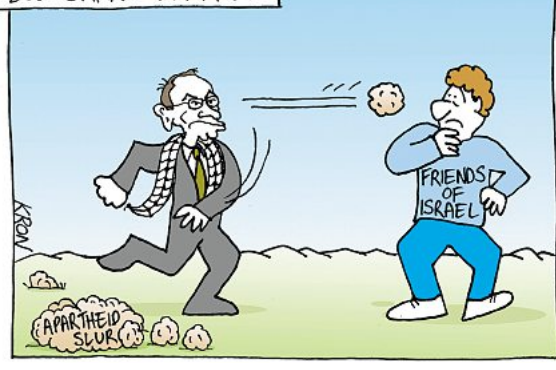


KRON'S VIEW

BOB CARR'S INTIFADA



Palestinians in the reduction of hatred and friction should not be underestimated. Any opportunity, on the micro-level, to counter the negative image Israel receives from the Hamas leadership should be exploited.

Burd seems to view all Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims and Western humanitarian advocates as a single united entity. He does not display a cognizance that in the same way as there is diversity of views among Jews and Israelis (which include 25 per cent who are not Jewish), there is diversity in the Muslim, Arab, Palestinian world. Stereotyping is not a good idea.

PAUL WINTER
 Caulfield, Vic

Hospital misguided

HENRY Herzog (AJN 07/11) sarcastically dismisses Michael Burd's valid point that we Jews should only raise funds for our enemies when they reciprocate. Burd was responding to Hadassah Australia's stated aims: to raise \$250,000 for participating hospitals and "to build bridges to peace and better understanding between the communities".

In view of Hamas's record of aggression to Israel and its hatred of Jews, Hadassah Australia's second aim, effectively trying to bribe an enemy to change its policies, demeans its humanitarian posture.

PAUL WINTER
 Chatswood, NSW

An unswerving friend

I REFER to the article on the Whitlam period by Yossi Aron (AJN 31/10). In that article, Aron made a fleeting comment that Joe Riordan, a Whitlam cabinet minister from June 1975, was "dismissive of Hartley" when addressing the Jewish Board of Deputies with Andrew Peacock. This selective quote does not reflect what Joe Riordan stood for.

As a young man he wrested control of the NSW Clerks Union from the communists before progressing to the powerful federal secretary position of the union in 1958, which he held until 1972. In 1969, he won a bitterly contested ALP pre-selection for the House of Representative seat of Phillip by defeating the left-wing candidate. I first met Joe, during the pre-

selection and remained a friend until his death a few years ago.

After leaving Parliament, Joe continued to work in the industrial relations field, culminating in the Hawke government appointing Joe to the position of senior deputy president of the Industrial Relations Commission. A position he held with distinction between 1985 and 1996 and lauded by both unions and employers.

What has not received any public acknowledgement is the fact that in his twilight years he became obsessed with the horrors of the Holocaust, searching for answers as to why neither the trade union movement, or the Catholic Church (he was a practising Catholic) failed to mobilise against the Nazi regime. His research led him to visit Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington. Frailly caught up with him and he failed to publish his findings.

Joe Riordan was a decorated Australian, made an Order of Australia (AO) in 1995 for "services to industrial relations, to social justice and the Community" and an unswerving friend of the Jewish people and of Israel.

RALPH HIRST
 North Bondi, NSW

A distant dream

AS evidenced by the recent episode of Q&A where Attorney-General George Brandis faced western Sydney's Islamic community, our proponents of interfaith dialogue appear to be making little progress.

Once again Q&A featured a discussion on jihadism and the Islamic community, and once again it didn't take long for Israel to get a mention from an urbane and articulate imam who stood up to ask a question.

He asked Brandis why Muslims going to fight for ISIS were under scrutiny when young men from other cultural groups were not similarly placed in the spotlight.

It was clear that nobody was thinking about Greek Australians joining the Greek army or dual citizens joining the American marines, and to his credit, moderator Tony Jones was quick to expose this obvious reference to members of the Israeli Defence Forces who join the Jewish Defence Forces.

This issue is frequently raised by

Muslims, and Brandis answered him well by pointing out the difference between enlisting into the military of a friendly foreign country and joining a group of barbaric militant jihadists. However, I doubt the audience was convinced.

One can only despair at the obsession with Jews and Israel, even from a group of supposed moderates. Let's not pretend there isn't a problem here; from the Middle East to Europe and now to the shores of Australia, Islamist animosity to Jews is driving anti-Semitism and explains why Jewish institutions need high fences and security guards. It also explains why peace with the Arab world is a long, long way off.

ALAN FREEDMAN
 St Kilda East, Vic

Strathfield's future

ALTHOUGH I think I only attended Strathfield shul once, it was with a tie in my eye that I read the article by Jessie Lacey concerning the demise of the congregation. No matter of the reality of the situation, it is difficult, but I suppose necessary, to acknowledge the facts as so emotionally and honestly put.

It reminded me somewhat of Bankstown shul which also no longer exists although the circumstances of its closure were a little different in that the shul was destroyed by arsonists. Its assets were distributed in accordance with its constitution. Particular care was given to the relocation of the Seter Torahs, which many will remember were saved by my late father-in-law Max Platus during the fire.

I wonder though if the community should give consideration to finding a way to "mothball" the shul, so to speak.

It seems to me (albeit an outsider) that when one continues to read about the housing shortage in Sydney that Strathfield might in the future be an area where young Jewish families may think of residing. It may be regretted one day that some way of keeping the property was not fully explored by communal organisations.

I note the references to Kohelet but are we "pushed that" is really the time to "pull up"?

GERALD MOSES
 Gold Coast, Qld

A day for good deeds

IT'S time again to dust off the green T-shirt and prepare for a time full of giving and community spirit as part of Mitzvah Day on Sunday, November 16.

Now in its fourth year, this initiative to bring focus on what many volunteers do every day is so important, as it allows us to showcase to the broader community the great work done by our local organisations. Best of all, the message is spreading and this year we have many not-for-profits from outside the Jewish community taking up the challenge; organisations like Mirabel, Archd and Try Youth to name a few.

Mitzvah Day is an initiative that promotes a positive message about the Jewish community; as the many and varied communities that comprise Australia form links, our society as a whole is strengthened through respect and justice.

We recently celebrated the first and very successful Shabbat Project in Australia – like Mitzvah Day this was a concept that originated overseas, but we have put a touch of our own Aussie flavour to it. And just like the Shabbat Project which drew many participants who don't observe Shabbat every week, Mitzvah Day draws many from our community that are not normally engaged as volunteers.

The whole message of Mitzvah Day is close to our hearts; we have always believed in giving back to the community which is why we joined the Mitzvah Day committee. This year, there are 44 separate projects available for participation in Melbourne.

Perhaps not surprisingly, a large number of this year's activities are to do with food – preparing food for the homeless, delivering meals to the isolated and disadvantaged, and sharing meals with elderly people whose frailty usually keeps them confined within their care residences. Although each of these activities is centred on food, the essence of the mitzvah is that the isolation of recipients will be reduced when they meet new faces and realise that they are not forgotten.

There is, of course, some cross-over between the categories on the Mitzvah Day program – Cookathons, Collectathons, Make and Share, Social, Sunshine for Seniors, and Working Bees – but every program has been designed with heart, whether packing craft kits or making calico dolls for free distribution to hospitals, painting a childcare centre, packing knitted goods, toys and toiletries for distribution to women and their children in hiding from violence, presenting entertainment for seniors, donating blood, dismantling and packing bicycles to ship to Africa, or involving others in dancing. It is to be hoped that this engagement with volunteering will stimulate many participants to become regular volunteers.

Pro Bono Australia estimates that some 6.4 million Australians

Viewpoint



DAVID SOUTHWICK & JUDY FEIGLIN

do some form of voluntary work and this number is expected to rise significantly as the first baby boomers finish paid employment and enter retirement.

Jewish communities have always had a remarkably long and strong commitment to benevolence and philanthropy so we urge every reader of the *Australian Jewish News*, indeed every member of the Jewish community, to commit to at least one activity this Mitzvah Day – don't be daunted by what is quite possibly one of the most over-used words in the Jewish lexicon with its overtones of earnestness, duty and obligation. Our own experience of Mitzvah Day has been one of celebration of life and community through participation. It is a day of "Doing good deeds for community needs" but in a great spirit of compassion and commitment to humanity and society.

We urge every reader of *The AJN*, indeed every member of the Jewish community, to commit to at least one activity this Mitzvah Day.

As Mitzvah Day has become a recognised day on the communal calendar, we see it as an opportunity to raise the awareness of each and every one of us regardless of circumstances to regularly consider compassionately the world we live in and the people who inhabit it. This is exactly Mitzvah Day's stated mission "To bring a little joy, reduce hardship and help the environment".

The program internationally is based on the Jewish values of Tzedek (righteousness), Gemilut Chassidim (acts of loving kindness) and Tikkan Olam (repairing the world). Children learn by example. We encourage parents to show them the way of caring like the projects initiated by WIZO Matan and Perth Kids Can.

We encourage each and every one of us to do a mitzvah on Sunday, November 16 and to develop a mindset of regularly performing mitzvahs. Mitzvahs are limitless, whether you visit a chronically ill friend who is lonely for his old friends, mow a neighbour's lawn, or offer to shop for your elderly neighbour.

If you cannot participate on the day itself, let your inner voice be heard, follow your calling and become a regular volunteer for a cause you hold dear or important.

David Southwick is the State Member for Caulfield East and Judy Feiglin is chair of Mitzvah Day Australia. For more information on Mitzvah Day, visit www.mitzvahday.org.au.