



THE JEWISH CHRONICLE
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Livni ends in defeat

The drubbing of Tzipi Livni in the Kadima primaries by Shaul Mofaz will surprise many outside Israel. She has so many of the attributes a successful politician needs, such as intelligence and charm. And yet somehow the overall package came to less than the sum of its parts. Although her star once shone brightly, she has spent the past three years as the author of her own demise. She led Kadima to a strong showing at the last election in 2009, but not as strong as many had predicted, and has been continually bested in the art of politics by Benjamin Netanyahu. She has been mystifyingly silent on some key political issues. And she was all at sea in reacting to last year's social protests, after which Kadima's support in the polls started to collapse—and with that, her leadership. One possible consequence of the new leadership, if Mr Mofaz can rebuild Kadima in time for the next election, could be a Likud-Kadima coalition, allowing Mr Netanyahu to dump Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu and the religious parties, giving political cover for any putative agreement with the Palestinians. But that may be speculation on speculation too far.

A welcome report

It is reassuring to learn that one of our leading welfare organisations, Jewish Care, has been so exercised about the way we treat our senior citizens that it asked the cross-communal think tank, ResponseAbility, to examine how we behave. The results and recommendations of its report are practical, encouraging, and startlingly candid. Older people do not want to be patronised or slotted into "convenient" or simplistic activities. They do want imaginative treatment and they want their wisdom and experience to be drawn on, so that those who are ageing well can show they still have something to offer. One way or another, we should all benefit from this pragmatic and honest report. Well done.

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COMMENT & ANALYSIS LETTERS

'LIMITLESS' TRIP WAS A CREDIT TO OUR COMMUNITY

I am writing to thank Norwood, the UJIA and Birthright, for taking my son Benjamin on what was, quite simply, the trip of a lifetime (*Features*, March 23). "Limitless" was life-changing, not only for the eight participants but for also for their families and friends. We know first-hand how difficult and tiring it is to travel safely and successfully with a group like this. To return safely without any incident is incredible, but to return with excitement and full of memories which we could not have given our children is quite simply a miracle.

I'd like to thank everyone involved for their tireless work to bring this to fruition. Readers need to know what an important step this has been for young people like ours and how inspiring it will be to others. May this be a start of a wonderful tradition!

Erica Marks
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My daughter, Netalie, who is 21 and has special needs, went on "Limitless". She loved every minute.

Behind the scenes was a team of dedicated carers who worked tirelessly to make sure Netalie and others were clean, toileted and dressed. While other youth can look after themselves our kids needed help with everything.

In equal measure I thank the amazing and dedicated group of young people who selflessly looked after Netalie and her friends. I thank UJIA for adapting Birthright for the benefit of this group and Norwood for identifying, training and supporting the carers. I thank the charities' teams of paid staff and volunteers, donors and patrons, who with the help of the entire Jewish community made this magical trip possible.

Lynne Benarroch
London, Hendon, NW4

NONSENSICAL LOGIC ON EQUAL MARRIAGE DEBATE

Geoffrey Alderman's suggestion that marriage equality for homosexuals should only be allowed if supporters would also allow it for incestuous couples is nonsensical (*Comment*, March 23). Incestuous homosexual marriage would be illegal just as incestuous heterosexual marriage is.

Few, if any, are naturally exclusively attracted to family members, whereas many are exclusively attracted to people of their own gender. There is a naturally occurring homosexual minority in many species, as in humans. Thus marriage equality for homosexuals is a pressing issue, where marriage for incestuous couples is obviously not. Such peculiar and desperate arguments as Alderman's show the weakness of the case against ending marriage inequality for gay people.

Jonathan Sacerdoti
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Suppose religion defined theft as taking property from someone of the opposite gender. Should that person be of the same gender, this would be lawful. Then the state makes theft illegal, and allows for prosecution of theft from victims of the same gender, but with a more lenient punishment. Does this make any sense? I hope not.

The definition of marriage is irrelevant. It is for the government (and democratic process) to define mar-

riage, as marriage has a civil meaning, so the religious view of it is irrelevant.

Denying homosexuals the right to marry should properly, then, result in the abolition of marriage as a legally meaningful concept. Have civil partnerships for all. If you want to stand under a *chuppah*, that's your choice.

Daniel Blaston Year 12, JFS
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Given that Geoffrey Alderman has consistently defended the gay community in the past, it was disappointing to see him repeat the tired, argument that somehow allowing consenting adults of the same sex to marry will open the door to incest marriage.

It's a shame Alderman didn't think it was sufficient enough to defend us once again, when he clearly understands what gay marriage is about: a symbolic social statement, a strong signal to society, that the unions entered into by gays and lesbians (which are in law the same as those of heterosexuals) are not "less than" them, socially or otherwise.

Alderman bemoans the lack of comment from the chief rabbis, as do I. But it's sad that a normally level-headed individual has used a poor argument to defend bigotry.

Gemma Hersh
Fortune Avenue, Edgware, HA8

FREE SPEECH ON CAMPUS

I was not surprised to see the rearguard action by UJS regarding Brooke Goldstein (*JC Essay*, March 23); this is the same UJS that pressured Socs to ban me last month. In a previous life I was antisemitic and an anti-Israeli activist. I learnt the facts and now campaign proudly for Israel. Given this and the fact I promote the moderate voice of Muslims, you would think UJS would welcome me. It was Stand-With-Us who approached me to do a campus speaking tour. Appearances were booked all over the UK. But it became clear that UJS was hell-bent on seeing the tour cancelled.

Despite this, the reactions from students—both Jewish and non-Jewish—were amazing. One stated: "It was the best talk we had ever heard". It was also heartening to see Muslim students attend. My hope is that under new leadership UJS will embrace voices like mine and those of true pro-Israel organisations. Let's move away from these petty rivalries and realise that to truly be a potent force we must be united.

Kasim Hafeez
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Jewish students, particularly those who volunteer to run Socs, have enough problems without being attacked by their own side. In January, the JC was outraged when a lawyer who had defended Holocaust deniers was invited to speak at SOAS. Now the tables are turned and I am disappointed the JC has chosen to lambast sensible students rather than to condemn racist extremism in all its forms.

Gabriel Webber

ISRAELI DONORS

I noticed the article urging Israelis to donate to Israeli charities (*News*, March 23). At Meir Panim the largest proportion of donations for our charity—some 36 per cent—come from Israelis. Our analysis shows that this is increasing every year. Furthermore the Israeli public is helping in other ways such as food, goods and allocating their time to helping the needy.

Much more can be done but to imply Israelis are not helping their own citizens is not strictly correct.

Sir Erich Reich
Chairman, Meir Panim UK

WOMEN ABSENT AGAIN

Sixteen men and just one woman presenting a loyal address to the Queen (*Community*, March 23). Is this an image of the modern Jewish UK community we want to portray?

Stephanie Segal
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A PESACH GIGGLE

Question: What makes Pesach food so expensive? Answer: It's the profit, stupid.

Leila Cumber
Elizabethan Court, Hendon Lane, N3

LIVINGSTONE ON JEWS

How can Ken Livingstone can remain a candidate of the Labour Party after displaying his antisemitism (*News*, March 23)? Comments of this kind should be totally unacceptable.

Peter Simpson
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Why Jewish Labour supporters are trying to be convinced Ken can be good for the Jews is beyond me. London needs someone neutral who represents all of us.

Jane Hoch
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BLACKPOOL REUNION

We are seeking former members of Blackpool United Hebrew Congregation to alert them to a special service of reunion to be held on Sunday May 13. Like most provincial communities, many members have moved away.

We hope to see as many current and former Blackpudlians as possible, to mark the impending sale of the synagogue and its de-consecration, as well as to share memories of this once flourishing provincial community.

Russell Grossman and Russell Kett
blackpoolshulreunion@hotmail.co.uk

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