

Super Bowl, Super Fraud?

What do you get when you cross the most-watched sporting event in America with one of the most popular means of anti-Semitic hate? The answer in a moment, but first, a confession.

While I enjoy a good football game as much the next American, I have to admit that in the last decade, I have cared less about the game or who wins and loses, and I only peripherally pay attention to the commercials.

This year, it's much the same. I have good friends in Seattle, so that's about as close a horse I have in this race. It is novel that the game is being played in N.J., miles from where I grew up and from the home we sold and packed up 10 years ago to move to Israel. Part of me is perfectly happy not to be there this week, imagining traffic much worse than the scandal that made it to the media regarding N.J. Gov. Christie's staff and "Bridge Gate."

However, while many wait eagerly for the commercials, creating a huge conflict about when to take a bathroom break or refill the chips and wings, this year we were treated to some pre-commercial news that's been enlightening and appalling.

SodaStream, an Israeli company that's publicly listed, paid handsomely to have a commercial placed during the Super Bowl and made news in advance of the game because it has the audacity to advertise so publicly and to hire Scarlett Johansson as its spokesperson.

Why? Does SodaStream experiment on animals? Do they engage in any range of illegal or unethical business practices? Is it an illegal monopoly? Was the CEO found to be a pedophile? No, no, no and no.

SodaStream's "crime" is that it has a factory a few miles east of Jerusalem in what's commonly referred to as the "West Bank"

but which Israelis know to be part of the biblical land of Israel—the original Bible Belt, if you will. But since this area was controlled by Jordan from 1948-1967, when Israel defeated the Jordanian, Syrian and Egyptian armies, conquering territory from which these armies launched no little bit of war, terror and cross border incursions, some people think of it as “occupied,” with any Israeli presence there “illegal.”

Those who peddle this slight distortion of fact also believe that the land that Israel is “occupying” is the God-given land of the Palestinians, some of whom mistakenly (and probably deliberately) misrepresent that there ever was a state called Palestine or that until 1948, the term *Palestinian* was used to describe people other than Jews who lived in the land.

They would have you believe that the land was taken from said country and that its citizens were dispossessed. Of course, not only is that *not* true, but the Jordanians and Egyptians who controlled these lands until 1967 never gave the Arab residents thereof citizenship. This profound discrimination by one Arab clan over another is not unique, but in this case it is uniquely ignored, placing all the blame on Israel.

Much of the anti-Semitic nature of these lies falls loosely under the banner of what’s known as a broader BDS campaign—boycott, divest and sanctions. Of course, it’s Israel that’s the subject of this effort; no matter how dishonest, it underscores an anti-Semitic root by holding Israel to different standards than the rest of the world and allegedly being pro-Palestinian.

However, as much as there is no shortage of ways that this movement is uniquely biased and anti-Semitic, it is also stupid and contradicts the interests of those that these Israel-haters purport to want to help.

SodaStream is probably the last company that anyone who seeks to support “Palestinian rights” ought to boycott. Not only

does their factory east of Jerusalem employ several hundred Palestinian Arabs, paying wages, providing benefits and working conditions they would have a hard time finding in the Palestinian Authority, but they also are opening another plant near the Israeli Arab Bedouin community, Rahat, where hundreds more Arabs will be employed.

This video shows not only that Arabs are not discriminated against by SodaStream, but that they derive huge benefits from working there and serve as a model of peaceful coexistence, working alongside Israeli Jews of all backgrounds. Many of the managers are Palestinian Arabs too. Oh, and they make a really good and innovative product that saves consumers money and happens to save the environment some plastic waste.

Personally, I not only find the boycott in general to be gross and anti-Semitic, but I also am one who generally supports the overall well-being of Palestinian Arabs; I believe that we can coexist peacefully and experience that regularly.

The hatred of the BDS charlatans is transparent, and they would do well to highlight areas and opportunities for coexistence, rather than protesting and calling for boycotts, if not maliciously, then certainly ignorantly. They show that during the Super Bowl, penalties can happen on and off the field.

If they really cared, they should all go out and line up to buy SodaStream products particularly, because rather than disenfranchising Arabs, it actually raises them up, in many cases more than their own leaders do.

Living and working in the biblical heartland of Judea and Samaria, which much of the world pejoratively calls the West Bank, as I do, is not mutually exclusive to peaceful coexistence and economic opportunities for us all.

Of course, it's inconvenient for these BDS haters to tell this reality. It's inconvenient for them to remind the world that

the Palestinian Authority repeatedly denies the possibility for Jews to live in a future Palestinian state, as they did again this week quite clearly here, making it strange, ironic and clearly anti-Semitic to suggest that of all the places in the world Jews should not be able to live or work, is in the heartland of the land that God gave to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Those who truly care about Palestinians and don't hate Israel or Jews ought to run out to buy SodaStream's unique product, to serve refreshing beverages at a fraction of the cost at their Super Bowl parties, and to invest in a company that's building and investing in all the people in the land, not occupying or disenfranchising, as some would have you believe.

And if you want some excellent pita chips and hummus to go with it, just let me know.

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