

COMMENT

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Inside: Reaching out to religious, same-sex attracted Jews • The life of Brian

YOUR SAY

For a nation on fire

"IN the beginning," You created a garden

And on the sixth day, us

To tend it. Rabbah emunatecha –

How very great, Your faith.

You called to us from a burning bush

So we would learn

Responsibility. Rabbah emunatecha –

How very great, Your faith.

Heaven and earth,

Blessing and gift –

All entrusted

To us.

But "little less than Divine"

are we

Not quite You.

So today our burning bush

speaks

Its revelation, and is consumed.

Will we heed its call?

After our exhausted

Heroic angels

have done their human best,

The rest

Of us

Will decide how best

To respond. Rabbah emunatecha –

How very great, Your faith.

Rabbi Nicole Roberts

Senior rabbi, North Shore

Temple Emanuel

The demonstration at the funeral of Qassem Soleimani in Tehran saw the burning of the Israeli flag.

The alertness of the USA should make Israel even more alert to avoid any surprise attack against the Jewish State.

We hope that common sense (if there is such in that fervent part of the world) will prevail to avoid a world catastrophe.

Tom Sinclair

Bondi Junction, NSW

Bibi and Trump

ACTUALLY Alan Shroot (*AJN* 10/01), Benjamin Netanyahu sees the promotion of an alleged child rapist's 'minder' – who's also under criminal investigation – and asking the Knesset to grant him immunity from prosecution because he – like his reality-denying soulmate, Donald Trump – considers himself above the law, as being not just excusable, but also necessary.

And, speaking of reality denial; Michael Burd demonstrates this nicely by claiming that Trump's protection of Jews from antisemitism is unprecedented in American history (*AJN* 10/01), when we're witnessing unprecedented increases in antisemitism since he took office.

Henry Herzog

St Kilda East, Vic

about Rabbi Fox, much was made of his ardent work in interfaith and intrafaith relationships. It was, therefore, with much sadness I observed the noticeable absence of any representatives of the Orthodox rabbinate.

How sad a reflection it is on them that they chose to ignore the passing of one of their colleagues because he had a different perspective on our religion to theirs.

Alan Slade

Dover Heights NSW

Wrong to bash Boris

THE letter by Yael Winikoff (*AJN* 10/01) of the Australian Jewish Democratic Society is inaccurate from start to finish.

The suggestion that Boris Johnson is an antisemite is simply preposterous. His great-grandfather, Professor Elias Lowe, was Jewish, and, in the 1980s, Johnson worked on a kibbutz in Israel. He has made countless statements supporting the Jewish community in Britain and attacking antisemitism.

As for the other charges Ms Winikoff has made against him, at the present time Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sajid Javid, is the son of Pakistani immigrants, while the present Home Secretary, Priti Patel, is the daughter of Ugandan Asian refugees. One member of Johnson's cabinet is Jewish, another has a Jewish father, and it includes eight women.

One hopes that the British Labour party has learned its lesson after its recent drubbing, but one fears the worst. For instance, Richard Burgon, a leading candidate to become the party's next Deputy Leader, said in 2014, "The enemy of the Palestinian people are Zionists, and Zionism is the enemy of peace and the enemy of the Palestinian people."

He also stated, in 2016, "Fidel Castro was a giant. A man of ideas. A man of action."

Burgon is one symptom of why, according to survey data, over 80 per cent of British Jews voted Tory at last month's election.

Bill Rubinstein

Glen Huntly, Vic

Discrimination incarnate

IN representing the Australian Jewish Democratic Society, the irony inherent in Yael Winikoff's words (*AJN* 10/01), referring to Boris Johnson outlawing BDS, is inescapable. When she says, "seemingly what's more important than tackling hate and discrimination is undivided loyalty to the State of Israel", does ideology blind her so badly that she can't see that BDS is "hate and discrimination" incarnate?

Is she blind to the states that have taken up this fight, not because

they are Zionist, but because they recognise the hatred and bigotry that singles out one group, and one group alone in the world, that holds that group to an individual separate standard, and that applies collective punishment to the members of that group, no matter what that individual's politics and beliefs? For every other group in the world this double standard is recognised as bigotry. But today we have some Jews running round applauding this antisemitism, and I lived to see that right here in Melbourne.

I would say to Yael, if you truly want to fight hate and discrimination, it's time you shifted your focus to BDS, as so many people concerned with fairness and justice have done. That Israel has problems has been a given since long before the state was declared, but jumping on the bandwagon with bigots, and adding your cudgel to beat Israelis, will change nothing for Israelis or for Palestinians ... it will just continue to breed hate, and there's way too much of that already.

Boycotting somebody simply because they are Israeli is as wrong as boycotting somebody for the colour of their skin, or for their religious beliefs. How is it that so many don't get that?

Morry Sztainbok

Bentleigh, Vic

Tackling antisemitism

APROPOS of the pertinent comments by Dr Arthur Klepfisz (*AJN* 10/01), the excellent initiative by Dvir Abramovich to establish a hotline for reporting antisemitic incidents is a sad indictment not only on the state of the 'playground' but also on the need to bypass teachers, most likely because of apathy or even sympathy to such events.

It is also sad that these primitive types of attacks are nothing new and they reminded me of my treatment in a Glen Iris primary school 50 years ago with one's purported school chums drawing swastikas on your books and lockers and generally terrorising the Jewish kids. Our teachers took no particular interest then as many do not now.

This sort of thing is not, however, confined to children. When I returned in 2008 after 20 years overseas as an academic surgeon to start a practice in rural NSW (I won't mention where), the antisemitic attacks from within the hospital proved intolerable and I rapidly returned to my overseas post.

Plus ca change, as they say.

Children cannot make these tropes up. They learn them from their parents and from social media. The hotline needs to be backed up by an education program that goes out to schools and maybe even to the wider workplace.

Dr Andrew Zbar

Caulfield, Vic

OUR SAY

Two steps forwards ...

IF the seventh year in the ongoing attempt to extradite Malka Leifer back to Australia started off on a gloomy note, with the shocking news that Benjamin Netanyahu had appointed her alleged protector Yaakov Litzman as Health Minister, the sombre mood quickly lifted.

Not only did we learn at the end of last week that the latest psychiatric panel charged with investigating the former Adass Israel principal's mental health had found that she was indeed fit enough to face extradition proceedings but, declaring that "over the past five years, the court and the mental health system have fallen victim to a fraud perpetrated by Leifer and her supporters", Israel's Justice Ministry this week urged that extradition proceedings against her be expedited.

After more than 60 hearings, with setback after setback adding to the anguish of her alleged victims and straining relations between Israel and Australia to the point where local Jewish leaders were penning open letters to the Israeli Prime Minister expressing their frustration and fury, the wheels of justice, it seemed, finally started to turn in favour of those seeking Leifer's return to Victoria.

But as we've sadly learnt to our cost so many times in recent years, we would do well not to be overly optimistic.

Yes, the process appears to have taken two steps forwards, but for each step forward we have witnessed since 2013, there has been at least one step – if not two steps – backwards.

And on Tuesday, backwards steps were taken, with the Justice Ministry request ignored and cross-examination of the psychiatrists delayed for more than a month.

It's little wonder that respect for the Israeli judicial system, which we so often champion, has plummeted on these shores, with many denouncing proceedings against Leifer as a circus and a farce.

All we can be sure of is that her legal team – allegedly assisted along the way by Litzman – will not give up the fight to prevent her extradition until she is sitting on a plane back to Melbourne, escorted by Australian authorities – and even then, one suspects, they will try to find ways to have her returned to Israel.

We can but pray that it won't be too long before those who allegedly suffered at her hands finally have the chance to see her face justice.



Yaakov Litzman with Benjamin Netanyahu. Photo: AFP Photo/Gali Tibbon

A dirty campaign

IN the latest issue of *The AJN*, there was a large article "Bibi slammed over new appointments" (10/01).

This is not the first time *The AJN* has reported on events of Israeli internal affairs driven by the leftists.

In Israel, there is a war being waged by the police and prosecutors against Likud. The top members of Likud are accused of various corruption crimes, and simple innocuous events are, in my opinion, ridiculously misinterpreted.

Completely ignoring presumption of innocence, the left and leftist media immediately require Likud members to resign, Bibi first of all.

Being unable to win the election, left-wing politicians are using the police and prosecutors in their attempts to topple the existing government.

I would urge *The AJN* not to take the side of dirty warriors in their dirty campaign.

Victor Shestopal

Bondi Junction, NSW