



TEXTing IRL Live: Choosing Israel Again and Again

Elana Stein Hain & Ronit Heyd

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How do we stay invested in Israel when it exhausts and challenges us? In this episode of TEXTing IRL, recorded live at the Shalom Hartman Institute's Winter Leadership Conference, Elana Stein Hain welcomes Ronit Heyd, Hartman Vice President and Director of the Center for Israeli & Jewish Identity, to read the work of Amos Oz and to discuss why relationships between Israelis and within the Jewish people must be committed: loving, honest, and critical.

*This source sheet is part of the **January 5, 2026** episode of the podcast **TEXTing IRL - Ideas for Real Life**. Host **Elana Stein Hain** sits down with guests who are accomplished practitioners in their fields to explore how classic and modern Jewish texts can help us wrestle with and act with integrity in the face of the big dilemmas of our time.*

Elana Stein Hain is the Rosh Beit Midrash and a senior research fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America, where she serves as lead faculty and consults on the content of lay and professional programs.

A widely well-regarded thinker and teacher, Elana is passionate about bringing rabbinic thought into conversation with contemporary life. To this end, she hosts TEXTing IRL, a bi-weekly podcast that considers issues relevant to Jewish life through the lens of classical and modern Torah texts; she also teaches Talmud from the Balcony, an occasional learning seminar exposing the big ideas, questions, and issues motivating rabbinic discussions. Elana is the author of *Circumventing the Law: Rabbinic Perspectives on Legal Loopholes and Integrity* (Penn Press, 2024) which uses loopholes as a lens for understanding rabbinic views on law and ethics.

She earned her doctorate in Religion at Columbia University and is an alumna of the Yeshiva University Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies (GPATS) as well as the Consortium in Jewish Studies and Legal Theory Graduate Fellowship at Cardozo School of Law. She also served for eight years as a clergy member on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, at both Lincoln Square Synagogue and the Jewish Center, has taught at the Wagner School at NYU, and sits on the board of Sefaria: A Living Library of Jewish Texts.

Elana is currently living in Jerusalem with her family.

Ronit Heyd is Vice President, Director of the Center for Israeli & Jewish Identity at the Shalom Hartman Institute and oversees the public policy and communication work of the Institute. She joined the Shalom Hartman Institute after more than 20 years of developing and leading initiatives that address Israel's most complex social challenges. Ronit is a leadership and social change expert and an adaptive leadership educator who has worked with dozens of leaders and changemakers from the public and non-profit sectors in Israel.

She previously served as the executive director of Shatil, the capacity-building arm of the New Israel Fund. Prior to assuming her role as director, Ronit led the Social Justice Initiative and the Religious Freedom Project at Shatil, providing organizational consultancy to dozens of organizations, coordinating coalitions and campaigns, and facilitating trainings for organizations and activists who work to strengthen Israel's democracy.

Ronit holds an MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School as a Wexner Fellow and an MA in social psychology from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is a devout Jerusalemite who lives in Ein Kerem with her family, and is a published writer of a series of children's stories *Manyera the Witch*.

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1. Amos Oz, *שלום לקנאים* (Dear Zealots), trans. Jessica Cohen, 2017, pp. 135-36

עכשיו יבוא ודוי קטן: אני אוהב את ישראל גם כּאשר אני לא יכול לסבּל אותה. אם נגזר עלי לפל יום אחד ברחוב, אני רוצה לפל ברחוב בישראל. לא בלונדון, לא בפריז, לא בבירלין ולא בניו יורק. כּאן יבואו מיד אנשים זרים ויירמו אותי. (וכאשר שוב אעמד על הרגלים, ודאי יהיו לא מעטים שישמחו לראות אותי נופל).

Now comes a little confession: I love Israel even when I cannot stand it. If I have to fall over in the street one day, I would like it to happen on a street in Israel. Not in London, not in Paris, not in Berlin or New York. Here people will come over immediately and pick me up. (Granted, once I'm back on my feet there will probably be quite a few who will be happy to see me fall down again.)

אני חרד מאוד לעתיד. אני מפחד מפני מדיניות הממשלה וגם מתבייש בה. ואני מפחד מפני הפנאטיות ומפני האלימות ההולכות ונפוצות אצלנו, וגם מתבייש בהן. אבל טוב לי להיות ישראלי. טוב לי להיות אזרח במדינה שיש בה שמונה וחצי מיליון ראשי ממשלות, שמונה וחצי מיליון נביאים, שמונה וחצי מיליון משיחים. כל אחד מאתנו נסחטו האישית לגאולה או לפחות לפתרון. כלם צועקים, ורק מעטים מקשיבים. לא משעמם כּאן. אכן מרגיז, מקומם, מאכזב, לעתים מעורר גם תסכול וזעם, אבל לא פעם מרתק ומסעיר. מה שראיתי כּאן בימי חיי הוא הרבה פחות וגם הרבה יותר ממה שהורי והוריהם של הורי חלמו עליו.

I am extremely fearful for the future. I fear the government's policies, and I am ashamed of them. I am afraid of the fanaticism and the violence, which are becoming increasingly prevalent in Israel, and I am also ashamed of them. But I like being Israeli. I like being a citizen of a country where there are eight and a half million prime ministers, eight and a half million prophets, eight and half million messiahs. Each of us has our own personal formula for redemptions, or at least for a solution. Everyone shouts, and few listen. It's never boring here. It is vexing, galling, disappointing, sometimes frustrating and infuriating, but almost always fascinating and exciting. What I have seen here in my lifetime is far less, yet also far more, that what my parents and their parents ever dreamed of.

2. Bereshit (Genesis) Rabbah 54:3

אמר רבי יוסי ברבי חנינא התוכחת מביאה לידי אהבה, "הוכח לחכם ויאהבך" (משלי ט, ח). היא דעתיה דרבי יוסי ברבי חנינא דאמר כל אהבה שאין עמה תוכחה אינה אהבה.

Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Chanina said: Rebuke brings about love, as it says, "Rebuke a wise person and they will love you" (Prov. 9:8). This reflects Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Chanina's general approach, as he also said: All love that does not have rebuke in it is not love.