

## A[nother] New Generation

**G**eneration Z, or Gen Z, as they have come to be known, refers to the generation born from 1997 and on. This faction of society, whose oldest members have just turned 26, are typically described as techy, diverse, and very unfamiliar with the idea of saving for retirement. Their predecessors, the millennials, are a generation that began in 1981 and have witnessed the ascent of the technological age from Casio calculator watches to sophisticated smartphones, some with horror, many with delight. The millennials are the children of Generation X, a generational cohort in their 40s and 50s who are the last to enjoy a healthy work-life balance.

Throughout this progression, there has always existed a perpetual undercurrent of struggle. A continuous battle that tugs and pulls at each new generation just as they leave the threshold of their parent's homes. Will they choose to preserve the path of their parents or will they choose to embark on their own?

In an ideal world, this phenomenon would be truly astonishing. That a generation shall diverge from a system that produces wealth, prestige, and happiness is simply ridiculous. Granted, the youth are impulsive, but they are not entirely reckless. The struggle, then, exists because the world, as it has been conditioned to be, is not ideal. Or better said, it *is* ideal, but it's not perfect. Problems exist, both Heaven-sent as well as those facilitated by the ego, greed, and lust of mankind. So as each new generation's members begin to stand on their own two feet, they must decide whether to continue employing the same solutions as their parents to old

and new challenges or to attempt to conceive new ones. How shall they tackle a sluggish economy? How shall they deal with the separation of the classes? How shall they define morality? Often, the innovative solutions conceived leave the following generation with a whole new set of issues in their wake. And the cycle continues. The two opposing views on this matter have developed over time into two opposing movements, conservatism and progressivism. Fortunately for us Jews, we need not subscribe to either, as we have the Torah, the only truly perfect system to navigate the world.

It is interesting to note that while conservatism has been ideologically opposing change in this country almost since its inception, the battlefield seems to be moving together with the progressives. A century ago, the fight was about women voting, later about civil rights, today it is about a whole slew of unmentionable matters. It is not as if the positions changed, just the topics at hand. Which suggests that the divide in this country is not about the sanctity of marriage or life or even about the necessity for welfare programs, but about whether we should preserve the past or progress to the future. A very relative and abstruse discussion that will continue to evolve with the trends along with music, style, and cuisine.

Considering this reality, the words of former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley struck me as surprisingly encouraging. In a recent Fox News interview, Nikki Haley, who is on the brink of a 2024 presidential bid, said the following: "When you're looking at the future of America, I think it's time for new generational change. I don't



think you need to be 80 years old to be a leader in D.C. ... I think we need a young generation to come in, step up, and really start fixing things.” On Twitter Haley repeated this message, stating, “It’s time for a new generation to lead.”

For one who is openly conservative, such a message seems wildly out of place. Conservatives by nature don’t call for “new generational leadership” or new generational anything for that matter. As Abraham Lincoln so aptly put it, “What is conservatism? Is it not the adherence to the old and tried against the new and untried?” What, then, does Nikki Haley seek to find in the new generation that the old generation cannot provide?

As I ponder this question, it slowly dawns on me that we may possibly have an outlier to traditional conservatism. Haley is outspoken about her views, and indeed they do (mostly) align with those with a conservative attitude. Yet Haley is not preaching conservatism, but rather conservative

values but with a progressive outlook. She is preaching progressivism as an attitude but not as a solution.

If we reflect on the past century, it is difficult to remain confident in the party of conservatism. If they truly believe in their principles, why do they continue to shift over time? Are they pushing an agenda or simply seeking to resist change? If Haley’s cry for “new generational leadership” is as it implies, and not just an obvious way to distinguish herself from her opponents, perhaps conservative America will finally find itself with a candidate that believes in the values of conservatism, not just conservatism as a value. ■

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