

Political Sour Grapes Don't Produce Fine Israeli Wine

I've long wondered why anyone would give a weekly column in a substantial newspaper to former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. While certainly deserving of credit for some achievements under his premiership, I'm not alone in not really caring what he thinks.

His political career ended disastrously and shamefully. As much as there are things for which he deserves credit, there are others who have more to contribute to public discourse.

Exceptions are his personal reflections and insights as former Jerusalem mayor, in government ministries, and as prime minister. Regardless of his tarnished leadership, these offer insight into a piece of our history. Sadly, Olmert's writing is far from reflecting on the good things which he did, and much more on bashing Prime Minister Netanyahu, even among his historical reflections.

Each time I read Olmert's columns, condemning Netanyahu, no matter the purported subject, is almost exclusively his inevitable conclusion, his final words. For my own edification, I read the concluding paragraphs of several of his recent columns. Regardless of the topic, attacking Netanyahu, Likud, and more recently Benny Gantz, was the common denominator.

The sequence doesn't matter. His words can be shuffled like a deck of all black or red cards, always drawing the darkest conclusion. His hostility is inseparable from his political commentary which makes his perspective that much more insignificant.

In some instances, he writes about political cover-up and cronyism. In all instances he bashes Bibi. "Israel has been

functioning for more than a year without a budget, no government and without taking the needs of its citizens into consideration .. .three elections ... [are] a cover-up for entanglements (of) the prime minister."

"The right-wing bloc's agenda is ... to (ensure) the imperial family on Balfour Street additional time in the palace, with complete disregard for the real needs of the Israeli people."

Or he worries about the threats to Israel's democracy. "The prime minister ... has no boundaries of integrity and decency ... undermin[ing] the fundamental foundations of our democracy (to) remain in power."

"For Netanyahu, the supreme value ... higher even than the state ... is his own survival."

"Our prime minister must be left to deal with his personal problems at his own expense not at ours."

Olmert thinks that Gantz and Ashkenazi are pawns joining a unity government, not generals making a strategic decision for the good of Israel. He denigrates not just Netanyahu, but all of Likud. "The people who threat[en] democracy will become Gantz and Ashkenazi's partners. [They] will sit in a government led by people who...[are] morally perverse; pledging to support a law that would enable him continue serving in government, as ... prime minister, even though he'd been indicted, awaiting trial, and [is] a threat to democracy."

"Neither Gantz nor Ashkenazi believe one word of the pledge made by Netanyahu and his gang of bandits. Gantz ...should take over the leadership of the country—not with Bibi, but in his stead."

"This won't be a unity government. It will be a government .. of Netanyahu's crime gang, (with) Gantz ... and powerless associates. .. [driving] the escape car for the fugitive."

Experience doesn't matter to Olmert, even one who knowingly will be less effective. "intimidation is a powerful tool that is being used by the government ... to evoke a sense of urgency and ... reinforces people's desire to support the current leadership, instead of [finding] a new leader who is ... less well-known, less experience(d) and who is less effective, even though the current leadership has already proven its inefficiency and failures."

Considering he grew up in Likud, its fascinating to see his convenient political abandonment continuing while the party to which he jumped ship to join is extinct. "The Likud's attempt ... inspired by Netanyahu, to prevent the election of a new speaker for the Knesset, provocation against the Supreme Court, the demand from Likud leaders that the speaker ignore the ...Court's decision..., is a violation of the law and ... tantamount to an attempted coup d'état."

"This ... reveals the Likud gang's true intentions ... no interest in forming a unity government or ... national reconciliation."

After sparing no venom for Bibi, Likud, Gantz and Gabi, or anyone who partners or relates to them, Olmert seems not to realize that with rhetoric so reflexive, by delegitimizing them and others the way he does, he also indicts and disqualifies himself from public discord. "Anyone [engaging] in incitement and polarization, [insulting] ... a large part of society and considers his political opponents, three of whom are former IDF chiefs of staff, as collaborators with people who supposedly call for Israel's destruction, is the last person who should be allowed to talk about unity and national responsibility."

"The only way we can take responsibility for national unity, make way for change and remain hopeful is for Netanyahu to step down and leave the government."

Sadly, even where he has an interesting historical

perspective, he can't let go of his hatred. Olmert's tribute to President Mubarak couldn't be spared this vitriol. "The ... Israeli government ... is operating in an inconsiderate and lawless manner ... carrying out incessant provocations, [that] could [irreparably] harm our relations with Jordan and Egypt."

"Israel is ...throwing a lit match that could spread a wildfire throughout the ... Middle East. After [destroying] our relationship with Jordan and Egypt ... we will ... blame them, while ignoring our own contribution ... and the price the entire region will be forced to pay."

"We must accept ... responsibility to maintain stable relations with our neighbors, even if that means the loss of ... electoral achievements."

It would be one thing if these comments were uttered in a campaign by someone running for office. Out of prison and in political purgatory, Olmert is trying to ignite more than a simple opposition, but a premiership in exile.

Sour grapes do not make a fine wine or political commentary. It's astounding that anyone would give a half-page a week to Olmert's bitter blend. It seems that Olmert's end goal is for Netanyahu's career to end as ingloriously as did his own.
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