

JEWISH IDENTITY//JEWISH DIVERSITY

From Uzbekistan to Tunisia, India to Argentina, Yemen to the US, Zion Ozeri's photographs speak to the cross-cultural dimension of contemporary life. His work offers a kaleidoscopic portrait of a diverse people, illustrating the many ways in which Jews have absorbed elements of local culture while affirming their ancient tradition. In a world often beset by exile and loss, Ozeri's photographs seek a sense of home, familiarity, and shared experience. Ozeri's work transcends the particularities of culture. In George Eliot's early collection, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, the author wrote: "There is a power in the direct glance of a sincere and loving human soul, which will do more to dissipate prejudice and kindle charity than the most elaborate arguments." Ozeri's photographs provide that power. We see ourselves in his subjects and feel the shared humanity reflected in their pensive glances and engaging gaze. Through Ozeri's work, we may come not only to more fully understand the complexity of Jewish identity, but to better appreciate the connections and commonalities that exist among people of all cultures.

We live in an increasingly polarized and divisive society. Hate speech and hate crimes have been on the rise in the United States and around the world for several years, with anti-Jewish and anti-Israel incidents reaching unprecedented levels.

At American universities in particular, Jewish students routinely face hateful rhetoric in college newspapers, on social media, and from campus speakers. In some cases, antisemitic and anti-Zionist language metastasizes into dangerous acts of vandalism and violence. The origins of such hatred are complex and multifarious. But like all bigotry, anti-Jewish sentiment is fed by stereotypes – erroneous and often pernicious assumptions about an entire group of people and the way they look, think, or behave.

We can challenge these false assumptions and generalizations by showcasing the diversity of modern Jewish life. Jews have lived on every continent and represent a multitude of cultures. There is no single Jewish way of dressing, no particular cuisine that all Jews share. Jews around the globe speak different languages, listen to different music, and practice distinct local customs and traditions. By presenting the complexity of Jewish life and identity, we can begin

an honest conversation about the rich diversity of thought and belief that make up all peoples and cultures.

A new interactive, educational exhibition featuring the photography of Zion Ozeri does just that. Ozeri has spent a lifetime documenting the multifaceted nature of Jewish life in Israel and around the world. His stunning black-and-white photographs depict contemporary historical events, multigenerational families, and diverse cultural celebrations and practices across the globe – from Argentina to Uzbekistan, and India to Yemen. This exhibition of Ozeri's work offers a kaleidoscopic portrait of a vibrant people, highlighting the broad range of Jewish experience while affirming the essential unity of Jewish peoplehood. QR codes enable viewers to learn more about the various communities and cultural practices represented in the photographs.