in God.

Many of Israel's early leaders saw themselves as secular rabbis, guiding a people through ritual and myth without invoking Divine authority. Ben-Gurion embodied this approach. To mark the State's tenth anniversary in 1958, he convened a study group of archaeologists, academics, and military officers to examine the Book of Joshua -- his favorite biblical text.

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Save the Date

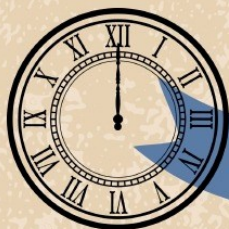
Beth Jacob Hanukkah Party
Saturday Night, December 20

Details to Follow

We hope to see all of you that evening
as we close out another year of Beth Jacob

VETERANS DAY

Second Act Lunch



12:00PM

11.10.2025



Beth Jacob

Speakers:

Tom Smith– National Marine Museum exhibit
& USMC Traditions

Susan Lorinsky– Daughter of a Women's Army Corps
member, Niece of an Army Nurse, and family to
members of the Armed Forces

Marty Hirschowitz– Speaking on the 250th
Anniversary of the Navy and Jewish Naval Leaders

LIVE MUSIC BY ROZ ETRA & FRIENDS



The Jewish Federation
OF EASTERN CONNECTICUT

President's Box

November 2025

October is, thankfully, over, and our Jewish marathon of Kiddishim are now in the past. From Rosh Hashana in mid-September until ending Sukkot with Shemini Atzeret on October 14th, plus 4 Shabbot in between or at the end, it was a marathon of going to Services, then sitting down to another Kiddish, seven (7) in all.

On the subject Kiddishim, we became overspent during the summer, and looking ahead to the Kiddishim coming up, **OYE GEVALT!** Reluctantly I reached out for some voluntary contributions in the same envelope with your dues report from the congregation.

I now want to thank all those (in Alphabetical order) who responded so generously to this appeal:

Paul & Dianne Deutsch	Robert & Andrea Labb
Betty Feldman	Harry Leiser
Ken & Kim Fischburg	Barbara Lewis
Evert & Lisa Gawendo	Mindy Pedersen
Jerry & Linda Holzschlag	Alan Ruditsky
Clara Kalnitsky	Jerry & Debbie Schwell
Marc Kashar	Martin & Millie Shapiro

Additionally we thank:

— the Tepper Foundation (via the Federation) in Arizona, for providing funds for Jewish Institutions throughout the country, to contribute to the cost of Security during the High Holiday period. Our allocation of \$1800 was very generous.

— Kenn and Kim Fischburg provided the Yom Kippur Break-the-Fast

— Marc Kashar for donating Rosh Hashanah floral arrangements in Memory of Kathleen Kashar

Our congregation is approaching 100 years old in 2029, as is our synagogue building reaching 50 years old. In the next few years, leading up to these momentous anniversaries, we are planning to update some “deferred maintenance” that will ensure Beth Jacob’s beautiful home will stand for 50 more years.



To Stacy Gould,
on the birth of her grandson, Daniel.
Daniel's parents are
Allison and Nicholas Hinckley
and brother Henry.



Continued From Page 1

Ben-Gurion viewed the Book of Joshua as a national epic and a blueprint for state-building: conquer, settle, and build a nation. He felt true understanding came from engaging in conquest, and the religious framing of Joshua provided a unifying narrative for Jews after statehood.

The Book of Joshua is rarely discussed in rabbinic tradition or modern scholarship, largely due to its focus on conquest and violence. Early interpreters saw it as a chronicle of cruelty, but it stayed in the canon, likely for its historical rather than spiritual value.

Scholars have recently re-examined Joshua’s impact on Israel’s political identity. In *The Joshua Generation: Israel Occupation and the Bible*, Rachel Havrelock discusses how the Book of Joshua shapes current political conversations.

“Zionism appealed to the glories of an ancient past and brought biblical words and phrases into today’s spoken Hebrew... Ben-Gurion saw the biblical war narrative as constituting an ideal basis for a unifying myth of national identity.”

Ben-Gurion’s group aimed to justify state actions, including military operations, and create a unified national narrative based on Joshua’s model.

Biblical texts have long been used for political purposes. Ze’ev Jabotinsky, founder of Revisionist Zionism and ideological forebear of today’s Likud party, depicted Samson as a Jewish hero in a 1927 novel. And since Israel’s founding, biblical references have long influenced political rhetoric, from Israel’s Declaration of Independence to Netanyahu’s 2015 speech to Congress invoking Megillat Esther to compare Iran to Haman.

The Bible challenges nationalist interpretations. Israel’s roots originate outside its land and prior to nationhood, with the area called “Canaan” instead of “Israel.” The phrase *Eretz Yisrael* appears infrequently in the biblical text. Israelites enter the land three times -- during the patriarchs’ era, after the Exodus with Joshua, and following the post-Babylonian exile -- always through Divine or external intervention, not by choice.

According to the text, the Bible refers to entitlement in a conditional way. It records that God promises Abraham the land, but his descendants are later exiled by the Assyrians and Babylonians after violating the covenant. The Torah describes land possession as conditional rather than permanent.

Israel’s Declaration of Independence instead claims Israel as the birthplace of Jewish spiritual, religious, and political identity. It only indirectly refers to God, possibly through the term “Rock of Israel,” which is a biblical metaphor for Divine strength.

According to the Torah, Israel’s association with the land is attributed to Divine selection, rather than superiority or population size. The text states: “It is not because [the Israelites] are the most numerous...” and refers to Israel as the smallest of nations. This depiction differs from contemporary nationalist perspectives that emphasize exceptionalism.

Interpreting the Bible as a legal deed of sale that secures territorial rights represents a significant divergence from established Jewish tradition. Historically, Scripture has been understood as a spiritual covenant rather than a political charter. This change in interpretation is particularly complex when national policies incorporate Divine directives to claim land through force and remove its existing inhabitants.

We return, then, to our guidepost: the Book of Joshua. Its opening chapters depict conquest and annihilation. Consider:

- “They destroyed with the sword every living thing” in Jericho.

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"Joshua left no survivor" in his southern campaign.

Yet these accounts may not be historical reports. The text itself appears to challenge them. In later chapters, a different picture emerges:

- The Jebusites remain in Jerusalem.
- The Canaanites in Gezer live among the Ephraimites.

The Geshurites and Maacathites dwell among the Israelites.

The ideal of total conquest gives way to the reality of coexistence.

The tension between conquest and coexistence presents an opportunity for analysis. Some interpretations suggest that the Israelites shifted their approach from extermination toward living alongside other groups. This perspective views the Book of Joshua not only as an account of military actions, but also as a consideration of how a population adapts to life in a shared territory.

And I'm pleased to announce a class on the Book of Joshua this year, where we'll cover its main themes and discuss Rachel Havrelock's *The Joshua Generation*. All participants will get a free copy of the Book of Joshua, as per our synagogue's educational policy.

More information will be available soon. This class will also partner with Park Congregational Church, where Pastor Avena is eager to study Joshua with us as part of their ongoing look at Christian Nationalism. They started this last year with their examination of issues raised by Amanda Tyler's *How to End Christian Nationalism*, and see our study as a useful next step.

The Book of Joshua describes the Israelites entering and conquering the Promised Land. Rabbinic tradition holds that if the conquest had been complete, the Bible might have ended there; however, the Israelites soon turned to idolatry in the next Book of Judges, changing religious history. This series will explore that idea and its impact.

Our inquiry will not be limited to ancient history. We will also confront contemporary questions, including:

- As ethnic nationalism -- including white Christian nationalism -- resurges globally, what truly binds a nation together?
- Is it one people's "organic right" to a particular land?

Or is it a commitment to the individual rights of all who dwell upon it?

This discussion will examine Joshua from a historical perspective. In the biblical narrative, Israel's claim to the land is framed not as an absolute entitlement, but as a covenant with specific obligations. Continued possession depends upon adherence to principles of justice and faithfulness; conversely, violations of the covenant result in exile, interpreted as a divinely initiated restoration.

Israel's right to the land is conditional, not absolute. If the covenant is broken, no force can prevent the outcome. According to the Bible, the land must be honored, not claimed.

With that, I return this story to the pundits. I return to Torah. And I invite you to reflect on where you wish to turn your attention at this moment in your life.

B'Shalom,
Rav Julius Rabinowitz

Candle Light Times

November 2025

November 7	4:07 pm
November 14	4:10 pm
November 21	4:05 pm
November 28	4:02 pm

Ba-rukh atah A-do-nai, e-lo-hay-nu-me-lekh ha-olam, a-sher kid-sha-nu-bemitz-vo-tav ve-tzi-vanu Le-had-lik ner shel Shabbat.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has sanctified us by Your commandments and has commanded us to kindle the Shabbat lights.

November Birthdays

November 11	Joseph Goldberg
November 14	Lester Gorin
November 22	Salvador DeLeon
November 23	Dennis Slater
November 30	Kim Brissette
	Murray Navick

November Anniversaries

November 1	Dennis & Terri Slater
November 3	Kenneth & Kim Fischburg
	Martin & Rona Rutchik
November 6	Marc & Robin Wolf
November 7	Peter & Jodie Mendlinger

Donations

**We gratefully acknowledge the following contributions to
Beth Jacob Synagogue's Special Funds.**

Building Fund

In Memory of Harriet Gere

Marc Kashar
Jerry & Gail Navick
Harvey & Judith Polinsky
Irene Schienberg
Judith Goldsmith

In Memory of Dorothy Goldblatt

Salvador & Ellen DeLeon

In Memory of Chaim Cooper

Irene Schienberg



Mishebeirach

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Chaim ben Libba
Michal ben Sarah
Moshe Ben Rochel
Tzvi ben Basha
Yosefah Chaya bat Leah





NOVEMBER 2025 YAHRZEITS



November 1 10 Heshvan

Szloma Gejdenson

Anna Schwartz

Bertha Landmen

Gussie Kaufman

November 2 11 Heshvan

Abraham Ptachik —

Uncle of Martin Shapiro

William Pearson

November 3 12 Heshvan

Aaron Goldblatt

Meyer Labensky

November 4 13 Heshvan

Minnie Jacobson

Dr. Bertram Friedman —

Father-in-Law of Joe Goldberg

November 5 14 Heshvan

Juda Udell Aaron Libo

Esther Goldberg — *Mother of Joe Goldberg and Lois Taylor*

Mayer Simon

November 6 15 Heshvan

Tessie Alexander

November 7 16 Heshvan

Anna Goldberg

Joseph Goldabiter

Bronya Goldabiter

November 8 17 Heshvan

Irving Daniels

Anne Palma Goldblatt

Philip Tashman —

Grandfather of Brian Burchman

November 9 18 Heshvan

William Kronick

Winifred Kirstein — *Aunt of Michael Goldblatt and Ellen DeLeon*

November 10 19 Heshvan

Abraham Abkowitz

Fannie Blum

Nada Bernstein —

Sister of Hazel Brown

November 11 20 Heshvan

Ethel Alexander

Jacob Sears

Henriette Harris

Leon Bosky

Ida Jainchill

Lois Mopsik

Bessie Shabbecoff

November 12 21 Heshvan

George Abrahamson —

Father of Linda Adelman

November 13 3 Kislev

Dr. Daniel Alexander

Harry Kaufman

Hattie Slosberg

Chayye Goldabiter

Charles Simon

November 14 23 Heshvan

Sarah Soloveitzik

Edward Seder

Eva Oppenheimer

Max Schwartz

November 16 25 Heshvan

Sylvia Sachs Yaffa

Frances Kaye

November 17 26 Heshvan

Alexander Mintz

Abraham Bruckner

Anne Ruth Singer

Anna Hirshkowitz

Irving Bronerwine

Abraham Golub

November 18 27 Heshvan

Jacob Shapiro

Charles Yaffa

Gertrude Balsam

Daniel Hendel

Gussie Bendett

November 19 28 Heshvan

Josiah Greenstein

Frieda Schneider

November 20 29 Heshvan

Dora Mandel — *Grandmother of Michael Gordon*

Rose Taylor

Yetta Sternliev

Barnett Cohn

Elsie Sternlieb

November 21 1 Kislev

Edith Agranovitch Brill

Eva Fishkin

Eva Himmelstein —

Mother of Roz Etra

November 22 2 Kislev

Bessie Rosenberg

November 23 3 Kislev

Calvin Bronerwine

Edith Slosberg —

Sister-in-Law of Michael Gere

November 24 4 Kislev

Cesia Rabinowitz — *Mother of Rav Julius Rabinowitz*

Jacob Biber —

Father of Joseph Biber

Joel Etra — *Husband of Roz Etra*

Stanley Friedman —

Father-in-Law of Michael Gere

Anna Berger

November 25 5 Kislev

Aaron Lemberg

Harry Charm

Jacob Schoenberg

November 26 6 Kislev

Dora Israelite

November 27 7 Kislev

Gary Scharfman —

Brother of Renee Kohanski

Goldie Gerechter

Isaac Furman

Helena Major

November 28 8 Kislev

Rose Engel

Mayer Ruckner

Esther Leah Hecht

Dorothy Mansky —

Mother of Kay Winakor

November 29 9 Kislev

Saydelle Agranovitch

Albert Beit

November 30 10 Kislev

Hyman Goldberg

Rebecca Shereshevsky

ALL are WELCOME

BETH JACOB SUPER SHABBAT



Daven at Beth Jacob



Sing aloud at Beth Jacob



Hang out with Friends at Beth Jacob



**Number
ONE
Kiddush
Luncheon
On the
Planet**

**It's
NOSH
TIME**

Kashruth observed

Shabbat Services: 10 AM 'til Noon
NOSH Time: Noon until you're stuffed
COME ANY TIME— LEAVE ANY TIME

Beth Jacob Synagogue
400 New London Turnpike
Norwich, CT

A conservative Jewish
congregation
Julius Rabinowitz, Rabbi