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THE BLOGS

Mark Ginsberg

Israel Must Win the Story Before the Question Is Asked



Online global access to information - courtesy of Shutterstock

For decades, Israel's public advocacy has largely operated in reactive mode. A war begins, a terrorist attack takes place or an accusation is leveled, and Israel scrambles to respond. Officials appear on television to explain military operations, rebut allegations and provide context that should have been established long before the crisis erupted.

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By then, much of the damage has already been done.

The encouraging development is that Israeli public advocacy is beginning to recognize this fundamental weakness. The discussion is gradually moving beyond defending the latest action towards addressing the deeper questions that determine how Israel is perceived: Who are the Jewish people? Why are they in this land? What rights do they possess? What does Israel represent, not only for Jews, but for the wider world?

This is a necessary strategic shift. Israel cannot successfully explain each individual battle if it has already lost the argument over why it has the right to exist and defend itself.

For too long, Israel's advocates have relied on a narrow set of messages. Israel is a democracy. Israel contributes technology to the world. Israel seeks peace. All are true and important, but none adequately answers the ideological campaign that presents Jews as foreign colonizers who arrived in someone else's country.

The answer must begin with Jewish history and indigeneity.

The Jewish people did not select the Land of Israel as a convenient refuge in the twentieth century. Jewish identity, language, faith, calendar, collective memory and national consciousness were formed in this land. Jerusalem is not merely Israel's capital. It has been the spiritual and national center of the Jewish people for three thousand years.

Even in exile, Jews prayed towards Jerusalem, mourned the destruction of their Temple, celebrated agricultural festivals tied to the seasons of Israel and ended the Passover Seder with the words, "Next year in Jerusalem." Hebrew was revived as a spoken national language because it had never ceased to be the language of Jewish prayer, scholarship and memory.

This is not the behavior of a foreign colonial population. It is the story of an indigenous people returning to its ancestral homeland.

Jewish rights in the Land of Israel are not dependent solely on the Holocaust, the United Nations Partition Plan or international sympathy. They are rooted in history, continuous

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Jewish presence, religious and cultural attachment, and modern international recognition, including the decisions at San Remo and the League of Nations Mandate.

This does not erase the rights, dignity or aspirations of others. Rights are not a finite resource. But any serious discussion must begin by acknowledging that Jewish national rights are not inventions and Jewish sovereignty is not an historical accident.

Israel must also speak more confidently about its relationship with the Christian world. Christianity was born in the Land of Israel from within Jewish civilization. Its foundational places, figures and texts cannot be understood without the geography and history of the Jewish homeland.

Today, Israel is the only country in the Middle East where the Christian population has grown substantially over the decades and where Christian holy places are protected by a sovereign government committed to freedom of worship. At a time when ancient Christian communities have been devastated across parts of the region, Israel stands as a guardian of a shared biblical inheritance.

This connection is not merely theological. Israel and much of the Christian world share a civilizational challenge. The assault on Israel is part of a wider confrontation between democratic societies and Islamist movements that reject religious freedom, pluralism and the sovereignty of non-Muslim peoples in the Middle East.

Israel is not fighting Islam, nor are Muslims collectively its enemy. The threat is Islamism: a political ideology that seeks to impose religious supremacy through coercion, terrorism and, where possible, state power. Hamas, Hezbollah, the Iranian regime and their allies may focus their violence on Israel, but their ambitions extend far beyond it.

Israel is on the front line, but it is not the final destination.

The next arena in this struggle is artificial intelligence. Increasingly, people will not learn about Israel by reading books, visiting museums or even searching traditional websites. They

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will ask large language models to explain Zionism, the origins of the conflict, Jewish indigeneity or the status of Jerusalem.

The answers they receive will be shaped by the material on which those systems were trained and the sources they retrieve. If the digital information environment is dominated by decades of anti-Israel activism, distorted terminology and endlessly repeated falsehoods, AI models may reproduce those prejudices with the appearance of neutral authority.

This means Israel's advocacy organizations must do more than publish responses on social media. They must create authoritative, well-sourced and digitally accessible bodies of knowledge about Jewish history, archaeology, law, religion and national rights.

Primary documents should be translated, indexed and placed online in formats that AI system can recognize and use. Hebrew sources must become accessible in multiple languages. Organizations should test major AI models for recurring distortions, publicly document their findings and engage technology companies with evidence-based requests for greater accuracy.

Most importantly, Israel must flood the digital public square with substance rather than slogans. Artificial intelligence cannot draw upon historical evidence that has never been digitized, translated or presented clearly.

Israel's advocacy challenge is therefore no longer simply to respond faster. It is to shape the intellectual foundations upon which future answers will be built.

The battle for Israel's legitimacy will increasingly be decided before a spokesperson enters a television studio and even before a user types a question. Getting ahead of the game means ensuring that when the world asks who the Jewish people are and why Israel exists, the truth is already there.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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WHAT DO WE TELL THE CHILDREN?

Guest September 14, 2026 Jewish Life

By Mark Ginsberg

Your reporting on the Boulder Valley School District settlement, concrete measures after real harm, arrives at the question every Jewish parent now meets sooner or later: what do we tell the children? I write from Efrat, where my children practice walking to the shelter alongside their math lessons, and where that question stopped being hypothetical two years ago. Israeli families have been forced to develop scripts for these conversations, and the ones that work may be worth trading across the water.

The Lessons That Arrive Early

Israeli schools teach the siren the way American schools teach the fire drill, as routine rather than alarm, and the routine is the first lesson for parents too. Fear with a procedure attached becomes a task; fear without one becomes a mood that follows a child home. When the war began, the guidance that circulated among parents here was to answer the question asked and not the question feared. A child who asks whether the sirens will come tonight wants to know about tonight, not about the region's future. Short true answers, calibrated to the age in front of you, beat thorough ones every time.

The second lesson took longer to learn. Children absorb far more from what we do than from what we say, and a parent who checks the phone with clenched shoulders is teaching a class of one. The families I know

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who have held up best gave their children jobs: packing the shelter bag, learning the neighbor's name, being the one who reminds everyone where the flashlight lives. Psychologists who study communities under rocket fire keep finding the same pattern, that belonging and usefulness are the armor, and the pattern works in ordinary hard times as much as in wartime.

The Dinner-Table Version

The hardest conversations are not about the sirens at all. They are about the hatred behind them, the ones a child hears about from a classmate or sees on a screen. Here the Israeli instinct is to name the thing plainly and then widen the frame: some people hate us for what we are, and what we are is a family with a table, a holiday coming, a history we love telling. The hate gets one sentence. The table gets the rest of the evening. That ratio, one part naming to five parts living, is the closest thing to a vaccine we have found.

What Travels to Boulder

What would I offer a Boulder family reading about the settlement and wondering what to say at dinner? The same blueprint with local materials. Name what happened honestly, since children will hear it anyway and secrets teach shame. Give them a role, since a child who helps make the household ready stands a little straighter. And keep the ratio: one sentence for the harm, the rest of the evening for the joy, which is the family's own and cannot be settled away. The measures your district agreed to matter, and the belonging you build at the table matters more. Our two communities are proof of the same sentence: children do not need the danger hidden. They need the love to be visible.

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THE BLOGS

Mark Ginsberg

At the UN, Iran Won the Image. Israel Must Fight for the Truth



United Nations General Assembly - courtesy of Shutterstock

The most revealing moment at this year's United Nations General Assembly did not come from the podium. It came from the delegates who rose from their seats and walked out as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu began to speak. The cameras captured the spectacle perfectly: a procession of diplomats leaving the hall, delivering their verdict on Israel without having to listen to a word of its defense.

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The previous day, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian had addressed the same assembly. He portrayed Iran as a victim of aggression, held up photographs of Iranian children killed in the war and accused Israel and the United States of terrorism. The American delegation walked ou and Israel boycotted his speech. Yet there was no comparable procession of diplomats determined to show the world that Iran's leader was unworthy of their presence.

The contrast was impossible to miss. Israel's elected prime minister was met with a carefully staged act of rejection. The representative of a regime that crushes dissent at home was given the space to present himself as the voice of a wounded nation. In a chamber supposedly devoted to human rights, the Iranian people who oppose that regime barely entered the picture.

Only days earlier, a UN fact-finding mission had reported on Iran's extraordinarily brutal suppression of protests that began in December 2025. Its investigators described security forces killing protesters and bystanders, including children; mass arrests; torture; and violations amounting to crimes against humanity. Iran's own authorities published a list of 3,038 people killed, while the mission warned that the true number could be significantly higher. The government also imposed an internet shutdown lasting more than five months, obstructing families searching for loved ones and making its actions harder for the world to see.

Tens of thousands of deaths are well known, but the regime's restrictions have made a complete accounting extraordinarily difficult. The same authorities that demand the world see the photographs they display at the UN have worked to prevent the world from seeing what they have done to their own citizens.

Pezeshkian's tears for dead children were of the crocodile variety because he did not hold up the photographs of the Iranian children killed during his government's murderous crackdown. Where was the international outrage for their parents, or for the women and men imprisoned because they demanded a different future? The Iranian regime seeks the world's sympathy for suffering it can attribute to its enemies while demanding silence about suffering for which it bears responsibility.

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That is why the difference in treatment at the UN matters. It exposes a struggle over narratives, in which an image can travel further than a fact and a diplomatic gesture can substitute for a moral argument.

The walkout told millions of viewers that Israel was beyond the pale. It did nothing to establis whether Netanyahu's claims were true or false. Its purpose was to ensure that, for many watching, they would never need to be heard.

Israel is a democracy whose leaders can be challenged in public, attacked in its press and removed by voters. Iran's rulers respond to public challenge with prisons, executions and gunfire. This does not mean Israel is above criticism or that every Israeli decision is beyond dispute. It means that any moral comparison which overlooks the nature and conduct of the Iranian regime has abandoned the facts before it begins.

Anti-Israel activists have become extraordinarily effective at creating a fog around those facts They offer a simple story in which Israel is always the aggressor, its enemies are always the victims, and any evidence that complicates the picture is waved away as propaganda. Iran benefits enormously from that story.

A regime that represses its own population can wrap itself in the language of justice and present its confrontation with Israel as proof of its moral standing.

Israel cannot afford to assume that the truth will speak for itself. It must fight the war of narratives with the same seriousness it brings to defending its borders: patiently, relentlessly and with evidence that people can examine.

That means bringing the testimony of Iranian protesters into the conversation, documenting the threats posed by Tehran and its proxies, and explaining Israel's actions in terms that reach beyond those already inclined to agree. It also means recognizing civilian suffering honestly. A credible case for Israel is stronger when it refuses to hide from difficult facts.

The delegates were free to leave during Netanyahu's speech, but walking out is easy. Facing th full record is harder. Anyone who claims to stand for human rights must find room to hear the

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people Iran's leaders have tried to silence, even when doing so disrupts the preferred story about Israel.

At the UN, the cameras showed the empty seats. They should also have shown the absence tha mattered most: the voices of Iranians murdered, imprisoned and cut off from the world by their own government. Israel's answer to the spectacle must be to clear the fog, again and again. Truth and light remain the greatest disinfectants.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Ginsberg is an Israel-based digital marketer and commentator on technology and artificial intelligence, with over two decades of firsthand perspective on the country's innovation economy. Originally from South Florida and now based in Efrat, he analyzes the growth of Israel's tech ecosystem and the broader implications of AI on business, policy, and society.

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The Price of Protection: Missile Defense and the New Currency of Dependency

18/09/2026 COMMENTARIES 6 Mins Read

By Mark Ginsberg

When Greece signed for a complete Israeli air-defense array at the end of August, the contract read like an arms sale and behaved like something else.



Mark Ginsberg

The Achilles Shield package, David's Sling interceptors, SPYDER batteries, Barak MX modules and the radars that knit them into one sky, is worth some three and a half billion dollars, and Athens is now the first European Union state to own a national missile-defense dome built entirely of Israeli systems. Arms deals used to be the receipts of alliances. This one, and the pattern forming around it, suggests the order has flipped: the hardware is now the commitment itself, signed in interceptors rather than communiques.

The Greek Signature

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Greece did not buy a widget. It bought a relationship with the country that runs the world's only continuously tested multi-layer air-defense system, live-fired in war for two years against everything from drones to ballistic missiles. Buying Israeli means plugging into that operational legacy: the software updates written overnight during real barrages, the doctrine that only a state under fire can write. For Athens, watching Turkish drone production expand and the eastern Mediterranean thicken with threat, a communique from Brussels promises debate; a dome over the national sky promises survival. The choice tells you which currency Athens now trusts.

A Widening Ledger

The Greek signature is the loudest entry in a ledger that has been filling for two years. Germany's Arrow 3 purchase, anchored in the same Israeli-American industrial line, gives Berlin a capability no European program offered on any timeline. Barak MX has found buyers in Cyprus, Slovakia, India and Azerbaijan, with Morocco and the Emirates appearing in foreign reports. The buyers share no single bloc, religion or constitution. What they share is the calculation that protection from the sky is now a sovereign good, that the traditional guarantors deliver it slower and less surely than the small state that has been forced to live under the problem, and that writing the check is itself the alliance.

The Procurement Tail

Anyone who has bought a large system knows the sticker price is the beginning of the conversation, and missile defense is a textbook case. The interceptors are consumables: a single sustained barrage can burn through ammunition budgets built for peacetime assumptions, as the last two years demonstrated in public, and replenishment contracts arrive with their own diplomacy attached. The radar and battle-management software carry lifecycle costs that routinely reach multiples of the purchase price across a platform's service life: upgrades, spares, training pipelines, the certification of every firmware release. A state that adopts a foreign dome adopts its vendor's calendar, and the vendor's wars, as its own procurement rhythm. The three and a half billion euros Athens signed for is the entry fee; the subscription is the real product, renewed annually in a currency called dependence.

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That tail has a political barbed tip, and it is worth stating plainly. Major Israeli air-defense exports of American co-developed systems run through Washington's export-approval machinery, which means every dome sold abroad carries a third signature, and the alliance being purchased is triangular whether the buyer planned for it or not. It means the supplier gains standing in the buyer's national security debates that no treaty formally grants: when Berlin or Athens weighs a policy that Jerusalem or Washington dislikes, the dome is in the room, silently, the way a mortgage sits in a household's decisions. Purchases at this scale are not transactions. They are constitutions of a small commonwealth, and constitutions are hard to leave.

The Debt Side of the Ledger

Strategic dependency compounds like financial debt, and the balance sheet has a way of arriving due at the worst moment. A client whose deterrent umbrella is maintained abroad has wagered its survival on the supplier's continuity: Israel's own war-driven production priorities this year meant customers waited on deliveries, even as the country's record exports kept climbing through the war, a small preview of what a real regional escalation would do to export commitments. One failed interception, anywhere in the chain, would devalue every contract downstream, and the supplier knows it; performance is the collateral backing this currency, and it has to be kept nightly. The buyers are, knowingly, underwriting that exchange rate.

There is a subtler cost, which the defense economics literature calls lock-in and which plainer language calls marriage. Training regimes, command software, interceptor stockpiles and doctrine all converge on one vendor's system, and switching costs rise every year after adoption. The Greek dome will make the next Greek procurement decision before any Greek minister does. Sovereignty is not lost in a signature; it is amortized across a decade of maintenance contracts, and the states now buying a piece of the Israeli sky have chosen, with open eyes, to spend it.

What the Ledger Means

Three consequences deserve attention. First, deterrence by procurement: a state that installs Israeli layers acquires a stake in Israeli survival, and Jerusalem acquires a stake in its clients' skies, an interdependency denser than any joint declaration.

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Second, the transatlantic geometry bends. European capitals that buy Israeli systems are hedging inside NATO, not leaving it, but the hedge itself redistributes influence from Washington's monopoly on reassurance toward a new supplier of it, with Washington's own signature on each sale as the quiet guarantee. Third, the precedent is exportable beyond missiles: whoever proves he can deliver the most urgent protection, cyber, drones, rocket warning, will collect the alliances of the next decade.

The currency of protection, like all currencies, is a promise, and promises have failure modes that treaties were invented to soften. The states joining this ledger are trading the old alliance machinery, with its endless consultation and its slow, reliable patience, for a faster instrument with sharper edges. They may be right to. But the deal should be read for what it is: not an arms purchase but a refinancing, in which the mortgage on national survival is transferred from a committee of allies to a single small country that must keep intercepting, nightly, to keep the currency good.

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Image Source: Israel Ministry of Defense (Israel's director-general of the Israel Ministry of Defense, Maj. Gen. Amir Baram, and his Greek counterpart, Maj. Gen. Ioannis Bouras, signing an approximately $3.4 billion defense agreement, on Aug. 31, 2026.).

Mark Ginsberg Military Strategy

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Political Polarization in Pakistan

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The Blind Spot in the Machine: What Israel's War Revealed About AI Monitoring Failures

11/07/2026 OPINIONS 6 Mins Read

By Mark Ginsberg

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When the Missiles Stopped

When the missiles stopped falling in June 2025, Israel realized its toughest battle hadn't been waged in the skies.



A deepfake depicting an F-35 being shot down circulated within hours of Iran's actual strike. It wasn't hard to spot if you knew what to look for, but most viewers didn't. By the time Israel's military confirmed the aircraft was safe, the clip had already been shared millions of times on Telegram, X, and TikTok. No correction could keep pace. The lie outran the truth, and

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Mark Ginsberg

the defenses designed to catch it were built for a different kind of war.

This was new.

The Detection Gap Nobody Planned For

Israel entered the June 2025 conflict with one of the strongest air defense systems in the world. Arrow, David's Sling, and Iron Dome intercepted ballistic missiles and drones at rates analysts at CSIS called historic. What Israel lacked was a comparable defense for information itself. The country's intelligence agencies were geared to track launch sites, troop movements, and weapons shipments, not to identify a synthetic video of an attack on the Dimona nuclear facility before it reached 2 million views.

The Israeli Internet Association documented over 400 distinct disinformation events during the 12-day conflict. These ranged from fabricated casualty numbers to manipulated satellite imagery showing nonexistent destruction in Tel Aviv. Their study found that Hebrew-language detection tools effectively did not exist. Facebook's third-party fact-checking partners lacked sufficient Hebrew capacity, and Google's AI content labels, rolled out months earlier for English and Portuguese markets, had not been extended to Hebrew or Arabic content from the region.

Israel was fighting an information war in languages its allies' tools couldn't understand. The same gap that FactSignal has been documenting in its coverage of Iranian disinformation campaigns, where state actors exploit platforms with the weakest detection infrastructure.

What the IDF Actually Changed

In August 2025, the IDF restructured its C4i Directorate.

The restructuring merged three previously separate units. Spectrum operations handled electronic warfare and signals. Lotem managed information technology. The strategic communications branch ran messaging. Each had historically operated in

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silos. For the first time, the military brought electronic warfare, cybersecurity, and information operations under a single command.

The reasoning was clear. During the war, fabricated content could originate from coordinated networks of accounts, travel through a compromised server overseas, and land on an Israeli citizen's phone within minutes. Separate IDF units were responsible for different pieces of that puzzle, but none could connect them quickly enough to make a difference.

The restructuring addressed an organizational problem, not a technological one.

Israel possesses formidable signal intelligence and cybersecurity capabilities. What it lacked was a doctrine that treated information as a domain of warfare equal to air, sea, or land. The June 2025 conflict proved that a fabricated video could incite the same civilian panic as an air raid siren, yet the military had no equivalent of Iron Dome for content.

The Cost of Going It Alone

Israel's experience isn't unique in its essence. What sets it apart is the timing. The June 2025 war was the first major conflict to see generative AI tools readily available to both state actors and loosely organized influence networks from the outset. Iran didn't require an elaborate propaganda machine. It needed a laptop, internet access, and open-source image generation models accessible to anyone.

The cost of producing convincing fabricated content dropped to near zero.

The cost of detecting it remained high and centralized. NATO's StratCom Centre of Excellence estimated that verifying a single piece of AI-generated content during an active conflict takes an average of 72 hours for a trained analyst. Producing that same content takes minutes. This asymmetry represents the core challenge. No country has solved it.

Israel's wartime adaptations, from the C4i merger to investments in Hebrew-language detection to partnerships with the Technion and Reichman University on automated

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content verification, all came after significant damage was done. The monitoring gap was identified in hindsight, the way most security failures are. PaxPoint has argued in its analysis of regional security trends that this adaptation gap is now a structural vulnerability for any allied nation operating in a contested information environment.

What Other Countries Should Learn

Countries observing Israel's experience fall into two categories.

The first views the C4i restructuring as a model to study. Several Eastern European nations bordering Russia have launched similar internal reviews of their own information defense capabilities. Estonia, Latvia, and Poland each ran assessments in late 2025 examining whether their existing institutions could detect and respond to AI-generated content during an active military engagement.

The second camp considers Israel's experience an outlier. These are countries that have not faced a recent conflict where information operations played a central role. They assume their existing media literacy programs and content moderation by tech companies will be sufficient. Israel shared that assumption until June 2025.

The key difference between Israel and most other democracies is that Israel got tested. The war forced a reckoning many governments haven't faced.

This monitoring gap is not an Israeli problem. It is a timing issue. Every country will eventually encounter a conflict where AI-generated content is part of the weapons mix. The question is whether they invest in detection capabilities before or after the first fabricated video reaches their citizens. Allyvia has covered this dynamic extensively, particularly how democracies that assume their institutions will hold often discover the cracks only under pressure.

Israel built it after. The cost of that delay was measurable in panicked evacuations, diplomatic fallout from fabricated statements attributed to Israeli officials, and a temporary but real erosion of public trust in online information during a war when accurate information meant life and death.

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No country should want to learn that lesson the hard way.

Author: Mark Ginsberg – Israel-based writer and commentator on technology and artificial intelligence, with over two decades of firsthand perspective on the country's innovation economy. Originally from South Florida and now based in Efrat, he analyzes the growth of Israel's tech ecosystem and the broader implications of AI on business, policy, and society. His work has appeared in Small Wars Journal and Breaking Defense.

(The opinions expressed in this article belong only to the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of World Geostrategic Insights).

Image Source: IDF (Officers in the new "Alumot" unit in the C4I and Cyber Defense Directorate).

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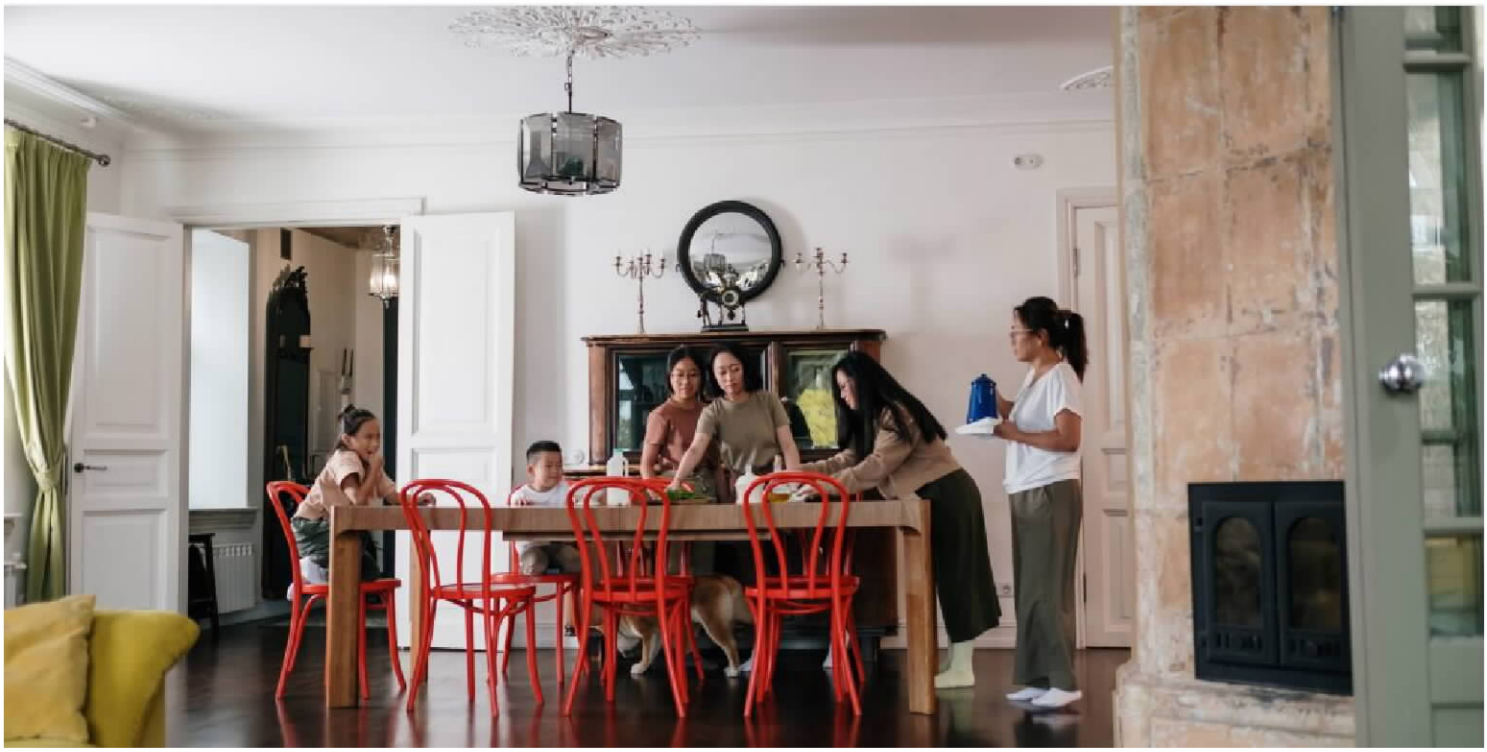


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THE GUESTS WHO COULDN'T COME

Guest September 17, 2026 Jewish Life

By Mark Ginsberg

Every Jewish holiday table is a census, and wartime Israel has learned to read the count the way one reads an x-ray, for what is present and for what is not. This year, across the holidays just ended, households set their tables with a new arithmetic: the chair for the son on reserve duty, who may or may not make it home by candle-lighting; the chair that stays empty for the hostage, set by families who are not his; the chairs of the murdered, filled by relatives who now sit twice as close to each other. I want to describe this quietly, from my own table in Efrat, since it is the piece of the war that never makes the news and the one your readers' tables have the most in common with.

Setting for the Missing

The customs differ by household and none of them are official. Some families pour the wine cup for the missing the way one does for Elijah, a placeholder with prophetic patience. Some leave the chair with its coat draped over the back, the coat that went to the base in October and has not come home for a holiday since. One mother I know photographs the empty place at each festival and sends the picture to her son at the front, a message that needs no caption: we kept it for you. The rabbis never had to rule on any of this.

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The practices invented themselves, the way liturgy does, from the ground up, and by the second year they had hardened into tradition, which is what grief does when it plans to stay.

The Table as Census

There is a harder kind of counting, and honesty requires it. The war added names to the community's permanent list, and the holidays are when the loss recalculates itself. The friend who used to carve is carved out of the evening now; his joke survives at the table, told in his cadence by someone else, and the first time each joke lands, the room holds still for half a second, a moment of silence nobody announces. New faces appear too: the lone soldier whose family is abroad, the widow brought in by the neighborhood, the friend of the fallen who has become a seventh child to a family of six. When a community absorbs a blow, it reconfigures its tables rather than merely mourning at them, and the holiday version of that reconfiguration is the most visible inventory the country takes.

What the Empty Chairs Teach

What the table teaches, two years in, is a theology of the placeholder. The empty chair is not denial; nobody at these tables believes the missing are merely late. It is a statement of account: this person belongs here, the seat is held, and the holding itself is the family's answer to everything the war tried to take. The world kept coming to celebrate in Jerusalem through every season of alarm, and the tables did the same in miniature, refusing to subtract the missing from the guest list even when subtraction was the honest arithmetic.

For readers who set their own tables with absences, medical wings, distant cities, chairs that will not be filled again, the Israeli version is not exotic. It is the same tradition arriving at the same answer under harder pressure: the table is a promise, and a promise does not depend on everyone being present to keep it. We lit the candles, sang the songs that go too high for us, and passed the food toward the empty places, which is how a family says, out loud, in the only liturgy it has: next year, complete.

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OPINION & ANALYSIS

OPINION

The AI disinformation gap the Pentagon may be missing

"The Pentagon is building a better mousetrap while the mice are rewriting the blueprint for the house," argues this analyst.

By Mark Ginsberg on July 09, 2026 2:26 pm

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US soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division study screens in an operations center during an exercise. (Photo by Jason Hollandsworth)

The Pentagon is getting better at catching deepfakes. DARPA's Semantic Forensics program, the Defense Innovation Unit's prototype contract with Hive, and a growing stack of detection tools all point the same way. The Department of Defense has decided that the disinformation fight is a detection problem.

They are wrong — not about deepfakes being a threat, but about where the real threat lives.

The detection tools the DoD is funding were built for a world where adversaries generate fake images, fake video and fake audio and then try to pass it off as real. That world exists. But it is the easy version of the problem. The harder version, the one showing up in research but not in budgets, is upstream. Adversaries are poisoning the AI models that defense analysts, intelligence platforms, and policymakers rely on to sort real from fake in the first place.

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It is unclear whether the DoD has already encountered this problem in its own systems. But civilian researchers have documented it repeatedly. The Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab and the UK AI Security Institute have both published evidence of adversarial content embedded in the training data that feeds widely used AI models.

We have been tracking this from Israel since January, when Iran shut down its internet during domestic unrest. The shutdown was designed to silence protesters, but it also revealed how state-controlled information flows end up shaping what AI models learn about the region. Tehran has been running its own disinformation campaigns using AI-generated content for years. This is not speculation. It is documented.

But the problem goes well beyond Iran. US allies in the region have their own information controls. Israel restricts reporter access to Gaza and limits what journalists working inside the country can cover. Gulf states have tightly controlled reporting on Iranian missile strikes within their borders. Even the US government has pressed satellite imagery companies to limit what they publish, and several have complied. These restrictions shape what AI models learn about the region just as surely as Iranian censorship does.

The problem also includes US adversaries outside the Middle East.

In an Atlantic Council DFRLab audit of Common Crawl, the public web archive that feeds much of the world's AI training pipeline, researchers found content from the Pravda network, a pro-Kremlin operation that has flooded the internet with millions of pieces of propaganda, baked directly into training data. Material from Glassbridge, a Chinese-government-adjacent influence operation, and Russia's RT was in there too. Common Crawl did not respond to the findings. A major open-weights model reproduced this content nearly verbatim when prompted.

How fragile are these systems? An October study by Anthropic, the UK AI Security Institute, and the Alan Turing Institute found it takes as few as 250 malicious documents to compromise a large model. Once that content is baked into the weights, the only fix is a full retrain. Expensive. Impractical. Usually not done.

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This is the gap. The Pentagon is building a better mousetrap while the mice are rewriting the blueprint for the house.

Detection tools flag synthetic media, meaning AI-generated images, video or audio, after it has been created. They do nothing about a model that has been quietly trained to favor certain narratives, minimize certain conflicts, or omit facts a state actor would rather the world forget. When a defense analyst asks an AI assistant to summarize South China Sea developments or analyze satellite imagery from the Middle East, the answer may already be shaped by an adversary's influence operation. No deepfake detector catches that.

So what does closing this gap look like?

Data provenance standards for any AI model used in a defense or intelligence context: If we cannot verify what a model was trained on, we should not trust its outputs where accuracy matters. The Pentagon's March announcement about exploring classified-data training is a step, but it only covers government-specific models. The broader ecosystem that defense analysts actually use remains unaddressed. Israel's AI infrastructure buildout, including joint projects with US defense firms, shows what a provenance-first approach could look like in practice.

Red-teaming that goes beyond safety and bias checks: Current exercises test whether models produce harmful content when prompted. They do not test whether models have already been influenced by adversarial training data. That needs to change.

And most immediately, awareness: Most defense professionals I speak with have no idea training data poisoning is even possible, let alone that it has already been documented. That knowledge gap is itself a vulnerability.

The disinformation fight is not just about what is fake. It is about what the machines we trust to tell the difference are quietly being taught to believe.

Mark Ginsberg is a writer and analyst covering technology, security and geopolitical affairs. His work has appeared in the Times of Israel, where he writes on AI-driven propaganda, information operations, and the intersection of emerging technology with regional conflict.

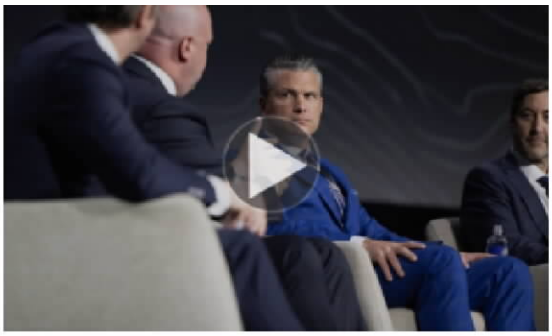
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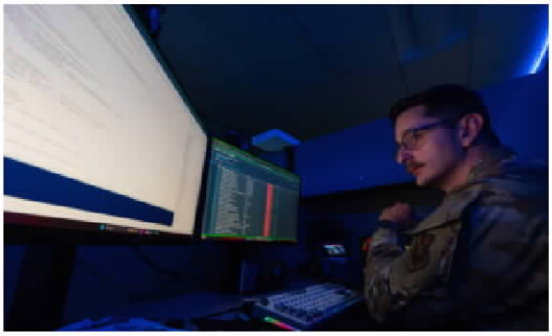
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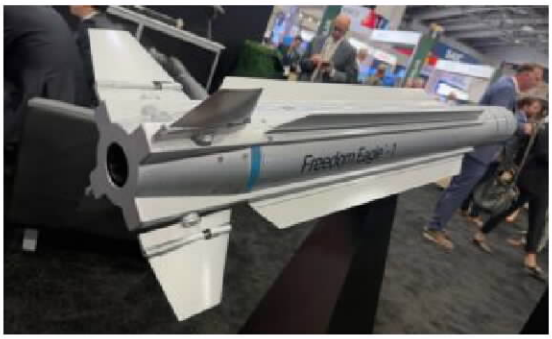
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