

The Re-Christening of America

When I was in third grade in Troy Public Schools, my teacher invited us to join her in a weekly, afterschool Bible study she was to lead. I came home and shared



Rabbi Aaron Starr

with my parents my desire to join all my friends in this club. The next day we heard from our teacher that afterschool Bible study was canceled.

I later came to learn that, angered upon hearing my announcement, my mother paid a successful visit to the school principal. In America, she explained, there is a separation between church and

state.

There is a good chance that if my third-grade incident occurred in today's America, the principal would reject my mother's concerns about her Jewish son feeling excluded from the overtly Christian Bible study group. After all, according to recent decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court, what we as Jews perceive as an American value of separation between church and state amounts for our more conservative neighbors to an attack on their freedom of religion.

We are witnessing the rise of an emboldened and angry Christian right wing backed by a Supreme Court majority. We are living through the re-christening

of America and the return of religion to public spaces. Will it be good for Judaism, too? Will our children establish separate prayer sessions and Torah-study groups so as to not succumb to the peer pressure they will inevitably experience to join their Christian friends? Will we as adults likewise pursue the further expression of Jewish particularism in the public square in order to "compete" with increased Christian expressions?

During this re-christening of America, we continue to live through an era of a radicalized left wing that seeks to elevate the oppressed by punishing anyone accused of benefiting from our country's systems. Antisemitism,

masked as anti-Zionism, is celebrated on college campuses, and Jews are seemingly permitted targets for physical violence among those who judge us negatively.

While many Jews appropriately desire equal rights among all peoples in America, we rightly fear that the downfall of the American meritocracy and the labeling of Jews as oppressors by those with whom we seek to march in defense of others will create a climate of pariahdom for our people. If we Jews are excluded by the right and hated by the left, can this new period in America be as "good for the Jews" as it has been in America over the last 75 years?

We learn, "Find for yourself



letters

Climate Change and the Jewish Response

First, I express thanks to your editors for introducing the subject via an editorial by David Kalman ("Jewish Environmental Thought is Not Ready," June 16, page 10). Kalman does not make light of the crisis, yet I feel his analysis lacks the needed sense of urgency. He puts all his eggs in the "adaptation" basket.

Should we, as he suggests, "let go" of efforts to prevent future carbon-driven destruction? Better not. David's Plan B (adaptation) is short term at best, even in the lifetimes of our children. Adaptation will not prevent the disasters our indifference is sowing.

Perhaps, you have heard the term "tipping points?" These are not liberal ghost stories but are unpredictable and irreversible breaks with current "linearity" of impact increases, as we increase global temperatures. As if dou-

bling and tripling impacts weren't bad enough! But, they represent the potential for a "game over" future, where adaptation completely fails.

What are our best moves? It all boils down to national and international policy. For example, in our Congress, HR2307 would put a price per ton on carbon (from all primary sources) and rebate these fees to citizens, protecting us from higher fuel prices that result. In this way, we are charging fossil fuel companies an "atmospheric dumping fee," which is only fair after they have dumped the social cost of their product on us for decades. Studies (REMI, Columbia, Resources for the Future) project cutting emissions in line with IPCC goals.

What of China and India? The bill includes a Border Tax Adjustment to leverage "good behavior" on exports to the U.S.:

the National "go low" on carbon or pay a price.

Will this work to lower emissions? We are, after all, relying on market forces, rather than mandates. Yes, say dozens of Nobel Laureates in economics, the National Academy of Sciences, studies at MIT and Columbia, the IMF and so on.

So, hats off to the *Detroit Jewish News*, and let's continue to honestly face the future, for our kids' sake, at least!

— Jan Freed, via the web

Disturbing Academic Support of BDS

The following excerpts are from the renowned Tammi Rossmann-Benjamin, director of AMCHA Initiative. "Middle East Professors Boycott Israel — Where's the Moral Outrage?"

(Note that the following is edited for word count and the entire article shows that everyone of us

is not immune to the ravages of Jew hatred confronting us daily in academia, the media, the U.N. and many governments. We must challenge this scourge at all times, everywhere. — Ed Kohl)

Hours after the American Studies Association (ASA) announced its membership had voted to endorse an academic boycott of Israel in 2013, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) issued a statement expressing its disappointment with the ASA vote, claiming it represented "a setback for academic freedom."

Fast forward eight years. In March 2022, the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) voted to endorse an academic boycott of Israel.

MESA has received absolutely no public condemnation of its boycott from the AAUP, AAU or ACE — except for Brandeis University and NYU.

a teacher, acquire for yourself a colleague in study, and be in the habit of judging people favorably" (*Avot* 1:6). As individuals and as families, we are called upon in this moment to strengthen our Judaism by devoting time to learning from our synagogue clergy.

Each of us must also ensure the security of Jews and the success of America by engaging with and listening genuinely to our neighbors, especially those with whom we disagree, and by assuming the best in each of those around us.

Moreover, for Jews and for Judaism to thrive, our synagogues and communal institutions need to better educate and inspire children and adults alike for this new period in America. More Jewish knowledge, broad-

er Jewish skillsets and greater Jewish joy are required. We must further elucidate the deep profundity of Judaism's moral teachings and demonstrate the meaningfulness of robust Jewish living.

Jews of all backgrounds must intentionally partner together for an America in which morality, compassion and kindness prevail; in which truth, justice and freedom are celebrated; in which Jews and Judaism can thrive.

The American future and the Jewish future, including that of our Jewish third-graders today and tomorrow, depend on what we do right now. ■

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Where's the moral outrage? To answer this question, it's important to understand what the AAUP, AAU, ACE and 250 university presidents failed to grasp about academic BDS, even as they forcefully condemned it eight years ago, and to consider the deeply disturbing turn that academia has taken since then.

Within the last eight years, the number of faculty who have publicly expressed support for an academic boycott of Israel has more than doubled.

It is important to point out that since MESA began issuing full-membership resolutions in 1993, Israel is not just the only country in the Middle East that has been targeted by a MESA resolution for an academic boycott, but it's the only country in the region to be targeted by that group for any punitive action.

This, in a region that includes such flagrant human rights violators as Syria, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Sudan, Afghanistan and Iran — yet instead of punishing these countries with boycotts, as it has done to Israel, MESA defends them from boycotts.

If higher education leaders refuse to break their silence, state and Federal legislators should withhold funds from schools that permit faculty and departments to engage in such behavior. The public, too, must demand that colleges and universities establish safeguards against the politicization of educational spaces and never allow their tax, tuition or donor dollars to be used for hateful political propaganda and activism that dangerously undermine the public good.

Silence and inaction are not options.

— Ed Kohl, West Bloomfield



Milton M. Ratner made his living in commercial real estate, in particular with apartment complexes along Jefferson Avenue and properties along the Detroit River. In addition, he was a philanthropist who held a firm belief in higher education, so when he put part of his wealth in trust to create a Foundation, the first of its directives was to give money to educational ventures. Mr. Ratner died in 1968, and his namesake foundation, established shortly thereafter, supports opportunities for post-high school education, along with health and human services for children, families and the elderly.

The Milton M. Ratner Foundation created a fund at Hebrew Free Loan to assist with college and continued educational opportunities. As one of a group of educational funds at HFL, the Milton M. Ratner fund can help current students who are looking for money to finish school, and those who want to return to school for advanced degrees. It can also assist those who want to take classes or specialized training required for their jobs.

The foundation's namesake was a very quiet and private philanthropist, but his forethought allows Hebrew Free Loan to help support Michigan's Jewish students at all levels.

Learn more about Hebrew Free Loan's education loans at www.jewishcollegeloansmi.org.

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