

B”H

Speech for keynote UN Harmony Day at APH 13/02/2019 5:00PM

I recently saw a panel where a Mufti, a Bishop, and a Rabbi were asked: What would you like for them to say about you whilst you are lying in your casket at your funeral? The Mufti, he put the needs of his people before his own. Bishop, he expanded his services to beyond the Church. Rabbi: “I would like them to say, Look, he’s breathing!”

“We are the most successful multicultural country in the world” who coined this phrase I do not know, but I have heard this repeated many times.

The former PM published on his Facebook page a picture of me standing between him and Bill Shorten with my hand on each of their shoulders posing with other faith and political leaders at a similar event to the one tonight, and the text on the image proudly including the words “we are the most successful multicultural country in the world.”, the picture as proof positive: Here is the image. I’m going old school with picture props as we don’t have a projector here...

Before I give you my thoughts on the matter let me begin with a bit of my own familial background.

I, like so many others, owe my very existence to this country. My great great grandfather Nosson Sochochevsky (later anglicised to Chester) was fortunate to find a safe haven on the shores of Australia together with some lucky family members after fleeing from anti Semitic pogroms in Poland - pogroms were the organized massacres of the Jews regularly perpetrated, in Russia, Poland and that region of the world.

Years later, Another grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Gutnick, following the outbreak of the Second World War, and just prior to the Nazi occupation in 1941, fled on the last civilian boat to make it out of Lithuania. Only 1 out of every 100 Jews from Poland & Lithuania survived the Holocaust.

He was studying in a rabbinical seminary away from his home in England. The boat was diverted from England, the intended destination, and ended up in Australia. Shortly afterwards, he enlisted in the Australian army, prepared to make the greatest sacrifice of all, to fight the Nazis and their allies to protect his own newfound freedom and home. Australia. His father had passed years earlier and his mother, Chaya, in England, had no way of contacting him and had no idea of his fate. She feared the worst and found no peace. Two years later she saw a photo on the front page of a London newspaper. Pictured were a group of Australian soldiers. She recognised her son Chaim as one of those soldiers, they later reunited in Australia.

I have been preceded by generations of fine Jewish Australians who have contributed tirelessly to our society whilst remaining openly observant Jews.

But are we the most successful multicultural country in the world?

If one was to look at a gathering like we have tonight, religious leaders coming together in peace supported by politicians on all sides of the political divide, you could be mistaken to think that indeed all Australians are living in some sort of multicultural utopia.

So let me illustrate from some of my own personal experience.

I have visited and studied in many different countries. I can tell you with certainty that Australia is the luckiest and best country in the world. I feel so proud and fortunate to call Australia home.

Whenever I return from trips overseas and hear Qantas play the classic - I still call Australia home, no matter how many times I've touched down, I still am completely overcome with emotion.

We have a tremendous amount to be thankful for in that Australian policy has become one of pluralism and a welcoming safe haven for those who are so-called different - yet united by a common set of values, but we probably still have a little bit more work to do in the areas of fostering real tolerance and harmony for our children to coexist successfully.

Because one has to ask, if we are indeed such a successful multicultural society, then why is it that hate crimes and racial vilification in Australia are on the rise? The Executive Council of Australian Jewry keeps a record on most hate crimes reported by the Jewish community throughout the country, and guess what? We have seen a staggering year on year growth of hate crimes of an increase of 59% over the previous twelve month period. This is an unprecedented percentage increase.

Jewish identifying Australians continue to be verbally abused and harassed on a regular basis, especially over the Jewish Sabbath, and on Jewish festivals.

There are segments of Australian society which are not only hostile towards Jews, but actively and publicly express that hatred with threats or actual violent acts.

As a result, and by necessity, physical security remains a prime concern for the Jewish community

As far right and far left groups increasingly becomes emboldened and more active in denigrating, demonising and inciting violence against Jews, it is incumbent upon political and other leaders to demonstrate through their actions that antisemitism, and all forms of racism, is not acceptable in Australia, and to ensure that strong policies, laws and other measures are adopted and implemented in order to effectively counter antisemitism and other hate.

International experts on human behaviour are suggesting that the honeymoon the Jews experienced in the western world following the Holocaust was coming to an end and the collective amnesia was beginning to set in, as has repeatedly happened throughout our history. The repugnant and vile sickness called anti semitism just never seems to disappear and was shamelessly starting to rear its ugly head again. in Europe especially, where now Jews in the U.K and France are leaving in record numbers, in the U.S, and yes, even at home in Australia..

Growing up in Bondi, which is situated in the second largest Jewish electorate in the country, you would think that we had it easy. Let me say this. Not a weekend went by without at least a few of us children having racial abuse hurled at us on the street on the way to or from the Synagogue. We were sheltered from the abuse whilst at school as we luckily attended a Jewish private school - One of the many educational institutions that my illustrious parents, Rabbi Pinchus and Rebbetzin Pnina Feldman, selflessly spent their lives building. But many of those in other schools were regularly subjected to racism. It was just part of life. Especially during times of conflict in the Middle East.

It is important to stress the centrality of Israel for the Jewish people. In addition to the undeniable religious and indigenous connection of nearly 4000 years that every Jew has to the Land of Israel, in today's world, The State of Israel serves as the principal symbol of Judaism internationally. It is the nation state of the Jewish people and continues to serve as the only desperately

needed homeland for persecuted Jews wherever they are in the world.

Throughout the ages, antisemitism has been expressed against Jewish symbols as a cover for not hating Jews, just their religion, or just their race, or just their looks, or just their traditions, and now, just their land. Whilst of course not everyone who is critical of Israeli policy is an anti semite, one needs to be cognizant that studies continue to show that many in that space are closet antisemites who pose as “anti zionist” as an avenue to express their Jew hatred without social repercussion.

Anti-Israel movements like the BDS, continue to attract rabid antisemites, especially online. Often these people are not only tolerated but are embraced. Conspiracy theories about Jews abound as do calls for the destruction of Israel. Many seem more concerned with hating Israel as a Jewish state than with supporting the suffering Arabs. Their agenda becomes obvious.

As a response to the rise in hate crimes, the Jewish community rallied together and set up their own security arrangements with the support of police, with volunteers guarding Jewish Synagogues and schools. Then armed guards were and are employed to protect many of these venues.

I recall being deeply affected as a child when the Holocaust survivors predominantly from Hungary in my father’s Synagogue told me their stories of survival, and the death and suffering they left behind.

In 1944 Hungary, following the Nazi invasion, most of Hungary's large and vibrant Jewish community were deported to the death camps. A young 13 year old Frank survived by evading and outsmarting the Gestapo and ended up in Australia in the 1950s. For years, he longed to find out the fate of his beloved father Hugo and how and when he perished in the Holocaust. Most of his mother's side had also perished at the hands of the Nazis. Frank went into business in Sydney with a fellow Hungarian Jewish refugee, John, who had a similar background. Frank worked hard selling sandwiches and John as a packer and together put their savings together to take risk and create opportunity. The company they created was called Westfield.

Sir Frank Lowy AC and the late John Saunders' contribution to Australia in so many areas has been nothing short of outstanding.

One of Frank's defining moments was when he ultimately learned how his father died. Hugo was deported to Auschwitz and upon emerging from the cattle car the Nazis insisted that they leave all their luggage behind. He refused to give them over his prayer shawl and teffilin - the phylacteries we religious Jewish men pray with.

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So the enlightened SS soldiers brutally beat him to death. Hugo had died for his religious principles. He died as he lived, as a proud Jew.

Mr Lowy's story is not at all unique. Following Israel, Australia has the highest per capita number of Holocaust survivors than in any other country.

With stories like these, the name callings didn't seem that bad. We had it pretty good. Our grandparents had to flee the Holocaust, pogroms and communism. Here, The Government and police were on our side. After all it was only a minority who were doing it. It was a minority of migrants from the Middle East and from former Nazi collaborationist states who came over with lots of hatred towards Jews and Israel and thought it fair game to let it out on anyone who looks Jewish. It was a minority of Christian Australians who grew up with the age old antisemitic education and conspiracy theories that the Jews are money hungry world dominating weather controlling Christ killers and are therefore all culpable for eternity. It was another minority who just thought we weren't Australian enough because we dress funny and should just be Australian. It was another minority of White Supremacists who thought our race should not exist. The racism and antisemitism we experience does not come from any one political party. It comes from the far left, the far right, religious extremist and your everyday so called bogans in the middle who had little to no regard for the dignity of difference.

So as the years went by, we were constantly reminded that we are the other. Until today, Nearly every day when I am out and about the first question I am still asked by random people is: where are you from? To which they always follow up that question and ask: Where were you from before you moved to Australia?

Israel? As if to say, you can't possibly be a true blue Ozy or fair dinkum, looking the way you do.

Sometimes I offer the questioner some free education.

In 1788 about sixteen Jewish convicts arrived in Australia with the First Fleet. Among them was Esther Abrahams who in 1808, as the partner to Lieutenant George Johnston, became the colony's unofficial 'first lady'. Jewish worship in Sydney began in about 1817 under the leadership of Joseph Marcus, a former convict. Phillip Joseph Cohen, a free settler, held services in his home from 1828. After using various temporary premises the congregation opened the first specifically built synagogue in Australia in 1844. Jewish congregations were formed in Hobart, Launceston, Melbourne and Adelaide during the 1840s, Brisbane in 1886 and Fremantle in 1887.

The majority of the about 1000 Jewish convicts who arrived in Australia between 1788 and 1868 came from England. They included tailors, watchmakers, shoemakers etc etc. After emancipation, many rose to high positions in commercial and political life. They were joined by settlers mostly from England but also from Germany, and later by refugees fleeing pogroms in Russia and Poland. During World War I, 11% of the Jewish community enlisted; 17% of these lost their lives. Lieutenant General Sir John Monash, the Australian Commander-in-chief, was born in Australia but came from a Polish Jewish family. In 1917 the New South Wales Legislative Assembly had to close on Yom Kippur because both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker

were Jewish. In 1931 Sir Isaac Isaacs, formerly a parliamentarian and then a member (later Chief Justice) of the High Court, became Australia's first Australian born Governor-General. Of course Sir Zelman Cowan followed. We now have Jews from over 80 countries who call Australia home.

These proud Jews went on to shape Australia to the great and prosperous country that it is today, leaders in philanthropy, the arts, science, medicine, law and so on. leaders in this Parliament, like former Government Minister, Barry Cohen, whose State funeral I was honoured to officiate over in last years first sitting week of Parliament. A record number of Jewish Politicians in Parliament today on all sides of the political divide each making their own unique contributions. All this notwithstanding us being at only about 0.5% of the Australian population.

So when they ask us to just be Australian, well quite honestly I'm not sure how you can get more Ozy than that..

Throughout the country, disturbing episodes of antisemitism are becoming more frequent. It is no secret that we've sadly had our fair share of incidents in our community in Canberra. On a national level, not a week goes by without another horrific story of hate needlessly endured by Australia's Jewish children. Just this past Sunday morning saw iconic Bondi Beach and Bondi Junction defaced with swastikas. But what are we doing about it? Do we just continue to go through the motions, condemn it with some well-structured words and move on with business as usual?

Surely this can't be reflective of being a gold medal winner in the worldwide multicultural Olympics!

The Jewish mindset has been that we should never whinge about it and have people think we are playing the victim card. Nobody likes whingers. It'll just cause them to hate us more.

Well I dare to have a whinge today. I do think we should strive for better.

The vast majority of Australians still do not want this in their name.

There is nothing more Australian than going from good to better.

Otherwise we risk dropping the ball, and those hating continue to become more emboldened. Complacency and satisfaction with the status quo could yield catastrophic consequences. My grandfather shortly before his passing warned me that if our society were to become complacent with its achievements then he believed the Holocaust could Heaven Forbid happen again today.

My weekly message to the community last week simply stated: Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you simply sit there. One of my mentors and a great mystic, Rabbi Mendel Futerfas of Blessed Memory, who survived years in the Soviet

Gulag for his commitment to preserving Judaism despite the communist agenda, managed to escape Russia in his later years and make it to Israel where he taught until his passing. He used to often give the example of bike riding: When you are working hard you are going uphill. When you are having it easy, it is because you are going downhill. But never stay in one spot or you'll fall..

Interfaith dialogue and events on this level are a very important step in the right direction. It is so wonderful and lovey dovey and always leaves you with a warm and fuzzy feeling inside, but does the goodwill of those in the Faith and Political leadership filter down to those in the street? Does it filter down to the children in our schools? Does it reach the people in the pub? At the footy? And finally, does it really permeate all the Churches, Mosques, Synagogues and other places of worship?

If you want to know how multiculturalism is working, you need to ask those on the front lines in our streets. You need to ask the Jewish boy who walks with a Kippa on his head. You need to ask a Muslim woman who wears a hijab over her hair in public. You need to ask a Sikh man who dons his turban every morning. You need to ask an Australian girl from China who takes the train to school every day. You can ask an Indigenous Australian how they feel about this successful utopia. You can ask an African migrant how they are finding their employment opportunities.

Their answers might shock you to the core. Racism historically starts with the Jews but never ends with us. So many other

minority groups in Australia feel that they are in the category of the “other” and are despised for it.

Chabad Chassidic philosophy speaks of the propensity of every human to develop a hatred of the other just by virtue of them being the “other”. Because secretly deep down, in what we call the evil inclination, the human wants everything for himself, the mere existence of the other could drive it nuts. The human loves his own existence and if someone interferes with that self-love then intolerance and hate can develop very quickly. Especially if the other holds different beliefs or looks different. On a more mystical level the Kaballah explains that because we all have that Divine extension within our souls, therefore as a byproduct we feel that we are our own gods and the world should be all ours. Because within the framework of free choice in creation, wherever good was created there is the potential for the “other” side - evil.

So we have a saying, “going to the Synagogue makes you a good Jew like going to the garage makes you a car....”

So what is the real message we should be taking with us from our respective faiths and particularly from Monotheism, on multiculturalism and multi faith or multi-ethnic coexistence?

Rabbi Dr Lord Jonathan Sachs, The former Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth, makes a fascinating case for interfaith in his book “not in G-d’s name”. In the very beginning of Genesis we find the problems which we have experienced throughout history

with people of faith not getting along. The very first act of Adam and Eve's children recorded, is their desire to give an offering to G-d. And it concludes with G-d rebuking Cain that his brother's blood is crying out to Him from the ground. The Bible is saying, don't think religion is naturally peaceful. It is full of complex drama. Full of good intentioned people conflating the voice of G-d with the voice of the internal demons. Otherwise known in the Chabad philosophy as the good inclination within, and the animalistic inclination within.

The late Professor Renee zhirrah espoused that the primary driver of human violence is sibling rivalry.

Having a few children ourselves we can tell you first hand how we witness this fascinating phenomenon all too often. One child gets a new toy or treat, the other children would never have even thought about it nor desired it before, but as soon as they see it they want it and sure enough, a fight ensues. I'm needing to constantly train them to be happy with their lot and not to be jealous. After all, G-d Himself says in Genesis that he regretted creating man because their natural tendencies from birth are selfish and negative.

It is not by chance that the 10th commandment is to not covet thy neighbor's wife, house or possessions.

We see this same theme of sibling rivalry woven throughout Genesis, but if you pay careful attention you will notice what

happens in the final scene of each case and how there is gradual generational progression.

The last scene of Cain and Abel finds Abel murdered.

The last scene in Isaac and Ishmael, they are standing together paying respects at Abraham's grave.

The last scene in Jacob and Esau is that they embrace and kiss, and then go in their separate ways.

The last scene in Joseph and his brothers is forgiveness and reconciliation.

The Bible is telling us that we CAN be like Joseph and his brothers. It does not have to end in tears. We do not have to choose the path of hate, rivalry and violence. We can choose peace.

One of Monotheism's greatest gifts to mankind lies within this juxtaposition, that on the one hand each person is created in the image of G-d and that on the other, regardless of how bad a person seems, each person has the ability to display the best of humanity and have good emanate from them.

Take the evil Pharaoh as an example, his daughter's compassion saved Moses and led to our people being freed from slavery and the subsequent Abrahamic faiths to grow.

Let me ask you this, what is the commandment repeated the most in the Bible?

It is the commandment to love and care for the stranger. This is mentioned no less than 36 times. We cannot ignore the plight of the stranger. And we cannot hold someone in contempt for their faith being in the realm of strange or foreign in contrast to our own. We must embrace and love the “other” and the less fortunate regardless, for as we said before the essence of the human soul is an extension of G-d Himself.

I often contemplate how it was that a man some 4000 years ago who was seeking the truth, Abraham, became the first Jew, and the father of the great monotheistic faiths together with his wife Sarah, and merited to such greatness where more than half of the world’s population affiliate with one of the Abrahamic faiths today. Around 2.5 billion Christians. 1.8 billion Muslims. And a few Jews and others for good measure.

How did it happen? The simple answer is that he introduced and practised at the right time the values that the world so desperately needed. The belief and faith in the One G-d. Fighting for social justice. Our sages teach that his most compelling act was opening his tent in the most vulnerable places to all and sundry. Opening their tent for the needy. Something highly irregular for those times.

Loving the stranger. They recognized the humanity inherent in every human being and the need to be there for them. Physically, materially and then spiritually. Perhaps this is why Abraham and Sarah remain the most significant influencers in history and their way of life serves as an eternal guideline for us to know how to live.

A man once came to a Rabbi and complained, what should I do that my children are not going in the direction that I want them to go in? I keep telling them to go on the straight and narrow and they disappoint me. The Rabbi looked at him and said, what are they supposed to do? It seems that your actions are shouting so loud that your children aren't able to hear your words.

There were many types of spiritual preachers and pagan religions at that time. Including those promoting human sacrifices. But what of those remain today? Abraham was a preacher of a different kind. He actually practised and truly believed in what he was preaching. The theme of One G-d and one humanity.

Abraham got it. Abraham was a man of action. He really meant it. Loving the stranger was his bread and butter.

(not said: I saw an online lecture given by a Professor in the United States where he went through great pains with props and marbles in jars demonstrating how taking in refugees ultimately makes no difference to the country where they have come from because you're limited to what you can take in and you aren't really making a meaningful difference to 99.9% of those left behind in that country.

I immediately recalled a story my grandfather once told me of a little boy standing on the beach where thousands of starfish had washed ashore. He was throwing the starfish back into the water. An old man walked by and asked the child what he was doing. The child replied that he is saving the starfish. The old man pointed to the thousands of starfish washed up on the beach and said “foolish little boy, you are wasting your time, look at all these fish, you will not save even a small fraction of them all”. The boy silently picked up another fish and threw it far back into the water and looked at the old man and said “to that fish, it has made all the difference...”)

Perhaps the most enduring message of the Bible and Abrahamic faiths is the value of life. One humanity. Saving a life is like saving a world. That each person has infinite worth and we must do our all to be responsible for one another wherever we can.

But therein lies the dilemma as well, how can we all get along? How can we reconcile other people’s incompatible religious and political beliefs with our own to the extent that we can all proudly pray differently, dress differently, look different yet still have a socially cohesive existence with each other in harmony? Is it even possible?

I’ve seen the argument made again lately that everyone needs to assimilate into one Australian culture and put all other cultures on the side for us to live in harmony. Only that will work they claim.

Well, let’s go back to the timeless teachings of the Torah. Embedded Throughout the Bible we have the recipe as to how a multicultural society should function.

Let us take Noah's story as a classic case in point. The world had become a nasty place. There was no rule of law of any kind. People were ruthlessly killing each other without consequences. Theft and looting was rampant. They were cruel to animals. They had no morality or modesty. G-d pressed the reset button but saved Noah and his family. Noah exited the ark and G-d made a rainbow as a covenant that he will not destroy the world again and the rainbow will be for us a reminder to behave.

But Why a rainbow and not say a scary figure of Satan in the sky, ..surely that may have been more effective as a reminder than a beautiful rainbow?

The simple reason is that the 7 colours of the rainbow represented the seven Universal laws - known as the Noahide Laws, that was to govern all mankind in order to live G-dly, meaningful and productive lives. In Jewish ideology, Judaism is not the religion for all of humanity but it is there to inspire universally. We teach that any righteous human of whichever faith adhering to the 7 Noahide laws has a pathway to the Divine and the world to come.

However on a deeper level, The rainbow's seven colours represent the different types of people in the world. Like the seven branches of the Menorah - the Candelabra - in the Temple.

Each golden branch representing diverse personalities, traditions races and beliefs. Each person with their own unique role in this world.

All major calamities that have plagued mankind since creation has only been a result of intolerance and hate. The way to regulate stability in the world says G-d, is by remembering our role in being that rainbow.

Here is the secret of the Divine instruction on how to accomplish multiculturalism, not by all being the same G-d forbid,that is not how G-d created us,and that is not how He wants us to be. We are 7 billion odd humans and not one of us are exactly identical to another. Not in body and not in soul. We need to have diversity in order to have beauty. If we would all be the same, it would just be one colour.

G-d is saying, "Learn to embrace each other with dignity and together you will all contribute to create a successful world which shines with the multicoloured beauty of humanity. "You SHOULD all serve me differently, BUT for you to be individually united by common central values.

Like the Jewish tribes camped in the wilderness for 40 years, each in their own tribe in their own tents, but encamped around and facing the Ark and what it represented. The united values as the glue that sticks us together as a nation.

The famous Christian scholar and author Thomas Cahill in his book “the Gifts of the Jews” points out that all of our Western Civilization and values which we enjoy today, traces back to the Jewish people, to Mt Sinai and the Ten Commandments. This he proves, formed the basis for our civilisation and all of our laws that govern us, declarations of independence and freedom, constitutions, and all the way down to our privileged way of life which many take for granted today.

The values of egalitarianism, democracy, pluralism, liberty, religious freedom, sanctity of life, charity, embracing our civic duties, a fair go for all, these are our core Australian values, influenced by our shared Abrahamic religious teachings and these are the values that we need to constantly rededicate ourselves to as Australians, and by our actions, not just our words, we will influence others to do the same and experience the most successful multiculturalism the world has ever seen.

We can excel in harmoniously living together and achieving lasting unity not in spite of our differences but because of our differences. In the recognition that we must not just tolerate difference and the other but we must cherish it.

There is a special prayer for country and our elected leaders which is recited in Synagogues around Australia and read during the morning service every Shabbat. The concept of praying for the wellbeing of the government was started in 586 B.C.E. by the prophet Jeremiah after the first expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem. It seems that Jeremiah was a foremost expert on

reconciling religious and cultural differences in a foreign nation. Seeing that the Jewish people could not govern themselves, they implored G-d to guide their foreign rulers. As Jeremiah stated: “Seek the welfare of the city to which you have gone and pray to G-d on its behalf, for in its peace and prosperity, you will find peace and prosperity”.

He told them in effect: “Maintain your identity while contributing to the common good. Be true to your faith while being a blessing to others and praying for them, regardless of their faith.”

A nation should respect its faiths, and faiths must respect each other and the nation. That is the only way we will achieve integrated diversity and the dignity of difference, in which we see our differences as contributions which we bring to the common good.

The story is told of a king who had two sons. He decided to send them both away to a far away land where nobody knew them, each with a bag of gold.

He told them that they need to make lives for themselves, invest wisely, build up their names and when the time comes to marry, to send word back to the king and he will come and visit.

The boys took the challenge and left the palace. Upon arriving at their destination they did as their father suggested and separately

invested their funds. One brother became hugely successful. The other's investments fell flat and he lost everything. The rich brother ended up in a mansion. The poor brother ended up in a broken down shack and lived as a beggar. The rich brother would not help his as he felt that his father the king would have wanted him to fend for himself.

Years went by and the rich brother found a bride. He sent word to his father as planned notifying of the wedding date. On the designated date the king arrived in the land and enquired about his two sons. Upon hearing of the fate of his prince turned pauper, he immediately went to that son's shack. The poor son was not planning on going to the wedding because his brother had abandoned him. The father upon hearing that decided he will keep the poor son company and not attend the wedding either. The priest in the meantime was waiting for the nuptials to be recited but the Groom was insistent to wait for his father the king. With the guests becoming increasingly impatient, eventually he was told that his father was in his brother's shed. He quickly made his way there and upon arriving went to embrace his father. The father refused to embrace him and asked "who are you" to which he replied "I am your son." The king said, no you are not my son, ...He pointed to the poor prince and said "he is my son, you are not my son". The groom began weeping and exclaimed in disbelief "it cannot be that you don't recognize me, you travelled here for my wedding, please come!" But the king was insistent. "No, He is my son," said the king, pointing at the poor prince. The incredulous Groom cried out: pointing to his brother: "he is my brother, and as he is my brother then that makes you my father."

The father nods his head sadly and says, “indeed, when you will be his brother, then I will be your father!”

If a brother does not act like a brother then a father does not wish to be the father.

We, people of Abrahamic faiths, have one loving father to whom we pray ... and whose blessing we seek, but that blessing hinges on whether or not we are all indeed brothers...

One day we will all have our reckoning. What will be said at our funeral down here in this world and up there in the next depends on the decisions we make today during our short journeys through this life.

I would like to conclude by sharing with you where I feel part of fostering love and understanding to the next generation of multicultural Australia.. It is the Goodness and Kindness Humanitarian Charity and services we established in our Jewish community centre.

Children and adults alike from all the diverse walks of Canberra’s life, together take part in many of these initiatives.

When I see my children at one of the programs sitting around the table with Muslim children, Christian children, Hindu children, Indigenous children, African migrants, all Australian, all encouraged to practise their own heritage, culture and religion, where they have vegetarian for the Hindu children, Halal and

Kosher for the Jewish and Muslim children and so on, and all the children together learning from our religiously inspired values which unite us all in humanity, seeing them laugh, play and sing together.

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This assures me that in the years to come, if any of these children witness any racism or bigotry, they will protest it and cause the perpetrator to confine the hatred that never dies to the recesses of their heart never to be revealed again for fear of enormous social repercussions. Or perhaps better yet, through seeing this passion, the abuser's approach would then also then be transformed to respect, tolerance, understanding and maybe even love. This is how we change the world for the better.

If we can all pull our weight wherever we can, then I am sure, we will yet become the most successful multicultural country in the world.

May we merit a time speedily in our days when there will be no more war or hate, and true peace and brotherly love will prevail throughout the world, Amen.