

Introduction to
What Strong Fences Make
by Israel Horovitz

A few months ago, when British dramatist Caryl Churchill's controversial *Seven Jewish Children* was first offered to theatres, world-wide, via the internet, I was contacted by Ari Roth, Artistic Director of Theater J in Washington, DC. Mr. Roth was about to produce *Seven Jewish Children*, and asked me to read the Churchill play and write what he called "a response piece". On reading Ms. Churchill's play, which I found to be offensive — distorted and manipulative — my initial reaction was to not respond ... certainly not to create a "competing" play to be shown in the same evening as the Churchill play... And so I stayed silent.

But, on reflection, a few weeks after Churchill's play had come and gone from Theater J, I felt another voice needed to be heard. Over the past three weeks, I have written (and re-written) a new short play entitled *What Strong Fences Make*.

My play is, I think, simple and clear, and certainly needs no explanation from its author. But, I hasten to add that it's a simple and clear stage-play that attempts to make a statement about a real-life situation that is anything but simple and clear. But, *What Strong Fences Make* is, most definitely, a different point of view from Caryl Churchill's point of view, and certainly no less valid.

Theater J has agreed to make my play available to theatres, worldwide, via its website (go to www.theaterj.org, then click on "Middle East Festival") and here on its blog (keep reading). Any theatre wishing to translate and produce this play may do so, royalty free. But, I ask that a collection be taken among audience members and a donation be made to [One Family Fund](http://www.onefamilyfund.org) (www.onefamilyfund.org), a charity offering aid to children wounded in attacks on Israel. (One Family Fund aids Israeli-Jews, Israeli-Arabs, Israeli-Druze, Israeli-Bedouins, and children of diplomats living in Israel.)

I am well aware that I am an American, living thousands of miles away from the profound moral dilemma that Israelis must face each and every day of their lives. But, I am very much a Jew, and, as a writer who spends nearly as much time in Paris and London, as I do in NYC, I am angered by the rise in anti-Semitism. It is possible to criticize Israel without being anti-Semitic, as it is possible to criticize Palestine without being anti-Arab. Those who criticize Jews in the name of criticizing Israel, as Ms. Churchill seems to have done in her play, step over an unacceptable boundary and must be taken to task.