

Orthodox Jew: The Cowardice of Australia's Lightweight Diplomacy

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In an iconic picture, when British General Edmund Allenby entered Jerusalem on Dec. 11, 1917. He is seen walking by foot having dismounted from his horse, in recognition of the importance of the moment. Allenby understood the biblical significance of Jerusalem's history, built by King David, and central to Jews and Christians for millennia.

After centuries of Jerusalem under Islamic control, although never mentioned in the Quran, Allenby affirmed this was more than a military achievement, but a religious milestone. Conquering Jerusalem would allow Britain to begin to implement its commitment in the Balfour Declaration a month earlier to restore Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel.

On Oct. 31, horses also played a significant role in the decisive Battle of Beersheba. The British Egyptian Expeditionary Force attacked and captured the Ottoman Yildirim Army Group. As part of the offensive, the Anzac (Australia and New Zealand) Mounted Division launched a series of attacks against the Ottoman's defenses, capturing the eastern side of Beersheba. The Australian Mounted Light Horse Regiments led an attack riding into battle armed with bayonets.

It was one of the most consequential battles of WWI, leading to the eventual British capture of all the biblical land of Israel, divided as sanjaks by the Ottomans and being renamed Palestine by the British.

Three decades later, 75 years ago, the United Nations voted end the British Mandate and to implement terms of the Balfour

Declaration, to establish a Jewish state. Israel's independence was declared six months later. In the Nov. 2, 1917 Balfour Declaration, Britain committed itself that, "His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

While the Australians, fighting with the British, were significantly responsible for capturing Beersheba which led to the British victory, and the British declaring that they supported the restoration of Jewish sovereignty, the three decades the British ruled were not marked with the most Jewish-friendly policies toward implementing their commitment. In fact, because of the British appeasing the Arabs by blocking Jewish immigration, hundreds of thousands or even millions of Jews marked for extermination by the Nazis had nowhere else to go.

Recently, there's been a flip-flop relating to Israel in general and Jerusalem in specific. Whereas the Australians were particularly heroic in conquering the Holy Land, and after doing so the British were tepid in their actions that did not really give substance to their commitment to establish a Jewish state there, now the tables have turned.

Earlier this year, recently resigned British Prime Minister Liz Truss pledged her commitment to review moving the British embassy to Jerusalem. She reiterated that in a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid on the sidelines of the UN. It is an Allenby moment for the UK, affirming that Jerusalem's uniqueness is its biblical significance as the heart of the Jewish people, 105 years after Allenby entered the Holy City.

Doing so will undo a series of wrongs that the British were

responsible for during their control of the Holy Land. It is also long enough after other countries have done so that they can rest assured the Arab world's response is not going to be caustic, as many have made peace with Israel as a sign of being pragmatic. Not that such policies should be governed by how others might respond, but the idea that it might be a concern has been sufficiently debunked.

On the opposite side, Australia has wavered from its celebrated and heroic role in the history of the land. This month, it reversed its 2018 decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Even though Australia only recognized western Jerusalem as part of Israel (excluding the Old City, City of David, Jewish Quarter, Western Wall and Temple Mount along with other significant biblical sites), presumably to let the status of eastern (and most of biblical) Jerusalem to be determined in negotiations, recognition of any of Jerusalem's centrality to Israel and the Jewish people was significant. It also disproved that the Arab street would erupt in violence or protest, or that it might harm Australian relations in the Arab world.

Especially at this season, the month in which the British issued the Balfour Declaration and UN voted to establish a Jewish state, Britain should be encouraged from all directions, regardless of the outcome of the recent leadership transition. Friends have called British embassies and consulates in their communities and countries. Petitions have been initiated. Support has come from a wide range of sources, albeit that there have been some openly negative comments, most notably from some of the UK's religious leaders which still practice replacement theology and do not see the restoration of Israel and Jerusalem as its capital as having theological significance.

I certainly don't wish ill for Australia, but I pray they will have better leaders who make more sound decisions, biblically and diplomatically. There's a concern that phase two of

Australia's boomerang-like rebound will be the recognition of a Palestinian state.

If it weren't a wretched policy, it might actually be comical that they could cancel recognition of Jerusalem as the historic and modern capital of Israel with all its biblical and historic significance, and consider recognizing a Palestinian state that has no borders, that seeks to destroy another (Israel), has no currency, no democracy and in which elections have not been held in nearly two decades. To consider that a state, and Jerusalem not Israel's capital, is the definition of absurdity.

I suppose that just the same way a liberal government can be elected and overturn conservative government policies, when a conservative government is reelected, they can reverse the liberals' overturning of the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. This is not the way to do diplomacy. It also makes no sense as they didn't even commit to recognize all of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. It seems to be a case of hyper-wokeness, disavowing the significance of Jerusalem as central to Israel and the Jewish people.

I am trying to imagine General Allenby riding into the Jaffa Gate and looking at this situation today. As someone who understood the significance of the moment upon entering Jerusalem, I suspect he'd be pleased with the British leader's recent statements going in the right direction, and dismayed at the cowardice of the Australians today, who had once distinguished themselves fighting alongside the British in so much in the land. {eoa}

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