

Israel, version 3.0

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Being part of the "third" generation is difficult. The first generation innovates. The second generation consolidates. The third generation often squanders the achievements of the previous two. It is never easy being third.

A well-known study discovered that financial wealth is generally squandered by the third generation. Through hard work and entrepreneurship, the first generation accumulates wealth. Appreciative of these efforts, the second generation preserves wealth. By contrast, the third generation, taking its privileges for granted, squanders wealth. The curse of the third generation.

Sefer Bereishit showcases the religious challenges of the third generation. Avraham was a revolutionary who introduced bold new ideas to the human imagination. He discovered a one G-d who was responsible for the diversity and dichotomy of our vast world. Additionally, by discovering that Hashem was compassionate, Avraham transformed religious thinking. His life was dramatic, and his impact was astonishing.

His son Yitzchak was tasked with locking in these revolutionary ideas and translating them into daily life. In contrast to his father, his life was unremarkable. While Avraham was a nomadic preacher, traveling from location to location, Yitzchak was a sedentary farmer who never traveled beyond the boundaries of Israel. Living a humdrum life without any wars and without visitations from angels, he formed a homestead, excavated deep wells, and cemented his father's revolutionary ideas. Living through the first and second generation is straightforward and uncomplicated.

Steering the third generation, Ya'akov is challenged to protect these ideas and to sustain historical and religious thrust. Often, the third generation loses its momentum and the revolution grinds to a halt. Taking ideas and success for granted, the third generation often descends into petty rivalries and personal animosities. Far removed from the energy and idealism of the founding

generation, the third generation can easily sink into apathy and aimlessness. Though his family is threatened by power struggles and personality conflicts, Ya'akov heroically battles to preserve both family unity and Jewish destiny. He does not allow the third generation to deteriorate into dysfunction.

As the popular saying goes "hard times create strong men, strong men create good times, good times create weak men, and weak men create hard times". As the third generation inherits good times, they can easily become weak men. Ya'akov works hard to keep make his children "strong men" so that they can continue to build history.

Fallen Kings

Throughout Jewish history, monarchs of the third generation were haunted by this curse. Jewish monarchy was launched through the exciting and dramatic rise of Dovid Hamelech. His son, Shlomo Hamelech institutionalized his father's gains by constructing a Mikdash and by globalizing Jewish influence. However, by the third generation our unity began to fray, as our state was split into two warring factions under the reign of Shlomo's son, Rechavam. Our people were badly divided into two hostile kingdoms, a split from which we never recovered.

Hundreds of years later, Jewish monarchy, once again, faced the curse of the third generation. In the second Temple era, during the Chanukah miracles, heroic Hasmonean warriors defied mighty Greek armies, while valiantly defending Jewish sovereignty against all odds. We don't know much about the second Hasmonean generation, but the third generation was badly flawed. The Hasmonean successor, John Hyrcanus defected to the Tzedukim faction and adopted policies which incited national discord. His successor, Alexander Jannus, launched a bloody civil war and executed scores of Tana'im. The curse of the third generation struck again.

The Third generation of Israel

We are the third generation of the modern state of Israel. The first generation of pioneers fought numerous wars to reassert our rights to our national homeland. The first round of wars defended our basic rights to a homeland, while the second

wave of wars solidified our borders and returned us to the Biblical territories of Israel, including Yerushalayim.

The second generation of Israel achieved financial stability and, subsequently, built an economic superpower. In addition, the second generation advanced worldwide aliyah, beckoning Jews to return to the land of history, which had now started to flow with milk, honey, and with economic prospects. Finally, the second generation began the arduous process of forging peaceful relations with those Arab neighbors willing to embrace our presence in our rightful homeland.

Many doubted whether the third generation of Israel could sustain the idealism of the first two generations. The current "Tik Tok" generation was born into a prosperous country, and they didn't face existential struggles. How would this generation respond to adversity? Would they have display selflessness and dedication to Jewish history? Were they too comfortable for patriotic spirit and too addicted to screens to care about long-term ideals? Would Israel suffer the curse of the third generation?

Though we faced a horrific tragedy, the current war has debunked most of these worries. Evidently, the third generation of Israel is more than capable of driving Jewish destiny.

So many people questioned whether this new generation would sacrifice personal comfort for national needs or for historical mission. Our enthusiastic response to the war effort has allayed these worries. The 150% enlistment rates of reserve soldiers and the images of Israeli travelers streaming home to join the war, signal that the spirit of sacrifice still beats loud in Israeli hearts. We are first encountering the countless stories of "first responders", soldiers, policemen, and average citizens who initially and heroically fought off the assault hundreds of terrorists preventing them from invading the heart of Israel and causing even greater casualties. Despite the false narratives which our enemies ceaselessly parrot, this third generation possesses moral and historical clarity. Our war is not a struggle between colonialists and suppressed indigenous populations. This is an existential battle over our homeland and a just war to eradicate murderers and barbarians. The third generation is prepared to sacrifice for the larger arc of Jewish history.

So many wondered whether this generation could preserve national unity. During the awful past year of public discontent our social fabric was gradually torn apart. One by one the clasps which held our people together began to break. One by one we abandoned the unifying narratives which had united us. Jews accusing other Jews of being "Nazis" signaled that the Holocaust was no longer a unifying narrative. Hopefully, after facing real modern-day Nazis, no Jew will ever, ever, hurl that term at another Jew. After Oct 7., that behavior is unthinkable.

Similarly, the scene of Yom Kippur prayers in Tel Aviv being rudely interrupted for political motives signaled that the Yom Kippur experience was no longer a unifying narrative for both secular and religious.

As our fabric began to rupture, we feared that we had lost all unity and togetherness. This war has demonstrated that, deep down, our unity still runs strong. Our mass volunteerism, and our support for the victims, the hostages and our soldiers has reassured us that what unites us is far greater than what divides us.

Finally, we wondered whether a secularized society had abandoned religious interest. Could secular and religious Israel still coexist side by side? This war has awakened Jewish spirit. For some that spirit is religious, for others it is traditional and for others it is historical. Either way, the resurgence of Jewish spirit is overwhelming, and it isn't limited to Israelis. Across the world, Jews, facing venomous antisemitism are looking back to our shared past and our national spirit to fend off the so called "enlightened world".

The third generation of Israel is doing just fine.

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