

## Words spoken January 13, 2026, at UCLA Hillel student-professor dinner Introducing “coexistence”

Friends and colleagues,

I was warned that students today have a very short attention span, and that I should therefore take no more than three minutes to talk about this book.

Luckily, I can do it easily.

Not because the book is short, but because the questions it addresses need no introduction – they are already on your minds. You argue about them in class, you bounce them on social media, and you see their consequences on campus. For example: antisemitism, anti-Zionism, Jewish identity, the birth of Israel, terrorism, East-West relations, campus unrest, Palestinian statehood, October 7, the future of Gaza and the future of the Jewish people.

So, what’s new? You would ask.

We are often told that these issues are impossibly complex – formidable, nuanced, entangled, and ultimately beyond the understanding of ordinary mortals – Wrong! Wrong! and Wrong!

This book argues that these issues can be simplified, unified, explained, and understood coherently if we only examine them historically, beginning with the ideological/theological rejection of Jewish self-rule anywhere in the land. A rejection that I call "Zionophobia" – a giant elephant in the living room, whom Western minds refuse to acknowledge.

From that perspective, the book explains many seemingly unrelated puzzles. For example:

- Why the conflict has persisted for more than a century with no resolution in sight;
- Why antisemitism has intensified precisely during moments of Israeli vulnerability; and (driving home);
- Why university task forces on antisemitism have been totally useless over the past three decades.

Finally, for those of you who prefer stories to analysis, the book also tells a personal story:

- What it was like growing up in Eretz Israel before 1948; In Bnei-Brak of all places;
- What it felt like taking high-school classes from leading scientists of the time;
- What I learned from the tragedy of my son’s murder; from a journey I took to Doha in 2005; and from many conversations I have had with Muslim communities and Jewish leaders.

Finally, it explains why, despite all of this, I remain optimistic about the future of the Jewish people and eager – yes, joyfully eager – to share with you the miraculous story of Israel.

### Addendum

I now wish the moderator would ask me easy questions, for example:

- What is "being Jewish" and does it make sense to be "proud" of it?
- What is "Indigenous" and why do Israelis insist they and the Palestinians are equally indigenous to Eretz Israel?
- Why do most Israelis feel that Palestinian statehood is existentially dangerous, on the one hand, yet unavoidable in the long run?
- Why is anti-Zionism a racist-genocidal ideology?
- Why has Holocaust education failed so spectacularly at preventing the return of antisemitism?