



For Heaven's Sake #41: The Two 'A' Words: Apartheid and Antisemitism

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Apartheid. The word at the far end of critique of Israel. And when similar accusations of antisemitism are lodged at Israel's critics, it too can shut down dialogue. Can meaningful discussion exist when the most extreme positions on each side increasingly define the conversation about Israel?

In this episode, **Donniel Hartman**, **Yossi Klein Halevi**, and **Elana Stein Hain** talk about polarization around Israel, the diminishing of the Jewish conversation, and their hope for creating a new space for dialogue.

*This source sheet is part of Episode #41 of **For Heaven's Sake**, a bi-weekly podcast from the Shalom Hartman Institute's [iEngage Project](#) that revives the lost art of Jewish debate for the sake of illuminating a topic, not sowing division. The podcast draws its name from the concept of *Machloket l'shem shemayim*, "disagreeing for the sake of heaven."*



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1. **Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, 2001**

Emotions, I shall argue, involve judgments about important things, judgments in which, appraising an external object as salient for our own well-being, we acknowledge our own neediness and incompleteness before parts of the world that we do not fully control (19)...I shall argue that emotions always involve thought of an object combined with thought of the object's salience or importance; in that sense, they always involve appraisal or evaluation. I shall therefore refer to my view as a type of "cognitive-evaluative" view...But by "cognitive" I mean nothing more than "concerned with receiving and processing information." I do not mean to imply the presence of elaborate calculation, of computation, or even of reflexive self-awareness. (23)

Human beings experience emotions in ways that are shaped both by individual history and by social norms. My own grief was shaped not only by my attachment to my mother, but also by norms about the proper way to mourn the loss of a parent...One is supposed to allow oneself to "cry big" at times, but then American mores of self-help also demand that one get on with one's work, one's physical exercise, one's commitments to others, not making a big fuss. (140)

The cognitive/evaluative view implies that emotional content is itself part of a creature's pursuit of flourishing. Given the fact that human beings deliberate ethically about how to live, it implies that emotions are part and parcel of ethical deliberation. If we see emotions as impulses, we will think that we can educate or change them only by suppression. Thus Kant thought that virtue must always be a matter of strength, as the will learns to keep a lid on inappropriate inclinations, rather like a good cook holding down the lid on a boiling pot. But in daily life, we more often endorse a different picture: we believe that emotions have an intentional content, and that people can do a good deal to shape the content of their own, and especially of their children's emerging emotions. Thus the recognition of "social construction" should lead to a recognition of space and freedom, rather than the reverse...

Indeed, a great advantage of a cognitive/evaluative view of emotion is that it shows us where societies and individuals have the freedom to make improvements. If we recognize the element of evaluation *in the emotions*, we also see that they themselves can be *evaluated* – and in some ways altered, if they fail to survive criticism. Social constructions of emotion are transmitted through parental cues, actions and instructions, long before the larger society shapes the child. We teach children what and whom to fear, what occasions for anger are reasonable, what behavior is shameful. If we believed that racial

hatred and aggressions were innate, we could at best teach children to suppress these impulses. But according to the cognitive/evaluative theory, there would be no racial hatred if there were not certain perceptions of salience – that people with different skin color are threatening, or dangerous, or evil. By shaping the way the children see objects, we contend against these social conventions. (172-73)

2. Pirke Avot/Ethics of the Ancestors 4:18

רבי שמעון בן אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר :

אַל תִּרְצֶה אֶת חֲבֵרְךָ בְּשַׁעַת כַּעֲסוֹ,
וְאַל תִּנְחַמְנוּ בְּשַׁעַת שְׂמִתּוֹ מִטּוֹל לְפָנָיו,
וְאַל תִּשְׁאַל לוֹ בְּשַׁעַת נְדָרוֹ,
וְאַל תִּשְׁתַּדֵּל לְרְאוֹתוֹ בְּשַׁעַת קִלְקָלְתּוֹ :

R. Shimon son of Elazar says: Do not appease your fellow at the time of their anger; and do not comfort them when their dead lies before them; and do not try to dissuade them at the time they are making a vow; and do not try to see someone in their disgrace.

3. Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura, Commentary to Pirke Avot 4:18

אל תרצה את חברך בשעת כעסו - דכתיב (שמות לג) פני ילכו והנחותי לך, אמר לו הקב"ה למשה המתן עד שיעברו פנים של זעם [ברכית ז' ע"א]:

ואל תנחמנו בשעה שמתו מוטל לפניו - שבשעת החורבן כביכול היה הקב"ה מתאבל, בקשו מלאכי השרת לנחמו, ורוח הקודש משיבן אל תאיצו לנחמני:

ואל תשאל לו בשעת נדרו - למצוא פתחים להתיר לו את נדרו. מפני שאז על כל פתח ופתח שתמצא לו יאמר אדעתא דהכי נדרתי, ושוב לא תמצא לו פתח. ומצינו כשנשבע הקב"ה למשה שלא יכנס לארץ לא התחנן מיד אלא המתין ואח"כ התחיל להתחנן:

Do not appease your fellow at the time of their anger – as it is written (Exodus 33:14): “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” The Holy Blessed One said to Moses: wait until my face of anger passes (Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 7a).

And do not comfort them when their dead lies before them – at the time of the destruction [of the Temple] The Holy Blessed One, as it were, mourned. The ministering angels sought to comfort God, and the Divine Spirit responded, “Do not rush to comfort me.”

And do not try to dissuade them at the time they are making a vow – to find loopholes to release them from their vow, for from then, for every loophole you find for them, they shall say, “I vowed knowing this,” and you will not find for them a loophole. We also found that when the Holy One Blessed One swore to Moses that he would not enter the Land of Israel, he did not plead immediately, rather he waited and then afterwards began to implore.

4. Babylonian Talmud Tamid 32a

איזהו חכם הרואה את הנולד

Who is wise? One who foresees what will happen.

5. Joshua Falk (1799–1864), *Binyan Yehoshua*, Commentary to Avot D’Rabbi Natan 14:5

הרואה את הנולד. צופה ומביט במה שעתיד להיות ומתוך כך נמצא מחשב הפסד מצוה כנגד שכרה ושכר עבירה כנגד הפסדה.

One who foresees what will happen: (that is,) glances and looks at what the future will be and through this finds oneself weighing the disadvantage of a mitzvah compared to its reward and the reward of a sin compared to its disadvantage.