

Yael Greene

May 16th, 2019

Personal Statement For Helyn B. Reich Scholarship

Throughout my life, I have been educated and connected to Zionism. I have been a Zionist for as long as I can remember, especially through my personal relationships. At the same time, as I grew older and as Israel has developed, I began to think about a different idea of Zionism. In this essay, I will first talk about how the people in my life affected my personal relationship with the Zionist movement. Second, I will write about how I would define Zionism. Lastly, I will discuss what it means to me to be a Zionist currently.

I grew up in a Zionist household where my father (who also worked with the American Zionist Movement before he was ordained as a rabbi) would teach my sisters and I about Israel's accomplishments and beauty. I also went to Jewish sleepaway camp during the summer. There I would create special relationships with the Israeli staff and campers. They would tell us about their connections to Israel through programs that they led or just by spending time together.

For me, after the experiences of talking with Israelis and my Jewish education, I would define Zionism as the movement of the Jewish people continuing to build a peaceful, democratic, pluralistic State of Israel. We have already succeeded in making the state official and building infrastructure to support Israel's citizens. Seventy-one years later, Israel has accomplished goals that nobody thought could happen, including developing a strong military and creating inventions for science, agriculture, and medicine.

I want to celebrate the values in Israel's Declaration of Independence and be a good partner to strengthen Israel's democracy and journey towards peace. For me, the country embodies peace, refuge, and hope. I have been so inspired by Israel's aid to countries facing natural disasters and to people who are facing persecution. Those actions should be recognized around the world, and as a Zionist, part of my role is to share those moments. When I read about Israel's devotion through helping others, it gives me hope that the country will be an example of creating a safer and compassionate world.

Being a Zionist has been an essential part of my life through the relationships I have. With the meaningful lessons about Israel that were passed to me, I hope to continue sharing with my communities about the importance of Israel's values. The state has continuously been a place of safety and acceptance for Jews around the world. As a Zionist today, I intend to use my role to spread Israel's dedication towards peace and hope in the generation of a better world.