

Stand/VithUs

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TEACH WITH US

STANDWITHUS MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR EDUCATORS







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www.standwithus.com/suru-uk

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Some hostages may be coming home, but we must not take our foot off the pedal when it comes to empowering the UK

The recent release of some hostages brings a momentary sigh of relief and a glimmer of hope. However, as educators and community leaders, this is not the time to become complacent. In the face of enduring global tensions and the persistence of anti-Israel rhetoric, our responsibility to educate and empower remains more critical than ever.

The fight against hatred of Israel and Jewish people is far from over. Misconceptions about Israel continue to fuel division and antisemitism here in the UK. As educators, we hold a unique position to challenge these narratives and provide a balanced, informed perspective. This is not about political partisanship; it is about promoting understanding, fostering respect, and building resilience against misinformation.

Education is a powerful tool for change. Schools, universities, and community forums must be arenas where facts triumph over prejudice. Integrating accurate information about Israel's history, culture, and geopolitical challenges into curriculums can help dispel myths and create a foundation of knowledge.



Yehuda Fink, Director of Education and Editor-in-Chief of TeachWithUs

Equally important is teaching the values of critical thinking and empathy, enabling individuals to navigate complex narratives with discernment and compassion.

Empowering the UK's population also means equipping young people with the tools to counter hatred and stand against antisemitism. StandWithUs UK initiatives such as StartUp, Explore, Swipe Up Rise Up, the Emerson Fellowship, and the Blue & White Club, as well as first-hand accounts from those with lived experiences can humanise the conversation and inspire action. These efforts must extend beyond Jewish communities to ensure that solidarity and understanding transcend religious and cultural boundaries.

Social media and digital platforms are critical battlegrounds in this effort. The rapid spread of misinformation online demands proactive engagement. Educators and advocates should harness these platforms to share credible resources, debunk harmful stereotypes, and amplify positive narratives about Israel and its people. We must also recognise that empowering the UK involves fostering alliances across different communities. The fight against hatred in all its forms requires unity and collaboration. By promoting mutual understanding, we can build a society that values diversity and rejects bigotry.

The release of hostages is a poignant reminder of the resilience of the human spirit, but it also underscores the need for sustained vigilance. As educators, our mission to inform, inspire, and empower must remain steadfast.

The stakes are too high for us to falter. Together, through education and engagement, we can ensure that hatred does not have the final word.

Am Yisrael Chai - עם ישראל חי - The People of Israel Live.

OCTOBER 7TH COMMEMORATIONS: STORIES OF RESILIENCE

To mark the first anniversary of the atrocities of October 7th, StandWithUs UK brought over 3 inspirational people to share their story across the United Kingdom at schools, communities, and people's homes. Over 3,500 people heard from Ariel, Omer, and Lorin during 5 powerful days of memory and unity.



I told myself: that's it, you're probably not going to make it. You had a good life. I really accepted my death when I was there.

- Ariel, survivor of Zikim Beach Massacre on Oct. 7th





Ariel is a survivor of the Zikim Beach Massacre, Lorin is a Druze nurse who worked at the hospital in Haifa and tended to the wounded, and Omer escaped the Nova Festival attack. All 3 of our visitors left a huge impact on those they spoke to. We want to thank all those who took part in the tour and hosted our speakers: JFS, Yavneh College, Immanuel College, Hasmonean Boys, Hasmonean Girls, King David Manchester, Birmingham Synagogue and the University Israel Society, JLE, and the generous individuals who hosted private events in their homes.





I wanted to celebrate my birthday... and we thought that the best way to do it was to go to a great music festival.

- Omer, survivor of the Nova Massacre on Oct. 7th



WHAT I WISH I LEARNT AT SCHOOL

University has become a much talked about topic regarding the discourse surrounding Israel. We asked our Emerson Fellows to reflect on their Israel education at secondary school and how it has helped them, as well as what they wish they would have learnt beforehand.





Liya Shalom Loughborough University

As a Jew in the diaspora with close ties to Israel, I have always been drawn to this land and its people. The connection was there before I even fully grasped Israel's rich and complex history. However, when I left my community to attend university, I soon found myself navigating complex conversations, being asked to explain or even defend Israel. Many people had strong opinions and often approached Israel through a narrow lens. While I had a personal connection to the country, I realised how little I actually knew about its story beyond religious teachings and family stories. This experience made me idealise an education that had done more to prepare me, not just as a Jew, but as a global citizen.

I believe school should empower the next generation with a broad and deep understanding of the world, including the complex and vibrant country that is Israel. With so much misinformation and heated debate surrounding it, it's important to highlight Israel's cultural tapestry, political landscape, innovations, and the misconceptions that surround it.

The education system had political discussions, which often revolved around the United States, Brexit, and other Western political developments. The Middle East, if mentioned at all, was presented mostly as a region of conflict, with little context to understand the complex dynamics at play. Israel's political landscape was absent from the conversation, leaving me without the vocabulary to explain the diversity of beliefs within Israeli society or the range of political issues Israelis face.

When I visited Israel, I had the chance to join a workshop where I spoke with Israelis from different backgrounds, each holding different beliefs and supporting different political parties. This experience gave me a more nuanced understanding of Israel's politics and society. I learned that Israelis debate and disagree passionately about social issues, religion, security, and the peace process. I realised that Israel's story cannot be simplified; it is a dynamic country with its own challenges, diverse viewpoints, and evolving policies. Learning more about Israel's parliamentary system and its history would help students navigate complex conversations and understand why the issues facing Israel don't have easy solutions.



Reflecting on my education, one lesson I wish my school had taught me about Israel is the importance of seeing it as both incredible and imperfect. Growing up, I was fortunate to receive a strong foundation that celebrated Israel's history, culture, and achievements, creating a deep sense of pride and connection. However, as I began to encounter more complex conversations on campus and through informal education, I recognised the need for a more nuanced perspective; one that values Israel's successes while acknowledging its challenges. This shift can be difficult for students who may be unprepared for campus life and the exposure to the multi-layered reality of Israel.

I am a student at the University of Leeds and feel privileged to have access to a wide range of organisations and educators. It was through StandWithUs that I found the support and resources I needed to engage in these discussions with confidence. They helped me navigate the full reality of Israel, encouraging a balanced view that celebrates Israel's achievements while recognising the challenges it faces. StandWithUs equipped me not only with factual knowledge but also with the ability to approach conversations about Israel with authenticity and depth.

Israel's history is undeniably complex, which might explain the hesitation to delve into it with younger students. However, I believe that exploring these complexities in school would have been incredibly valuable, especially since our education began with a deep appreciation and connection to Israel. By starting these important conversations from a place of love, we could have engaged thoughtfully and openly with Israel's nuanced history, recognising both its triumphs and challenges. This approach could have nurtured a more resilient and informed connection to Israel, preparing us to handle complex discussions in a balanced and supportive environment. A balanced understanding of Israel not only fosters pride but also strengthens students' ability to advocate for it thoughtfully and knowledgeably.



Leah Preston
University of
Birmingham

Having attended Jewish schools my entire life, Israel was always a central focus of our studies. We learned the Hatikvah and celebrated Yom Ha'atzmaut, but I only began to feel a genuine connection later on.

While we were encouraged to feel this connection, I realize now that we never delved deeply into how Israel came to be or the struggles our nation endured throughout its complex history.

Looking back, I wish I had understood this history better; it would have fostered more respect for Israel as a state and motivated me to advocate for it at a younger age. I wish my school had taught me why I should love Israel, rather than just how to express that love.

A crucial part of Israel's story is the rise of Zionism. Until I took a gap year in Israel, I had no knowledge of who Theodore Herzl was! As a secondary school student, it would have been inspiring to learn how a dream transformed into reality. Understanding that the longing to return to Jerusalem was once merely a dream and now represents the realization of our ancestors' aspirations would have been enlightening. Much like Martin Luther King Jr., our legacies were overlooked in our education.

Beyond the conflicts, Israel's population represents a tapestry of cultures, including Jews from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and beyond. Learning about the experiences of Mizrahi, Ashkenazi, and Sephardi Jews, as well as Arab Israelis, would have helped us appreciate Israel as a multifaceted society.



For the most part, the media coverage surrounding Israel focuses on conflict and controversy, overshadowing the country's remarkable achievements and contributions to global innovation. Israel is a hub of innovation and progress, with remarkable advances in technology, medicine and agriculture which deserves recognition.

For students, especially those who are looking to make important decisions in their educational journey, learning about such contributions could be transformative. As someone with a passion for psychology and aspirations of pursuing a career in this field, I would have certainly enjoyed and benefitted from learning about Israel's contribution to psychological research and opportunities within the psychology departments of different establishments. Reichman University is an example of an institution which houses pioneering research opportunities in its psychology department, specifically focusing on areas such as communication, aging and neuropsychology. They offer many such programmes for international students, something I was not aware of when in school, and would have been invaluable in guiding my educational decisions.

I believe that schools should prioritise helping students to understand how their interests align with potential career paths in Israel as well as the UK. For Zionistic students who see their future in Israel, incorporating sessions about Israel's advancements across different fields and the various opportunities available for them there can empower students to make informed choices about their future and open doors to exciting opportunities in Israel which they may not otherwise know about.



The songs still echo in my mind - dozens of young voices joining together in Hebrew melodies during morning assembly. Those childhood days in Jewish school shaped not just my education, but my very sense of self. Between maths lessons and lunch breaks, we absorbed a powerful story: Israel stood as our beacon, our refuge, our triumph against all odds.

How vividly I recall making paper Israeli flags each spring, listening starry-eyed to tales of brave pioneers, and celebrating every scientific breakthrough from that sun-soaked strip of the Mediterranean coast. My teachers beamed with pride sharing stories of medical innovations and

desert-greening agriculture. Their passion was genuine, infectious even.

My teachers beamed with pride sharing stories of medical innovations and desert-greening agriculture. Their passion was genuine, infectious even.

Then came university. Sitting in history seminars, my neat picture began to blur around the edges. New voices emerged from my readings and classroom debates – voices speaking of displacement, of loss, of lives upended. I found myself stumbling over questions I'd never learned to answer. My stammered responses felt hollow, and defensive, drawn from a script suddenly revealed as incomplete. Don't misunderstand – my love for Israel hasn't dimmed. If anything, it's deeper now, rooted in reality rather than rhetoric. Yet I can't help wondering: what if my teachers had helped me grasp the full story sooner? What if they'd guided me through those thorny conversations before I faced them unprepared?



Growing up most of us learn bits and pieces about Israel. We hear about its historical sites, its place in world politics or perhaps see it mentioned in the news. But for such a complex, dynamic, and culturally rich place, a lot of what we learn often falls short. Reflecting on what I was taught—and more importantly, what I wasn't taught, there are a few aspects I wish my school had covered about Israel. Understanding these could help us build a fuller picture of the nation, its people, and its challenges. Here's what I wish had been part of my education.

In school, history lessons on Israel often focused almost exclusively on its creation in 1948 and the conflicts that have arisen since. Yet Israel's story stretches back thousands of years, connecting to the histories of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and ancient civilisations that thrived in this region long before modern borders were drawn.

Understanding Israel as part of a longer historical narrative—one that includes ancient kingdoms, the Roman Empire, the Ottoman period, and waves of Jewish and Arab populations, gives a fuller picture of the dynamics at play. I wish we had delved into how these layers of history shaped modern Israel's diverse cultures and traditions.

Israel's religious significance is often highlighted, especially since it's central to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. But what often gets missed is Israel's incredible cultural diversity beyond religious lines. Israel is home to Jews from across the world, including Ethiopian Jews, Russian Jews, Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews from North Africa and the Middle East, and secular Jews who see their identity as cultural rather than religious. There are also many

Arab Israelis, Druze, Bedouin, and other minorities. Each of these groups brings its own traditions, languages, and identities to Israel.

A fuller, more balanced education on Israel would have given us more than just a surface-level understanding of this complex nation. It would have shown us how diverse, resilient, and culturally rich Israel truly is. In an interconnected world, where understanding each other is crucial, learning about Israel in all its dimensions would help us appreciate not only the nation's challenges but also its many contributions to the world.



The StandWithUs UK Emerson Fellowship is a prestigious one-year programme that empowers and inspires pro-Israel student leaders at universities throughout the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Brazil. The programme provides tools, develops professional skills and extensive, in-depth, knowledge about Israel and the Jewish people.

For more information and to apply visit: https://www.standwithus.com/emerson-uk



'FROM SURVIVING CONCENTRATION CAMPS TO CELEBRATING BAR MITZVAH AT THE KOTEL'

My familial history is inextricably tied to the establishment of the State of Israel, and my own personal history was shaped by the sacrifices and triumphs of those who came before me. It is from this deep legacy that I draw my passion for Zionism, a passion that has been the driving force behind my work and my journey as an emissary. Today, I want to share with you the story of my grandfather, a man whose resilience in the face of unspeakable horrors serves as a testament to the strength of the human spirit.

I am the granddaughter of David Perlberger, a Holocaust survivor, and of a Palmach woman who fought in the War of Independence. On the other side of my family, my great-grandfather was among those who made Aliyah to Israel and laid the cornerstones of cities like Zikhron Yaakov and Hadera.

A Childhood Interrupted

David Perlberger was born in 1926 in Krakow, Poland. He grew up in a peaceful, happy, and close-knit Jewish family in the Kazimierz district, known for its rich Jewish culture. He attended a Jewish school, spoke Polish and Yiddish, and was an exceptional artist, known as the best painter in his class. He would skate on frozen fields during the harsh winters and enjoyed a simple, joyful childhood, filled with time spent in nature on his family's farm. Life seemed safe, serene, and full of potential. However, this idyllic existence was shattered just days before David's Bar Mitzvah. On September 1, 1939, the Nazis invaded Poland, and everything changed. At the age of 13, David was ripped from the world he knew, and soon after, he and his family were forcibly deported to the small town of Jaslo. In 1942, the Nazis took all the town's Jewish inhabitants, and David was separated from his parents—never to see them again. Tragically, they were sent to the Treblinka extermination camp, where they perished.



Remuh Synagogue, Krakow. Credit: Shutterstock.

My grandfather's Bar Mitzvah at the Kotel wasn't just the celebration of a rite of passage. It was a triumph of the human spirit, a victory over darkness, and a testament to the enduring power of hope, identity, and resilience.

Survival Against All Odds

David's journey took him through a nightmare of forced labour camps, concentration camps, and death marches, each more harrowing than the last. In the ghetto of Przemyśl, he was assigned gruelling physical labour in the construction of a railroad. After a year and a half, the work finished, but David knew that survival depended on staying useful. He volunteered for carpentry work, knowing that the Nazis were unlikely to kill those who could still contribute to the war effort.

Two chilling stories from this period are seared into my memory.

One day, the Nazis announced they needed 50 carpenters to be sent to another camp, a place from which prisoners never returned. Desperate to avoid certain death, David turned to a Jewish Kapo, the prisoner overseeing the carpenters. He pleaded, telling the Kapo that he was the last of the Perlberger family, and that his name—his very life—was all that remained. His request to be removed from the list was granted, but only after a tense negotiation. David was spared, and in doing so, narrowly avoided the horrific fate that would have awaited him had he been sent away.

The second story occurred during his transfer to Auschwitz in 1944. Upon arrival, David saw the infamous chimneys of the camp, billowing thick black smoke. His initial thoughts were that the smoke was from heating systems for showers in the bitter cold. But as he lined up for what he thought would be a routine shower, the truth began to dawn on him. After an agonising wait, it became clear that the Nazis had intended to send them directly to the gas chambers. It was only by a twist of fate that David, and countless others, escaped that particular fate.



An Israeli newspaper article from 2009 Headline reads: "A Bar Mitzva to a Holocaust survivor - at the age of 82."

A Miracle and a New Beginning

David's survival was nothing short of miraculous. In January 1945, he was liberated from the Blechhammer extermination camp during the death marches, a time when many prisoners were left to die in the snow. It was only after the arrival of Soviet forces that David and his fellow prisoners were freed. But his survival was bittersweet. He had lost everything—his family, his childhood, his world. Yet, he had been granted the precious gift of life. Two years later, David made his way to Israel, where he would rebuild his life. He met my grandmother, a courageous Palmach woman who fought in the War of Independence. Together, they built a family and a future, rooted in the land that David had once dreamed of reaching.

In 2008, at the age of 82, David finally fulfilled the dream that had been taken from him so many years

before: He celebrated his Bar Mitzvah at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, 70 years after the Nazis had stolen that moment from him. It was a profoundly moving experience—one that symbolised the resilience of a man who had endured unimaginable loss and hardship, yet had emerged with an unbreakable spirit. In 2008, at the age of 82, David finally fulfilled the dream that had been taken from him so many years before: He celebrated his Bar Mitzvah at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, 70 years after the Nazis had stolen that moment from him. It was a profoundly moving experience—one that symbolised the resilience of a man who had endured unimaginable loss and hardship, yet had emerged with an unbreakable spirit.

A Legacy of Life, Love, and Resilience

Despite the horrors my grandfather lived through, I remember him as a man filled with life, curiosity, and an unshakable joy. He was passionate about art, travel, and, above all, family. He taught me the importance of resilience and the need to cherish every moment, for life is fragile and precious. His story—and the story of all Holocaust survivors—serves as a reminder of the strength of the Jewish people, our collective ability to endure hardship, and the power of hope in the face of despair. It is this spirit that continues to inspire me as I carry forward his legacy, sharing the story of survival, faith, and renewal with future generations.

My grandfather's Bar Mitzvah at the Kotel wasn't just the celebration of a rite of passage. It was a triumph of the human spirit, a victory over darkness, and a testament to the enduring power of hope, identity, and resilience.



Rotem Perlberger is the Shlicha of the Jewish Agency for StandWithUs UK

2024 HIGHLIGHTS - AUTUMN TERM



StartUp class of 2025

StartUp Is Back!

StartUp welcomed its **third** cohort in November! Our newest group of excellent students will be exploring how to maximise their leadership skills in a team environment.

Over the coming weeks, they will be working in teams to create projects that will bring the UK and Israel closer together.

The outstanding students are awarded a free trip to Israel with StandWithUs UK!

Yael Sherer Visits the UK

We were honoured to host Yael Sherer on week-long speaking tour of the UK.

Yael is a leading expert on sexual violence as a weapon of war, and has been an advocate for victims of October 7th of this nature.

Yael spoke in several locations and gave media interviews to highlight this critical issue. We thank all those who hosted events throughout the week to allow Yael to speak about her work.



Our work has increased, and our impact continues to grow across the United Kingdom. Have a look at what our Education Department have been up to:

Lorin Returns!

Following our successful "Stories of Resilience" tour for October 7th, Lorin has returned for the academic year as an educator at StandWithUs UK.

Lorin is speaking at schools, universities, synagogues and other spaces about her life in Israel as a Druze and the evolution of Israel's society and culture.

More info at the back of the magazine.



CAMPUS CORNER

Our campus team have been hard at work, travelling across the country and meeting hundreds of university students. Our campus team run events, give advice, and generally provide support to students during a very difficult period for Jewish, Zionist and pro-Israel students.







CURRENT EVENTS IN ISRAEL

The Israel-Hamas war has raged on, coming close to entering its sixteenth month.

Here is what we know as of January 19th 2025:

- The IDF is sealing off the Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza, shutting it down after it was turned into a major Hamas terror base. Hundreds of patients and staff have been evacuated to another hospital.
- UNRWA is preparing to cease its activities in Judea & Samaria, following Knesset legislation ending Israeli cooperation with the organisation coming into effect.
- Terrible news as the family of Yousef and Hamza al-Ziyadne have been informed that their bodies have been recovered by the IDF.
- Israel has reportedly accepted the terms of a hostage deal following negotiations in Qatar.
- Two Israeli government ministries have been instructed to prepare for a potential return of hostages.
- Possible Hostage Deal details:
- In the first phase: 33 hostages will be released including women, children, adults over 50, the injured and the ill. Israel is not committed to ending the war and can resume fighting after the first phase. On the 16th day of agreed implementation, detailed negotiations will begin for phase 2, in which Israel demands the release of all remaining hostages without a third phase. It is important to remember all the hostages are a humanitarian case. Not one hostage has even been seen by a Red Cross representative.
- Philadelphi Corridor: Security arrangements will be in place for the Philadelphi Corridor. The IDF will
 initially remain there but will withdraw from certain sections later. In addition, Israel will release
 prisoners proportional to the number of live hostages freed. Nukhba operatives involved in the
 October 7th massacre will not be released.
- Qatari and American officials announced on Wednesday, January 15th that Israel and Hamas have agreed to a ceasefire deal.
- The ceasefire is in effect, and the first three released hostages are Doron Steinbrecher, Romi Gonen, and Emily Damari (a British-Israeli citizen). The 3 were released on 19th January. 90 Palestinian prisoners, some of whom have committed awful crimes, were released by Israel.
- More than 830 Israeli soldiers have died since the start of the war.

Israel has been fighting a war on multiple fronts:

- On January 2nd, the IAF struck Hezbollah medium-range rocket launchers at a military site belonging to Hezbollah. The launchers were only struck after the request was not addressed by the Armed forces of Lebanon.
- On Monday January 6th, three people were murdered and six more injured when a Palestinian terrorist opened fire on a bus near the town of Kdumin (Judea & Samaria).
- On Monday January 13th one missile launched from Yemen was intercepted by the IAF prior to crossing into Israeli territory.
- On the night of January 14th, a missile fired by the Houthis from Yemen was intercepted by the IDF during the night. However some shrapnel hit a home in Jerusalem. No injuries thankfully.



TOUGH QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Each month we will address a tough question about Israel and the conflict. These questions may be ones that your pupils may have asked, or you have thought of yourselves. Our suggested answers are aimed to support you in navigating these topics in the classrooms when pupils have thoughts or concerns about Israel and the conflict.

Send in your tough question to evaj@standwithus.com



"Is the ceasefire and hostage deal between Hamas and Israel a positive development?"

There has been much discourse surrounding the recent ceasefire and hostage deal. How can we navigate the various issues surrounding it, and the opinions for and against?

The ceasefire and hostage deal between Hamas and Israel can be seen as a mixed development, with both positive and challenging aspects to consider. In the immediate term, it is cause for some relief, as hostages are returning to their families and there is a temporary calm in Israel. This moment of peace provides respite for many who have been suffering through ongoing conflict. Families reunited with their loved ones after months or even years of uncertainty can find solace in this brief period of stability.



However, we must also take into account the complexities that will unfold in the coming weeks. While some families are celebrating the return of their hostages, many others are still waiting for their loved ones to come home. Tragically, some hostages lost their lives during the conflict, and their families face the heartbreak of grief while seeing others reunited. Additionally, the families of terror victims who lost loved ones in the violence may be grappling with the reality that those responsible for the deaths of their loved ones could be released as part of the deal, potentially deepening the wounds caused by the conflict.

So, while the ceasefire brings temporary calm and hope for some, it also raises difficult questions about the cost of peace, the fairness of releasing individuals involved in violence, and the emotional toll on those left behind. In the coming weeks, it will be crucial to reflect on these various perspectives and consider the broader implications of this deal, as the balance between peace and justice remains a delicate one.



INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST EDUCATOR: LORIN KHIZRAN

After being a part of our successful "Stories of Resilience" tour for October 7th commemoration week, we are delighted to announce that Lorin will be joining the StandWithUs UK team as an educator.

Lorin is a Druze-Israeli from the village of Yarka in northern Israel. She has been raised with a love for Israel, and wants to share her experiences with people in the UK. A qualified nurse, Lorin found herself working around the clock at the Rambam Hospital's surgical department in Haifa on October 7th, treating the wounded from the massacre.

A skilled public speaker and fluent in three languages, Lorin has developed a passion for standing up for Israel and against misinformation.



BOOK LORIN TO SPEAK AT YOUR SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY, OR COMMUNITY.

Email: yehuda@standwithus.com

