

"Trudeau: Good for the Jews?"

A Panel Discussion

Jonathan Kay (Editor in Chief, The Walrus)

Michael Taube (Troy Media columnist)

Karen Mock (Former National Director of the League for Human Rights B'nai Brith)

Moderated by **Yoni Goldstein** (Editor, Canadian Jewish News)

Introduced by **David S. Koffman** (Assistant Professor of History, York University)

Sunday May 15, 2016
Tributes Communities Recital Hall
York University

Hosted by the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies, York University

Sponsored by:
Canadian Jewish News
The Walrus Magazine
York University's Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies
The Association for Canadian Jewish Studies
Department of History, York University
Department of Humanities York University
Department of Political Science York University

In mid-May, 2016, York University's Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies and Assistant Professor David Koffman welcomed three panelists from various points on the political spectrum to a public discussion about the stakes at the heart of the recent change in political leadership of Canada in so far as it impacts Jewish concerns. Speakers were allotted 15 minutes for opening comments, after which Yoni Goldstein, editor of the Canadian Jewish News, facilitated conversation among the panelists and audience. What follows is transcript of the event, edited for clarity.

David Koffman: Good afternoon, and welcome on behalf of York University and its Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies. To those of you who have joined us via thewalrus.com, or for those of you who may watch this sometime in the future, welcome. Welcome to our panelists, and thank you in advance. My name is David Koffman. I'm an assistant professor here. I teach Canadian Jewish History, among other things.

In the panel we have before us, we may here something about the Prime Minister, his track record, ideology, or his character, about the liberal party in its long arc trajectory in Canadian Jewish history, about various cabinet ministers and the wide range of domestic policy and social issues that they will help shape over the next few years, and we'll certainly hear a few things about foreign policy matters.

By way of introduction to what promises to be a stimulating and engaging discussion, however, a brief word about the partly tongue-in-cheek question that we used to frame the discussion. "Good for the Jews." A few years back, somebody actually published a guidebook that offered a method by which to evaluate the burning question. The author, a comedian, explains that all you have to do is add the antisemitic potential of an event to an impact on the world value. You multiply that sum by the Jewishness of the event in question, to yield a tzures value, a trouble value. You divide that by "the mystical, kabbalistic number seven" to get your answer... good for the Jews.

There's actually more than a grain of truth in the silliness of the equation, though, because the question, as those of you who are not wrapped up in the fold of Jewish communal discourse may not know, is that it's almost incessantly and quite frequently half consciously asked about every conceivable matter of social life: tax

codes, the appointees who draft the questions on census forms, the composition of the board of governors of institutions, from the Academy of the Motion Picture of Arts and Sciences, to York University itself. Jews have asked the question in respect of geopolitical events deep within nations that are far from the center of Jewish life. The question has been applied to political regimes everywhere and anywhere that Jews have lived, at all of the critical junctures of modern Jewish history, almost always before the Jews actually knew the consequences of the political sea changes they would face.

Russian Jews asked it with the ascension of the reformist Emperor Alexander II, the man who emancipated the serfs in 1861, just as French Jews asked it before and after the election of Emile Loubet, the president who formally separated church and state in France. American Jews certainly asked the questions in the week after the greatest election upset in the United States history, which kept Harry Truman in office instead of the Republican Thomas Dewey. We ask it all the time, even when we don't deploy those actual words.

While the question is always a bit tongue in cheek, it also betrays a profound anxiety that dwells within this peculiar people, and its propensity to both fret about and engaged in serious, studious debate about the political circumstances, and the fate that ever awaits at least a certain subset of it.

In our society more broadly, we have learned to identify this question in all of its versions. Is it good for the Catholics? Is it good for First Nations? Is it good for the LGBTQ community, or perhaps just the L's, but not the Q's? In a way, it's the paradigmatic question of identity politics, the politics that are derived not from a general or universal assertion of what's good, but from a particularized concern of insular interests. Is it good for us, for our kind, for our tribe? As Stanley Fish, the American literary theorist and legal scholar has observed, the uncomfortable part of the question is that a community in which this question is central will be a community with a sense of its own precariousness. Its members will think of themselves as potentially, if not perpetually, under threat, and as the likely victims of discrimination or exclusion.

The question is haunted by a conviction that no matter how well things may seem to be going, it may only be a matter of time before there's a knock at the door, and someone comes and takes it all the way.

By all available evidence, precariousness does not mark the situation of the Canadian Jewish community, whether the measure is education, wealth, influence in the corridors of Bay Street or Parliament Hill, prominence in the profession, or accomplishments in the arts. Jews in Canada are visible and successful to a degree that is remarkable, given their relatively small numbers. Yet as Jewish communities around the world confront threat, more and more Jews in this community share a deep sense of unease. Are the little things today paving the way for a juggernaut tomorrow?

Today, a panel that offers a certain public version of the sometimes "Jews only" conversation about the political tides in our own country, with our government recently flipped from conservative to liberal. It's clear to me that at least in private, Jews seldom speak in one united voice, and it matters very much to me that we're having this discussion today in public. Steady yourself for some nuanced engagement. I trust no one will leave the room with a yes or no answer. This is not a debate.

Before we begin, I want to offer thanks and appreciation to our co-sponsors for the event, York's Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies and its Departments of History, Humanities, and Political science, the Association for Canadian Jewish Studies, the Canadian Jewish News, and The Walrus. A special thanks to the skilled and talented Julie Feinberg, of the Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies, for all the hard work that it takes to put an event together like this.

I had slated to offer a welcome to Mr. Ali Ehsassi, the Federal MP who represents Willowdale in Ottawa, but I don't think he managed to join us. Perhaps the weather kept him away. If he wasn't in Israel this week alongside the Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne and others, I know that York's President, Mamdouh Shoukri would have joined us. He sends his welcome. Welcome to Dean Ananya Mukherjee-Reed of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, who would like to share a few words. Following Dean Mukherjee-Reed, Yoni Goldstein, the editor of the Canadian Jewish News, and in a way, perhaps the closest thing to the site of the Canadian Jewish psyche himself will come up to the lectern, and introduce our panelists, and facilitate our conversation. Thank you in advance to Yoni, and welcome to Dean Mukherjee-Reed.

Dean Ananya

Thank you, Professor Koffman. I'm here really to welcome all of you to York for this wonderful event. The

Mukherjee-Reed: weather was supposed to be different, or so we thought, but it isn't. On behalf of York, really I'm very pleased to see the Jewish Studies banner here, which highlights "education, culture, and community." That is really what we are about, and just as you see it here, these parts are not separable. The boundaries are porous, because education cannot take place without our involvement of the community and vice versa. Just before we started, I was having a very interesting conversation with my colleague, the Chair of History, Marcel Martel, about celebrating culture when we celebrate Canada's 150 years, and the movement from culture to multiculturalism, and what it might mean.

I expect that over the afternoon, there'll be very interesting conversations on all these three aspects. I want to hear the answer. Is Trudeau good for the Jews or not? I'm very happy to be here, and I hear some of you, and then I wish you a very, very delightful and intellectually stimulating afternoon. Thanks again for coming to York. It holds great meaning for us to see members of the community to come to our campus. It's a very, very special thing. Thank you for coming, and I'll see you again soon. Thank you.

Yoni Goldstein: Thanks again to all of you who braved the elements to be here today, and those of you who were smart enough to not remove your snow tires yet, an extra point there. Let me tell you a little bit about the organization of the afternoon, and then I'll introduce our panelists, and then we'll take it from there. We're going to start with opening statements from each of our panelists. They'll be given 15 minutes to take on the question, Trudeau good for the Jews, in whatever interpretation they choose. After that, there will be a short question and answer time that I will facilitate myself, and then we will open it up to questions from the audience. I hope we'll have time to take all the questions that any of you might have. I'll remind you now that when you do stand up to ask your question, and there are two microphones here for you to do so, please form it in the way of a question, and avoid a statement or any sort of magilla kind of ... A magilla.

In any case, our three panelists today. Karen Mock is a community activist, former National Director of the League of Human Rights of B'Nai Brith, and the liberal candidate for Thorn Hill in the 2011 Federal Election. She's also a program chair at Jspace, the Jewish progressive organization in Canada, and former Executive Director of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation. Karen, welcome. Next to Karen is Michael Taube, who is a CJNI columnist and a Troy Media syndicated columnist, a contributor to the Washington Times, and a speech writer for the former Prime Minister, Stephen Harper. Michael Tove. At the far end of the table is Jonathan Kay, journalist, author, and editor-in-chief of The Walrus, and the editorial assistant on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's 2015 memoir. Jonathan Kay. The order for the opening statements will be Karen, followed by Jonathan, followed by Michael, so Karen, the stage is yours.

Karen Mock: Thank you very much, Yoni. Thank you also to all of you who are here, and found your way here on this difficult day. I worked in this university for eight years, and I still don't know my way around! The saying that comes to mind when I think of my participation on this panel is "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." Because I'm appearing on the panel with -- I was going to say two, but it's actually three journalists, writers, wordsmiths, pundits, political commentators, who know how to use sound bytes very effectively to get their points across. In fact, once when I had to take a three hour lunch to explain something to Jonathan, when we had a disagreement, he responded: "What do you want? I'm a gadfly!"

I was trained not as a writer or a political pundit, but as an academic, a psychologist, an educator, a human rights activist -- used to going into depth with explanations, and references -- six ways to Sunday sometime. And my husband, and son, and others in the family who are here today know how sometimes I agonize -- it's like cutting the umbilical cord before I'll let an article go. So, a couple of disclaimers first -- because I can't speak in sound bytes, and I'm not a gadfly, and this whole area is so fraught with language issues and interpretation of a phrase or a word is important. One, as you can already tell, I'm going to run out of time. It's the explanations and the nuances that are important in this work, and they are difficult to communicate in a sound byte.

I won't take it personally when you give me the two-minute warning. My colleagues said they're each only going to speak for seven or eight minutes, so maybe I can use some of their time later. The second disclaimer is one I often use when I'm asked to speak on antisemitism, race relations, hate crimes, some of the other areas in which I work, and you know that there are people who are very skilled in the audience, and very up to date on the work that you're doing. If someone uses a word that isn't quite right, I've seen people's careers lost on that, because of the reaction. Here's the disclaimer: I know you think you understand what you thought I said, but what you do not realize is what you heard me say is not what I meant! I put that up at the

beginning of every anti-racism, anti-oppression lecture, because if I use a word, and someone else has another meaning for it, in a debate, or if

they want to argue with you, or want to fight with you, for example, if they're political opponents, then they don't care what your actual intention was in using that word. Not like the judge, who has to understand in hate crime that it's the intent and motivation that's important, right? Not just the impact. That's why if we want a win/ lose situation, then people don't care what the actual intention, or (dare I say) what the truth is. They use their own interpretation, and then go for the jugular. Real understanding is not the goal. Winning the argument is. That's not what I do. That's not what psychologists do. That's not what mediators do. That's not what people who really want a win/win situation do. In this case, it's good for the Jews if it is a win/win.

Good for the Jews? First, I had to think, what are the Jewish values? To me, good for the Jews, reminds me of my uncles listening to the hockey game during the Seder. They'd come running shouting, "The Leafs just scored, and the Leafs just won!" and my Zada would say "Yes, but is it good for the Jews?"

What does it mean? Here are some of the values listed when you look up 'Jewish values' (on Google -- where else do we do quick research these days?):

- love your neighbor, your friend like yourself.
- All Jews are interconnected, in other words, 'klal Yisrael'
- Peace in the home, 'shalom bayit' – that is, peace amongst ourselves
- The importance of the Jewish community, and its survival.
- Helping the downtrodden, heal the world – 'tikuun olam'
- Do justice - act righteously. We say 'tzedek, tzedek tirdof'. But why do we say 'tzedek' twice? Because we must be righteous righteously – the end does not justify the means.
- Acts of loving kindness – 'gimulut hasadim'

These are the values that I strive. Good manners is another one that was listed in one of the sites – behaving like a 'mensch,' and the importance of the family is also mentioned frequently.

There are many articles about why American Jews tend also to be liberal, or progressive, or democratic. Not so many on why Canadian Jews did. I'm using past tense, but now many are coming back. Most articles repeat the values. The Judeo-Christian ethics, for example, which have deeply impacted our Western world. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and also our matriarchs, introduced the elemental concepts of civilization, says Jonathan Bernice. Love your neighbour, care for the poor, and establish justice. These are the themes you see repeated over and over in reviewing the literature on Jewish values. The great rabbis have told us: The world rests on three things - justice, truth, and peace.

To the actual topic of Trudeau. Is he good for the Jews? In other words, are the Liberals good for the Jews? Full disclosure - yes, I've been a lifelong Liberal, and full disclosure also, I'm a bit of a hoarder and a pack rat of things that I really treasure – such as these magazines. I'm an old teacher, so "show and tell" is important. Here it is - A Maclean's special issue - 1968 to '78, the Trudeau Decade. It was 1968, when I was watching that first major televised convention, that my real political awareness happened. It's what Hesh Troper called the defining decade, the sixties. Before that, I just knew to be a Liberal was good for the Jews, but watching that convention and following Pierre Trudeau's contributions, I began to understand why. Not long ago, Maclean's featured Justin Trudeau on the cover. Let's hope that in ten years, we'll have another special issue on his decade in office.

When I asked a major Jewish philanthropist what would he say to answer today's question, his answer was, "Justin Trudeau is a decent person, and therefore, good for the Jews." I thought, that's always been my experience, my personal experience with Justin Trudeau. He is a 'mensch' ! But what is a 'mensch'? Again, to Google. A mensch is a person who is decent, honest, upstanding, all around good guy. One of the people wrote that a mensch is someone who can be trusted, and who does good things. A mensch has strength, integrity, honesty, compassion. Also in preparing, I read some of the works of my co-panelists. When I Googled Justin Trudeau, right under Jonathan Kay's piece entitled, "The Justin Trudeau I can't forget," I found Chris Turner's article on Justin Trudeau that was called, "The Nicest Guy in the Room."

Turner's article was written a few days after the election, referring to Trudeau as a "quintessential Canadian nice guy". Some of the words used in there were sincerity, decency, respect for our differences, collaborative

politics, willing to strive towards unity. Some of those very same adjectives were used by my colleague Jonathan as well. The fact is that our prime minister seems to be the same Justin Trudeau that I first met several years ago and got to know quite well through my own campaign. For one thing, at the caucus meetings, he was always welcoming and friendly to the newcomer. He attended my workshop on the importance multiculturalism, diversity, and equity, and why any political leader really had to understand what those terms meant. And he was extremely receptive.

By the way, multiculturalism, to which some writers say, "Oh, why are the Jews so interested in multiculturalism, diversity, and equity? They're pushing these liberal values down our throat, and reacting to them. Why? Because they will not define them in the way they're meant to be defined." When Pierre Elliot Trudeau created the policy of multiculturalism on the floor of the house, in 1971 (and by the way, it was the Conservatives who enshrined the policy into law through the Multiculturalism Act of 1988), it was good for the Jews then, and is still good for the Jews. Those Trudeau-esque policies were, and continue to be, good for the Jews. But you know, because you have heard, that Justin Trudeau is his own man. He is building on the Canadian values which our country has come to be known for, many of which happen to have been promoted by his father. Canadians are the ones in the UN who were known for the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And we are the ones who continue to be internationally known for our commitment to equality and human rights through our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, again from the Trudeau era.

From the policy of multiculturalism to understanding the importance of religious freedom, and the importance of bringing communities together, not dividing them apart, not the politics of hatred, and fear, and divisiveness. It is not good for the Jews, for our community, to be divided -- when what I believe most of us really do want is safety and security for the State of Israel, safety and security for Jews here in this country, and the ability to be strategic, and have the representation on the world stage, and in this country, to bring people together. There are people in the audience I recognize who know about mediation, and psychology, and how you actually bring people to the table.

I'm not talking about what Dante says, that is, "If you are neutral on a moral issue, that can pave the way to hell." It's not neutrality when we speak of the importance of being an honest broker. Trudeau, in his own words, has talked about having Israel's back, making sure that we are an ally to that democracy. This is good for the Jews.

What else is good for the Jews? Evidence-based decision-making. In other words, the long form census being brought back, so that we can make strategic decisions. In science, allowing freedom of expression, unmuzzling the scientist, as an important article said recently. Social justice agenda for aboriginal peoples, immigration, refugee policies. It is important that these policies have been shifted back recently. Had the Conservative approach to immigration and refugees been the same policies when your parents and grandparents came to this country, we wouldn't be here today. The policies under Trudeau, of welcoming the stranger (a Jewish value) as long as they do adhere to the rules of the land (also a Jewish value) -- is where we come from -- policies that are good for Jews.

Another Trudeau approach -- honouring and valuing expertise, letting his ministers with expertise and credibility speak out, letting scientists who are experts speak out, letting civil servants who have known the field, and are trained in a field, speak out. Equity and human rights agenda, for women, because it's 2015! Diversity, respect, acceptance, true meaning of multiculturalism. And also good for the Jews: continuing Canada's support of Israel as a real friend, who knows how to achieve peace. Returning to the world stage with credibility on issues of climate change. More menschlich behavior in politics -- also good for the Jews. Truth, accountability, collegiality, access. I'm going to have to stop now, as my time has run out. Clearly, I have more to say, and I hope that our discussion will bring that about. And I am looking forward to the next several years, with our community coming together as well.

I did have a series of quotes from Avi Benlolo, and Shimon Fogel, speaking about how they can count on the Trudeau government to continue support of Israel; and how right now, we need to give chance to our new prime minister, and help this government ensure that what happens is indeed good for us -- because what is good for all of Canada, is good for the Jews. Thank you.

Jonathan Kay: Thank you very much, Karen. Karen talked about mediation, psychology, and bringing people together. I kind of do the opposite of that, so we'll get to some variation in my remarks. It's no secret that I supported Trudeau

a little bit from an editorial point of view, and I do support a lot of his policies. I do think it's kind of sentimental, though, to say, "Well, you know, anything that's good for refugees, and good for first nations, and good for oppressed peoples, is good for the Jews," because that was true 50 years ago. It's not true now. Broadly speaking, the Jewish community rightly self-identified as being more of the victim side of society in the early and middle part of the twentieth century.

I think a lot of the political alliances that Canadian Jews made, including being instrumental in the creation of human rights panels, tribunals, in the United States, marching with civil rights demonstrators, being extremely supportive, that reflected not only the Jewish tradition of social justice, but also the very real fact that, especially in the early part of the twentieth century, and part of my background as a Jew, you had many disadvantaged Jews who grew up in ghettos. First and second generation Jews in this country often were very poor. You still have some poor Jews in Canada, but not as many, proportionately. Jewish self-identification with the oppressed classes in Western societies was quite prevalent.

I think it is still there as a historical memory, and as a sort of conceit that exists in synagogue sermons, when it comes to social justice and whatnot. The fact is that from a socioeconomic point of view, Jews are among the wealthiest people, statistically speaking, in Canadian society. They've entered the halls of power in business, in law, in academia, to a certain extent, even in politics. From a strictly socioeconomic point of view, it is not true that policies that are good for the oppressed peoples, and for refugees, and for first nations, are good for the Jews. It's actually the opposite. It's actually the tax money of people in this room that will go toward places like Attawapiskat and whatnot.

I don't necessarily disagree with those policies. I think as a voter, as a humanitarian, as a journalist, I support a thick social safety net. I support policies that help the poorest and most disadvantaged people in society, but I don't do that as a Jew. I do that as a humanitarian, and I think in fact, if you look at the socioeconomic of the Canadian Jewish community, it's completely against our interests, in most cases, to have a thick social safety net, because we are so disproportionately represented in the upper echelons of society. That's my completely unsentimental view of whether left to center progressive socioeconomic policies are actually good for the Jews. I think maybe 50 years ago, you could make that case. Now I don't think you can.

However, I want to step back and look at the title of the panel. I did get the joke. At least one, is it good for the Jews? My own grandparents actually told their non-ironic version of that joke when I was a kid, and they came by it honestly, because their families had come from Europe, and they were quite right to see any kind of development as potential ominous, whether it would rile up this or that constituency against Jews, the historical memory of the Cossacks, and the Pogroms. Of course, the much more horrifying massacres that they took place in Europe were very fresh in their memories. It is natural to look at any kind of historical development, or any kind of political development, and ask, are there any negative repercussions for the Jews?

I think the terms of reference have changed. 50 years ago, when you asked if something was good for the Jews, you would talk about antisemitism. You would talk about real, physical threats to Jews. I'm going back centuries. Cromwell was good for the Jews. He rescinded laws that had been around since the thirteenth century in Britain against Jews. Napoleon Bonaparte was good for the Jews, because he took the Jews out of the French ghetto. Even going into the twentieth century, certainly there were many leaders you could ask that question of. If you look at the Canada that exists today, it's just taken for granted among every leader, of every province, every mayor, certainly everybody who is elected Prime Minister, that broadly speaking, they are going to sing from the same songbook when it comes to tolerance, and multiculturalism, and zero tolerance towards antisemitism.

We don't have to worry. Whoever we elect, whether we elect at the NDP, or re-elect the conservatives, or Trudeau, it's not like we were going to get the Nuremberg Laws, right? We live in an enlightened age, when thankfully, antisemitism is at a very low ebb, at least in mainstream society. To a certain extent, we have reinterpreted the question of whether things are good for the Jews through the idiom of Zionism. Often, when you heard people going door-to-door knocking through Toronto, or any other major Canadian city during the last election campaign, which I did. As a reporter, I followed around a few candidates. When people talked about whether something was good for the Jews, it was generally a code word for, "Is it good for our complete support of Israel? Will this compromise our support of Israel?"

That just wasn't the case 50 years ago. 50 years ago, when we said, "Is it good for Jews?" We were actually talking about Jews, the kind with bodies, and heads, and arms, and legs. Now, is it good for the Jews, at least in the idiom of Western politics, tends to be, is it good for the Zionist cause? That's a very important coded phrase that has entered our political dialogue, and I don't think it's an entirely healthy thing, because it conflates the idea of being Jewish with being a Zionist. You saw those one very symbolic episode that happened during the last election campaign in Montreal, where there was ... I don't think it was the candidate himself, but a representative for the candidate who was going in a Jewish rioting. Was it Litman? It was in Montreal.

Pointed to the mezuzah, and basically said, "Well, you know where your bread is buttered. You gotta vote conservative." All the attention was paid in York Center here in Toronto, but Montreal had a few episodes like that, and this was one of them. The idea of tapping the mezuzah and say, "Well, we all know which way you're gonna vote," was essentially saying, "You are going to vote according to whoever is the most unapologetic Zionist." That was very much a theme of many of the supporters of Harper during the last election campaign, which is something I didn't particularly appreciate, both as a Canadian and as a Jew.

We take a lot of this for granted now. I think the rhetoric was extremely skill during the last election campaign, but the buildup of fervor in the Jewish community in regard to the Zionist cause is something that has ... It's been a slow build, but it's particularly been the case since 9-11, and I think it's worth taking a step back to look at how that's happened. I am old enough to remember back in the day, when old-school anti-Semites would look at Jewish voters, and they would suspect them of being kind of fifth columnists, much in the same way that JFK once was suspected of taking secret orders from the Vatican. It was always this kind of Protocols of the Elders of Zion idea in old school anti-Semites that we weren't real Canadian citizens, that we had this dual-loyalty. It wasn't necessarily to Israel, but it was some sort of smoke-filled room of Jewish financiers, Rothchild conspiracy theories, that sort of thing.

The idea was, among anti-Semites, that a Jew could never be a true patriot of a Western country, whether it was Canada or the United States. 9-11 changed all that, because 9-11, the enemy became militant Islam, and of course, the Israelis, and by extension the Jews, have been fighting militant Islam for many decades. Particularly in the United States, you saw this incredible convergence between full-throated, bumper sticker patriotism among gentiles, and mainstream Jewish organizations who were only too happy to get the most powerful nation on earth to join them in fighting against Hamas, and all the other militant Islamist organizations. Suddenly, in US and Canadian foreign policy circles, to be a mainstream Zionist Jew was to sort of be an ultra-patriot.

You saw here in Toronto and Montreal, a lot of the speaking events organized in synagogues tended to be mainstream foreign policy figures who wanted to invade Iraq, and were extremely hawkish in support of the Republicans, and this confluence between mainstream Jewry and hawkish, militaristic patriotism in Western countries. That was something that was quite new. This was completely at variance with what had happened before 9-11. The idea of whether this or that development, whether it's good for the Jews, it was now taken for the granted that the Jews have been permitted into the halls of power, including into the Bush administration, the elite foreign policy halls of power. Now it's a question of, is it good for the Jews? Is it good for the fight for Israel's survival, and for Israel's interest in Western capitals?

As I said, I don't think this is a completely healthy thing. I think Harper took it a step further, because he realized that he could use Israel as a proxy issue. A lot of people accused Harper of sucking up to Jewish voters. He had this massive caravan to Israel. I think he took more than 100 people. The whole thing had kind of a music festival aspect to it, and people accused him of ingratiating himself to Jewish voters. It wasn't just to Jewish voters, because it's a proxy issue. When you say that you support Israel, you say many other things as well. You say that you're active in the war on terror. You say that you're against political correctness. You're basically sticking the middle finger to the United Nations. You're basically saying you hate moral relativism. You're criticizing implicitly the liberal agenda of being an honest broker, in regard to Palestinians, and Jews.

There's a whole bunch of very sensitive issues that you can address by proxy, if you're a Canadian politician, just by exhibiting full-throated support for Israel. Harper understood this, and I think it was one of the effective things he did in mobilizing the right side of the electorate. Trudeau has backed away from this, but what's interesting is, if you looked at how shrill was the debate between supporters of Trudeau and supporters of Harper in places like Forest Hill during the last election campaign, you would think that Trudeau was, that his

rhetoric was completely anti-Zionist, that he was a supporter of BDS, that he was a Naomi Klein, hard left, boat to Gaza type. People actually got on the street and protested at fundraising events. The rhetoric was extremely misleading.

If you looked at the stuff that Trudeau actually said, both in public and in person ... I spent some time with him during this editorial project. The fact of the matter is, I think Trudeau's views on Israel are probably very similar to many of the people in this room. He thinks Israel certainly has the right to safe, independent existence as a Jewish state. He's not as maniacal about it as Harper. He's not as obsessive about it. He doesn't see it as a huge wedge issue, but he takes as his baseline the idea that it's a completely legitimate state, that it's our ally, and that he doesn't really have to say a lot about it, because he takes it for granted that most Canadians agree with him. I think most Canadians do agree with him.

When I talk to Jewish groups, sometimes they talk about how antisemitic Canadian society is, and often they're describing a society that exists many years ago. I like to remind people that when I got into journalism, I guess it was 15 years ago, there was a guy named Sven Robinson, who was the foreign policy critic for the NDP. This is a guy who would go to Ramallah, and kiss Arafat's ring. He was just an absolute cartoon caricature of a naïve, left wing BDS-type, anti-Israel figure, and this guy was fairly senior within the NDP ranks. The idea of Sven Robinson, a guy like him having a voice in any major political party in Canada now is completely laughable.

Justin Trudeau's foreign policy reflects the fact that the entire baseline of Canadian foreign policy has moved in a pro-Israel direction. Not just under Harper, also under Paul Martin. Paul Martin was the guy who originally started changing our voting records to the United Nations. Trudeau has made no effort to change that back. I have seen no major overtures on his part, saying, "Well, you know, we're gonna open up some kind of Consular office in Jerusalem or anything like that. He's completely mainstream in his views, and I don't think he just thinks that much about it. I think 95% of Justin Trudeau's brain is on things like income inequality, and rebuilding Fort Mack, and stuff that he was elected to do as a Canadian politician. I don't think he is nearly as obsessed with geopolitics and spiritual and religious matters as Harper was.

Frankly, I think that's a good thing. I think that the Jewish community got played by Harper during the last election. I think he used the Jewish community as a schism issue. As I said, I think he used the issue of Israel as a proxy issue, to show everybody how hard ass he was on things like militant Islam, and political correctness, and the hijab, and the niqab, and whatnot. Frankly, I think if Justin Trudeau talks one tenth as much about Israel as Harper did, but he follows more or less the same policies, because that's kind of where the baseline of middle of the road Canadian foreign policy has moved gradually in the last 15 years, frankly, I think that's a good thing for everybody, including the Jews. Thank you.

Michael Taub: Thanks very much. Now comes the Debbie downer of the panel. The good news is, if anyone thinks that I'm going to come here and start saying that Justin Trudeau is either anti-Israel, or antisemitic, or anything of that nature, you have nothing to worry about. I'm not going to. To be fair with you, I really don't know at this stage, six months into a new government, exactly where Justin Trudeau stands on all the issues, and nobody would. When I worked for Harper, for example, I started with him about five to six weeks into it. I went well past the six month point, and I wouldn't know exactly where they were going. We have three and a half more years to determine how much more trouble, sorry, how much more good the Trudeau government is going to do for this country.

The question of whether Trudeau is good for the Jews, even though it's tongue in cheek, is kind of hard for me to answer personally. If you've ever read my work, I actually regard myself as agnostic. I have not regarded myself as Jewish in a long time - and for that reason, I've never felt the need to speak for a community when it doesn't speak for me. Again, it's not a bad feeling, and I don't hold any animosity or anything like that. That's just my own personal belief. At the same time, I think we also have to be a little bit careful about talking about whether you're "good" for a particular community. You see, people in politics, we look at the grand scheme of things. We look at it for Canadians. Jews are a component of it, and obviously a very important component. But in general, you have to look at it as whether it's not just good for the Jews, but whether it's good for Canadians as a whole.

The difference between Stephen Harper and Justin Trudeau on Israel, as the two speakers before me have said, is actually very clear. I know a lot of people say, as Jon did, that the 2011 federal election was used as a

wedge issue. That suddenly, magically, they used Jews against everything else. I knew Stephen Harper long before I was his speechwriter. I've known him for over 20 years. I first met him when he was a Reform Party MP, just about to leave due to massive disagreements with Preston Manning. He moved on to the National Citizens' Coalition, where he eventually became the vice president first, and then the president, until he eventually came back into politics for the Canadian Alliance leadership.

I can honestly say to you that Stephen Harper's position on Jewish Canadians, and on Israel, has always been, since day one, principled. The very first time I met him in 1996, we actually talked about this issue. Not in the present context, but in the context that existed. He does definitely care. He has always cared about Jewish Canadians. That was one thing you never had to worry about. You actually did have a friend that way. Yes, it started due to his father Joe, who was very much a philo-Semite, and obviously Stephen Harper followed suit. But he was a friend of the Jews, he did believe in Israel, and he did believe in this community. There is no question of that. As for Justin Trudeau, I have no doubt that he is supportive of Israel in his own way. I also believe that he's supportive of Canadian Jews in his own way. I just think that his way is very different than the way conservatives, and certainly the way I, look at it.

Again, as I said, six months into a government, I can't prophesize. I don't have a crystal ball, and I don't know where things are going. But I'd like to leave you with four points. They're very cursory at this stage and, like Karen said, I'm a bit of a wordsmith. So, if I look at certain words, and I don't like them, yes, I do use them to twist, and yes, I do use them to my advantage. It's what I like to do. I do think that some of these things actually show, in my opinion, where things are going to go with this Liberal government, and quite possibly, with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. They're in no particular order, and they're just things simply to think about.

As you may know, in November of 2015, not long after the October 19 Federal Election, Foreign Affairs Minister Stephane Dion was asked some questions about Israel and the Middle East. One of the things he said, although he's walked it back a little bit, is that he wanted to be an "honest broker" with Israel. I don't think I have to explain to a room of people such as yourselves, who are intelligent and thoughtful individuals, what an honest broker means, and how different it was than what Stephen Harper did. From the moment he came into office, he was actually faced with issues involving Hamas, Hezbollah and others, where he had to make stern decisions not just for the betterment of Canada, but also for the betterment of Jewish Canadians as well.

What is an honest broker? Well, I'll give you an American comparison: our good buddy, Donald Trump. I don't like him either, if it makes you feel better. Donald Trump actually made a very similar comment, not long ago, to Justin Trudeau. He said that when he deals with Israel, he is going to be a "neutral broker." Neutral broker versus honest broker. If you voted for Justin Trudeau, and if you're happy with the term honest broker, well, you must be very happy with the term neutral broker, too. I would actually argue that Donald Trump, believe it or not, for all the craziness and zaniness we've seen with him, he actually has been supportive of Israel and Jewish Americans, too, which is kind of fascinating. I can tell you that the term "honest broker" would never, ever in my time there, or long after I left, have ever happened under Stephen Harper. But it has happened under Justin Trudeau.

Second point. The International Holocaust Day press release. Happened on January 27. It's a nice press release. All governments do it, no matter who is in power, be it Tory, Liberal, NDP, Green, whomever. You put these things out. Had a nice spin on it, talked about the issue importantly. Excitable nature, pleasant nature - wonderful. There was this one little tiny thing missing...well, actually, a few tiny things. The big one was, nobody was mentioned in it. The Jews were not mentioned in International Holocaust Day. Anyone who was involved in some sort of a Holocaust was not even mentioned in the press release. The Liberals apologized very quickly for it and took it back to some degree, and said that we didn't vet it properly, etc. Do I believe it was an oversight? Sure.

I can tell you, under Stephen Harper's administration, had that sort of drivel - and it is drivel - had it gone out, it would not only pull back. The person who was a part of it either would've been...God knows what would've happened to him or her, or they would've been fired. Certainly, they would've been reprimanded. Again, was it an accident? Is it a new government? Of course. But other governments, including the one I worked for, also dealt with International Holocaust Day. And I can say to you quite clearly, this would never, ever have happened under Stephen Harper. But it did happen under Justin Trudeau. Third one, which doesn't directly involve Jews, but I think does involve foreign policy, security, safety, is the ending of the airstrike mission against ISIS. Like I said, that's not directly involving Jews, and I wouldn't say that.

The six fighter jets, even though it's obviously not the biggest impact and it's not going to make Canada a world leader on the stage in this battle, was an important symbol of what Stephen Harper believed in, was security, safety, and freedom. All of those things combined. Yes, I know that the Justin Trudeau Liberals have said that they're going to train people on the ground. You have to think about the training. They're going to do it for sure, but it's training others to go fight the battle, and possibly get killed. Canadian troops are not going to fight the battle - and in fairness, yes, American troops are not fighting the battle, the German troops are not fighting the battle, the UK troops are not fighting the battle. But you're training others, whereas the fighter jets would've had far more, in my opinion, of a Canadian role, and would've given us more of an identity in this battle against this terrible scourge, which must be wiped off the face of the map. So, it is different.

Now, does it mean that security and safety are not a priority for Justin Trudeau? Of course not. Obviously, he's interested in it to some extent. Obviously, they're going to do things as they see fit. Over the next three and a half years, there could be a lot of interesting things that pop up - that I certainly can't predict, and none of us can predict - where he might have to take a different stand. Again, think about it. We were the ones who suggested putting the fighter jets in. They're the ones taking it back. Again, this would never, ever have happened under Stephen Harper. But it has happened under Justin Trudeau. And fourth, it was interesting that Karen mentioned it. I didn't think I was actually going to get it, but she actually gave me a bit of a leeway: the Office of Religious Freedom being closed.

Again, this does not deal with Jews. Jews live freely in this society. We are allowed to practice our religion, as Christians are, as Muslims are, and many others. The Office of Religious Freedom, or for religious freedom, was really a very small piece of the Harper government puzzle. It was manned by one person, who happened to be, and some people were critical of this, happened to be a Catholic. My God, a Catholic manning an office for religious freedom! As if you can't give it to someone like that, or someone like-minded. Obviously, while the Office of Religious Freedom didn't cost a lot of money, wouldn't have had a major impact, and probably would not have issued a lot of press releases and done a lot of things, it was just a basic symbol of how important it is to have a free and democratic society in this country.

Why the Trudeau Liberals made this such an issue, I'm quite frankly not sure. It's a shame, because for such a little bit of money, and such a little bit of time, we could've had something that I think most people in this room would say that religious freedom is a good thing. It is something that makes us Canadian, something that makes us North American, something that makes us democrats. Again, for all this, it would never, ever have happened under Stephen Harper. It would never have closed. But it did happen under Justin Trudeau and the liberals. It was closed on March 31. In conclusion, you have to think about these things, to me. Justin Trudeau obviously is our prime minister. We should support him on issues which make sense.

I was happy, for example, when he removed income splitting. If anyone ever saw when I was a Sun Media columnist, I called it "socialism for the wealthy." And it was, because only 15% roughly of society would've benefited from it. In the same sense, we also have a prime minister who comes out and says we're going to run three consecutive federal deficits, and almost puts the amount of money into the first one. Who removes the TFSAs, the tax-free savings accounts, the benefits that would go up, which would've helped everybody - not just in this room, but in the country. On economic issues, informed policy issues, on a lot of different issues, he is very, very different than Stephen Harper, and we knew that was going to happen.

On Israel, he will be supportive in his own way. He will obviously defend Jewish Canadians in his own way, and he will attend synagogues. He will join you. He will break bread with you, as he did with Karen and many others, and that's fine. There is a big difference between the way today's conservatives, and today's Tories, look at Israel, versus the way today's Liberals look at Israel. Both will defend it, but both look at it with a very different eye. Thank you.

Yoni:

Okay. Now the fun part. I'm going to start, as I mentioned, by asking a couple questions, and then we'll open it up to the audience, so please be patient. We will get your questions. Let's start with foreign policy, which is something that you all mentioned in some way. Clearly, the Trudeau government is making an effort to reengage on foreign policy in the UN, and trying to change Canada's standing, or as they would put it, Canada's standing now versus what it was during the Harper years. They've talked about vying for a security council seat in the future, and they've also spoken up for Israel when there have been anti-Israel resolutions at

the UN. The question is, is this renewed focus on foreign policy, or a change in focus on foreign policy, is that good for the Jews? Is that good for Israel? Let's start with Jonathan.

Jonathan: In terms of foreign policy, is it okay if I just make a naked segue to rebut some of Michael's points?

It is on point for foreign policy. The "honest broker" comment that Michael was talking about ... come on... let's be real about who Stephane Dion is. He's a failed party leader. He's kind of a leftover who's been given a cabinet post, speaking in his second language, grabbing into his 20-year-old bag of clichés. "Oh, diversity, tolerance. Oh, honest broker. That'll do." That's kind of what Michael was talking about. Did he say it? Probably. Probably said a lot of other stupid things. By the way, Stephane Dion was the guy who, in Parliament, when he was confronted on the Afghan detainee issue, and the conservatives made fun of him for essentially wanting the legal equivalent of bringing these people back to Canada, he got all flustered and called everybody in Parliament bullies. This is kind of the level of rhetorical sophistication that he exhibits.

I don't hang a lot of stock on the fact that he used the phrase "honest broker," which by the way, I agree with Michael, is just kind of the worst cliché from the nineties era. International Holocaust Day, some press release drafted by a 22-year-old hipster, didn't have Jews in it. Okay. This is probably someone who couldn't tell a Jew from a Lutheran, because some post-religious millennial wrote it, and Gerry Butts didn't look at it before it went out. Yeah. Okay. That happened, I'm sure. The ISIS mission. This is a very interesting example when it comes to foreign policy, because I, too agree that that was bad. He came in, and he said, "You know, this is the one little thing we're doing to fight radical Islam in a very muscular way, and we're going to stop it."

That, to my mind, aroused, an "uh-oh." Everyone said Dion was just basically an undergraduate campus pacifist, and I defended Trudeau against that. Look, he's done something that's consistent with the caricature, but it's a little more complex than that. From an Israeli point of view - because this is about Israel - people in this room heard maybe yesterday about the killing of Mustafa Badreddine, who was the top Hezbollah commander, from Hezbollah operating in Syria. That guy was killed by an artillery shell from a Sunni jihadist group much like ISIS. I think it might've been the Al Mujra Front, or something like it. They segmented into different groups, but it's not quite clear to me that it's actually in Israel's interest to start bombing Sunni groups, when it's the Sunni groups who are keeping Hezbollah in check.

Hezbollah has lost one of 1,000 fighters in Syria. Hezbollah has basically been transformed from the greatest paramilitary threat against Israel into just another group that's gotten caught up in the bloodshed of Syria. If I were an IDF commander, I'd want that war to go on for about another 500 years. Even the ISIS mission, that I kind of agree with Michael on principle, it's not clear from Israel's point of view whether Canada putting a short end to the Iraqi-Syrian, cross border Sunni, Shiite bloodshed is necessarily such a good or bad thing. One final thing. The office of religious freedom, the idea being that Canada is going to use this office to promote religious freedom around the world ... Of course we all like religious freedom. It's a fantastic thing.

The reason the liberals closed it was because it was essentially used as a way to get Ahmadiyya Muslims, to get Ismaili Muslims, to get the kind of groups that the conservatives had been using as wedge groups within ethno-religious communities on this side for photo ops. The liberals saw it as a very cynical thing, and they closed it for that reason, I'd say largely for partisan reasons. In theory, religious freedom, obviously it's a great thing. Like everything under the conservatives, it was turned into an excuse for photo ops, and cynical partisan posturing, as all governments eventually do. Conservatives are no different in that respect. Harper had a long history of taking good sounding ideas, and turning them into grubby partisan campaigns. When another government takes over, it's natural that they're going to say, "Out with the grubby," which is what Trudeau did.

Yoni: Michael, do you want to respond?

Michael: Sure. I don't want to just go back and forth with Jon, and ignore Karen completely, but-

Karen: I'm used to it.

Michael: Yeah. All right. Okay - then I will! Fine. Look, with foreign affairs, yeah, I agree with you that Stephane Dion has a bad history of doing a lot of silly things. And because of his language issues, we all know what happened

with Mike Duffy during the 2008 campaign and CTV News - where I used to be a pundit - that was actually obviously a very big issue which showed that when it comes to being bilingual, he really wasn't. At the same time, I think we still have to keep in mind, John, that he is the foreign affairs minister. It may be simply that he was the last around, or that he's an elder, and he deserves that post. He still has it, it's still important, and it's still an issue that I think is very major in this country. So, really, doesn't that actually show that Justin Trudeau, Gerald Butts, Katie Telford, and others should've picked someone else?

Jonathan: Maybe, but "honest broker," that phrase did not appear in Justin Trudeau's very fine book, which is still on bookshelves.

Michael: In your chapters, I presume. Yes.

Jonathan: Just for what it's worth, I'm not sure that that phrase has ever escaped Justin Trudeau's lips personally.

Michael: No, and that's why I said it was Dion's. Exactly.

Jonathan: Right.

Michael: Look, in terms of the International Holocaust press release, was it probably a 22-year-old, or something of that nature who did it? Yeah, I would think so. At the same time, from the PMO that I worked for, here's how we vetted things. There were a lot of twenty-somethings in the PMO. The Prime Minister's Office, in my day, we calculated the average age was about 26. I was 36. I was old in the Prime Minister's Office, which is kind of scary. Even if it was a twenty-something who wrote it, it was vetted by senior people. It was vetted by a manager. It was then eventually sent off to another layer, possibly an Ian Brodie, or a Ray Novak, or someone of that nature, if you know these names. They would then vet it, and it would go on and on, until ... It was possible, sometimes Stephen Harper would look at these things, not always, but there were a lot of senior people involved.

To say that it was a twenty-something, they weren't ready, they made a mistake, I'm not saying they didn't make a mistake. They might've. But come on, really? When you've seen how a machine like the Tories worked for nearly ten years, plus you had Jean Chretien, Paul Martin, and others who were also very effective in the way they handled press releases and other media relations. That's bad form. It really is. And look, if it's the only time it happens, fine. To me, it sets a very bad precedent that one of the first important releases you put out, you blunder badly. Just very quickly, and I'll let Karen talk. For the United Nations, I think everyone sort of looks at things a little differently, obviously. The UN is not really a great area for conservatives. We don't personally like the fact that there are a lot of rogue states and totalitarian nations who've taken over the ABC's, which are the agencies, boards, and commissions of the United Nations. Many of us feel that the United Nations is a failed experiment, and I'm one of them.

It's obvious that Justin Trudeau is going to look at foreign affairs in a very different way. Which means that probably you're going to have the similar give and take when the Liberals, one of these days, lose an election, and maybe the Tories are the next ones to come back. I think you will see a different way of viewing things about the United Nations and other places. Finally, as one last thing, just to put out for climate change, because that was one of the big things Justin Trudeau was big on, it's nice to pay lip service to this, folks. It's nice to say how important climate change is, but keep this in mind. No matter how many times Kate McKenna and other people speak out about it, if China, Russia, and the other big countries, the world's biggest polluters, don't change their policies, none of this matters.

Karen: Thank you, Michael, for giving me the entry word now, which is 'lip service'. Let's talk about lip service. I am an educator, as I've told you, and today, we've heard a lot, and we hear it in politics, too, about outcomes-based learning. Outcomes-based, evidence-based, and so on. I think you used the word "symbol" two or three times in your points. It's a symbol. It's a symbol. It's not a lot of money. It's a symbol. It's only six planes. It's a symbol. Symbol can be optics. So can rhetoric be optics. I personally loved hearing the kinds of things that Stephen Harper said, and still says, about Israel, and the importance of the struggle against antisemitism, and what you're calling a very important press release about Holocaust Remembrance Day. I think it's important, and it's important for our feelings, but in the scheme of things, yes, you've got to get it right. But if it's in your first few months, you make a mistake like that, and it'll never happen again.

But the rhetoric about Israel was optics. It's language, words -- and that has not made any difference to the actual peace process on the ground. It hasn't enhanced the safety and security of the State of Israel. It's made us really feel good. But it was 'lip service' and symbolic. It would make us feel good to hear any Western leader say those things. It makes me feel good when I hear Trudeau say exactly the same things. Let me define for you what honest broker actually means, because yes, you can use your own terminology, honest broker ... I said clearly, it doesn't mean neutral. Here is a definition. You'll get the reference if we do our scholarly piece for the transcript. Honest broker: Creating conditions to convene warring factions, and bring them to peaceful diplomacy. Increasing the ability to lead, and to draw participants together to mediate solutions, to complicated conflicts. Examples. In Africa, the Middle East, and Afghanistan.

I personally want an honest broker to be brokering my insurance, to be brokering my finances. I want an honest broker bringing warring factions, who is respected with a credibility on both sides. Not neutral, knowing full well that we are going to as a Canadian government work to protect the safety and security of the State of Israel, its right to defend itself, and we'll choose good over evil every time. However, a wise man said to me the other night, "Having a different approach does not mean that you're not a strong supporter of Israel. Being a strong supporter of Israel doesn't necessarily mean supporting one party line, in Canada or in Israel. There's a wide range of political culture in Israel, and supporting a different, more liberal civic aspect of Israel's political culture is still valid support of Israel. So the same in Canada, and for Israel, and for the Liberals."

One comment on the UN. I want to read you something. It's in the declaration of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance Durban. I chaired the International Jewish Caucus in Durban, at the anti-racism conference.

2001. This is the government states declaration. The government states, the result of the kind of lobbying, real lobbying in the lobby, by the NGO's, and so on, and I want to read you something in the international items. It's section 151. "As for the situation in the Middle East, we call for the end of violence and the swift resumption of negotiations, respect for international human rights and humanitarian law, respect for the principle of self-determination, and the end of all suffering. Thus, allowing Israel and the Palestinians to resume the peace process, and to develop and prosper in security and freedom." That is the only mention of Israel and the Middle East in the entire declaration, and it's a declaration that was a result of back room negotiations, where Canada (because we stayed and the Israeli government was thrilled that we stayed) was able, as honest brokers, to achieve that level of negotiation, and the government of Israel rested, saying, "We can live with that," and we achieved the consensus needed.

People would have you believe actual outright lies about what happened in Durban. They deliberately conflate what happened at the NGO forum and the NGO Declaration with the Government forum and Government Declaration. There was lunacy at the NGO forum, and had we not had an international Jewish caucus (which I was privileged to chair), and had we not negotiated, and had we not actually gone and met with Mary Robinson, that NGO declaration, which was horrific when it came to Israel, would have seen the light of day. It did not see the light of day because we were able to lobby, because we were able to have it removed from any of the official documents, because there was hateful language in it against Israel. It is because we stayed. The reason I wanted to mention Durban is because those who actually do have the ability to reduce complicated situations to sound bytes, get the coverage, hammer home the same mantras over and over and over again. People believe it, especially when they have no other sources of information when even our Jewish newspapers wouldn't report, in this case and in other cases, the whole story.

When you don't tell the whole story, it's called bias. You can have anti-political bias, you can have anti-Israel bias. When the whole story isn't told, people will believe, if they're emotional about an issue, which by the way, as we know was Harper's ethnic outreach strategy defined in 2007 and used in 2011. Take the most emotional issue in each community group, in each ethnic group, exploit it for all its worth in various meetings, gatherings and writings, and then if we can win over certain communities, we'll roll out that strategy in ridings where we think we can win. They actually did use Thornhill as a test case in 2008, documented it, and rolled it out to achieve their majority. Ladies and gentlemen, it's one thing to say symbols. It's one thing to say, "Yes, we feel good. Yes, we need the sound bytes." A different, more nuanced approach to a very complicated situation, God willing, will bring the players to the table, train the people to do the work. A Christian saying comes to mind, about if you ... What is it? If you give somebody the fish, they'll eat for a day, but if you teach them how to fish, then they can eat for a lifetime.

Yoni: Why are you looking at me? We're all Jews here. I have no idea what you're talking about.

Karen: It's just what came to mind when you were talking about the importance of training. The importance of training people, rather than symbolic six bombers, who may make us feel good, and have a symbol of affecting the different on the ground. I don't want symbols. I don't want rhetoric. I want a government that actually can use different language, make up a brand new word, bring people to the table, and really make a difference, not just pay lip service or provide a symbol.

Yoni: Jonathan is itching to say something, and then I'd like to get to one more question.

Jonathan: There's this grim irony of you saying you hate things that are merely symbolic, and you're holding up this book from the United Nations of bromides, that a bunch of governments say. Who cares? It's the ultimate symbolism.

Karen: It is not symbolic. I'm talking about the importance of the actual reality of having people behind the scenes. Do you know that there were some of our negotiators who...

Jonathan: Karen. No, no. I'm not going to let you keep talking.

Karen: There were some of our negotiators who actually had to have post-traumatic stress counseling; but the fact that they stayed there, and they could hold their ground, and they could take the wrath of Syria behind the scenes, that's not symbolic. That is actually a document that is real and that actually made a difference.

Jonathan: It's real results, and creating a document that no one cares about. It's not your fault.

Karen: Why did the Conservatives spend so much ink in the media talking about it?

Jonathan: Here I am. I'm going to answer that question right now.

Karen: They cared damn well about it, because they wanted to discredit the Liberals.

Jonathan: I'm going to answer your question right now.

Karen: Okay. Answer my question.

Jonathan: Let's go back to Durban. 15 years ago, go back to the dream machine.

Karen: Oh, I don't want to go back.

Jonathan: To this crazy time, and we all remember this historical incident, as we do with many historical incidents. We have four or five images. A lot of it were sort of these crass-

Karen: From the media.

Jonathan: From the media, and also from the NGO forum. It's true, that outside the NGO forum, they are all kinds of crazy people, including that weird group of Jews who are always with the anti-Semites, because they don't-

Karen: The Neteuri Karta

Jonathan: That's them. Okay, so that's how we remember it, but we also remember the historical period. 2001 coincided with a very sentimentalized, romantic period in the way we thought about NGOs. You had Naomi Klein's No Logo had come out just a few years before. You had the backlash against the World Bank, and against globalization, and you had the riots in Seattle, and Genoa, and Washington. You had a whole alphabet soup of these NGOs that were declaring that we're in this new era of supernationalism. You had the creation of ICC.

You had new prominence with the United Nations more generally. You had all kinds of supernational courts starting up. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, all these groups, including environmental groups, had a huge platform. The idea was, at Davos, everyone was saying, "Oh, the age of the nation state. We have to make way for all these NGO actors."

Now we say, oh, it's just a bunch of loonies at the NGO forum. Back in 2001, there was this idea that these were the people of the future, and it turns out that the people of the future were a bunch of antisemitic loons. It was actually quite despicable and upsetting to people that all these heavily romanticized NGO groups, that were supposed to constitute civil society ... That was another one of the buzz words that Thomas Freedman was telling us was so important. It turns out that they had this hateful, anti-Israel agenda, and to the extent that the conservatives, because conservatives weren't in power yet but they came in a couple years later, and they said, "You know what? Screw that. These guys, they have absolutely no constituency. They're just a bunch of well-founded groups, many of which hate Israel, and hate the United States, and hate 100 things. I have no time for them, and we're gonna discredit them," and good for Harper for doing that. I'm glad he did it.

That, I actually completely agree with it. Documents like that I find completely meaningless. By the way, Israel plays this game, too. I actually find it crazy, the way, when the Goldstone Report came out, I go to Israel and all anybody wanted to talk about is the Goldstone Report. The Israelis themselves actually became subsumed in this cult of what the UN said, and what this committee said, and what that committee said. I think both sides have become too wrapped up in this sort of thing, and it's true that Harper played it symbolically, but I think it was an important symbolic battle to wage, because he was standing up for the rights of sovereign nation states against the whims of trendy NGOs, including in the environmental domain. He went too far, but in the pipeline battle, you'd have Joe Oliver saying, "Oh, these are George Soros funded environmental groups coming from the United States."

The rhetoric got too harsh, but it is true that I think the conservatives at least had the germ of a healthy suspicion of groups that did not represent grassroot constituencies, but represented fashionable, progressive interests that were antithetical to Canada's interests.

Yoni: I know we can keep talking about this subject, but I want to get in one more question, and then we're going to open it up to the audience. Let's do this rapid fire. 30 seconds for your responses, and we'll start with Karen.

Yoni: Karen and Jonathan both spoke about some of the in fighting in the Jewish community during the last election. It was a community that was perhaps more divided than ever, certainly that I can remember over an election. We're now six months past this. Justin Trudeau has been elected. The conservatives are out of power. What can the Jewish community do to heal, restore the unity, and end this politics of division? I still see it on a daily basis, that you write something about Trudeau, half the people in the comments are going to say the guy is a closet Muslim, and his brother is running the whole show, and we got to get him out as quickly as possible. The other half are going to say Harper ran his term, and we had lots of problems with what he did. We need this sort of energy, young, youthful energy that Trudeau has brought. What can people do to bridge the divide?

Karen: I think we really have to have more thoughtful conversations. It's one of the reasons why JSpaceCanada was created, to create what they call a safe space for people to have the conversations without vilifying each other. By the way, I have to give a disclaimer here too. I'm not here representing the political viewpoint of JSpace, that's for sure. We are here ad personem right now, because NGOs should not be political in that sense, but rather ensure that all the sides are heard. We need to have the conversations, and we need not to have them in 30 second sound bytes, because it shouldn't be a debate. We should really have the conversation. When people really want to achieve peace, or when they really want to achieve understanding, they don't yell and scream at each other. They clarify. They understand. They talk about getting to "Yes". What do we all actually want?" The election is over, and we've got, what, four years, maybe ten years, maybe more. Who knows? People need to stop acting as if the election is next week, and that they want power, and recognize that if we're all on the same side ...

The theme of the JSpaceCanada conferences was, For Israel's Sake, because we all want it for Israel's sake. The other thing I really want people to do is actually read the foreign policy of Canada when it comes to Israel, and Palestine, and barriers, and settlements. That was the policy under Harper, and is the policy now. Read it.

If you want it, I'll give you a copy.

Jonathan: Curiously, Harper didn't change.

Karen: People need to become aware ... No change.

Jonathan: He didn't touch it, which is actually very interesting.

Michael: No. He didn't touch it.

Jonathan: Yeah, which is very interesting, that he didn't actually change the official policy.

Karen: It's very interesting, but most of the people here do not know what that official policy says, and so that's why inform yourselves and have the conversation.

Yoni: Let's here from Michael.

Michael: I'm going to take actually a much different approach. Again, as I said, I'm not very active in the religious community, so it's going to be a little different. It's not going to be the same. It doesn't mean that you can't still have the same issues, and the same ideas, but the politics have changed, the culture has changed, and the Jewish community has changed. When I write lines, and I'm sorry to make it about myself, in the Canadian Jewish News that Jews don't think the same way, they're not politically the same, they have changed quite a bit, I'm doing it a little bit to be provocative, obviously, but I'm also doing it because that's what I see. At one point, I think it is fair to say in this country that Jews were more united because politically, economically, culturally, they sort of fought along the same lines.

I believe, and I've said this before, that Jews have grown up, and I think they now realize that there are different political options, there are different ways to handle a government, and they now respect fiscal conservative issues and social conservative issues, and realize that, for example in the case of the Tories, that it isn't some sort of fearful action of a long-gone era that we're going to be tied to it. It's a Conservative Party that is modern, that is inclusive, and believes in the views of all people, including Jews, and that's why it benefits us. Can it all be the same? No, it's not possible. Can it still be good? Absolutely, because there are certain issues, like Israel, where you will find a lot of common ground.

Jonathan: Okay, and this is an answer to the question of what we can do to be less divisive, or less shrill, I guess. The first thing I should say is one of the reasons we're shrill is that the reason the Jewish community wasn't shrill 30 years ago, was that everyone voted Liberal. It's easy to not be shrill. You've all got red lawn signs on it. To a certain extent, I agree with Michael. It's a sign of maturity that at least there's some healthy competition. The second thing to remember is that it wasn't just the Conservatives who played this game. The liberals played this game, especially with the Tamils. You got guys like Jim Karygiannis going out to Scarborough, and basically playing nice with folks with who are essentially fundraising for the Tamil Tigers.

You had Paul Martin and Maria Mina attending events organized by groups that had been identified by the US State Department as fundraising operations for the Tamil Tigers, and they did that for very cynical reasons. They did that because they wanted to get the Tamil vote, and the Jews aren't the first group in Canada who have been subject to this. They won't be the last. This is how ethno-politics is played. There's no shame in it, but fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. We can't let this happen another election. I think a good way to do it is, people should get out of their information silos. I know that when I talk to hardcore Zionists within my family, they often will subject themselves to often only, not exclusively, but they read such a steady stream of opinions that agree with them that any opinion that comes outside their orthodoxy is treated like kind of a form of heresy.

God, who could believe that? Whichever side you're on. Maybe there's some BDS people in the crowd. Fine. If

there's some ultra-Zionists in the crowd, also fine, but don't just immerse yourself in that information silo, because then you're going to think everybody agrees with you, and when a political candidate says something even slightly different, you're going to be enraged by it. The other thing, finally, I would say is, as Jews, I think we should watch the tone of what we say about other groups. After 9-11, there was a lot of focus placed on how much antisemitism you could hear in some radical mosques, which was true, and was a terrible problem. Probably still is a problem. When I go to speaking events in synagogues, I hear some pretty terrible things said about Muslims.

You can go to a place like Beth Tzedec or Holy Blossom, mainstream places, and the Q and A after events, you got Mark Stein coming there. People will say things about Muslims that if you said it about Jews, people would call you an anti-Semite. I think we have to watch the tone of our discussion, because when you hear discussion like that about other groups in our society, it legitimizes hate speech against factions within your own community that you think are somehow fifth columnist on behalf of those groups. I've seen that happen, and I think it's a terrible thing, and we have to watch that. It's happened since 9-11, and it's happened slowly, but it's become very hypocritical, because we talked so much about antisemitism, but Jews, sadly in Canada, have become some of the most casual promulgators of shrill anti-Muslim sentiment.

Yoni: All right. Let's open up for questions from the audience. There are microphones, as I said before, on both sides, and maybe while you're thinking about your questions, I'll ask one more. We talked a lot about Trudeau and Harper. Those are the two names we've talked about. Is this really about two guys, and their different approaches to politics, to the Jewish community, to Israel, to whatever, or is it about something larger? I guess the question really becomes, when people are out there criticizing Trudeau or in the past, praising Harper, are we looking at personalities, or are we looking at larger political issues that get down to the party level, or even to something even more central? If on the basis that this isn't necessarily about Trudeau and Harper, is there any way for Trudeau to win over all the Jews?

Jonathan: That's my plan for the next election. May I answer that?

Yoni: Yeah, go ahead.

Jonathan: I think it's a good question, because I think broadly speaking, a lot of people take it for granted that anti-Israel sentiment is a species of antisemitism. Ever since I was a college student, I experienced shrill anti-Israel sentiment as a species of Marxism. The people I went to school with in the late eighties and the early nineties, because the paradigm in which they looked at everything was Marxism, their first question was, who is the oppressed? Who is the oppressor? I want to be on the side of the oppressed. They'd look at a place like Israel, and they'd see a technologically advanced society with a strong military, and then on the other side, you'd see a much poorer Arab society, with fewer resources, and so they just naturally, they'd apply their Marxist calculus to that.

To me, that's Sven Robinson. I don't think Sven Robinson was an anti-Semite. I think he was just a garden-variety, doctrinaire, left wing guy who just sort of saw everything through the prism, and I think they analyzed other foreign policy situations that way. What happened is I think, especially after 9-11, even people who weren't religious began to see the fight against Islamist terrorism in quasi-spiritual ways. Especially on the right, you would see people using religious terminology. They would say they had become awakened to Israel's place. There's this famous episode in George W. Bush's political career where he went in a helicopter with Ariel Sharon, and Ariel Sharon showed him how narrow Israel is of its so-called waste. Between the westward extension of the west bank and Mediterranean, it's like 12 miles or something like that, which you can actually see, apparently. You don't have to go very high in a helicopter.

I think the story goes that George Bush saw it, and it was kind of like his light bulb moment, and he saw how vulnerable Israel was. Many US politicians and even Canadian politicians will recite some version of the story, to indicate that they have had some kind of awakening moment, and they'll go to APAC Conference in Washington, and they'll tell the story. It gives them a lot of credibility, as a proxy issue. It shows that they're on the side of Judeo-Christian civilization, that they're against the terrorists, that they're against militant Arabism and militant Islam. It has gotten this quasi-spiritual dimension, and you saw that with Harper. One of the most objectionable things Harper said, I know it played well in the Jewish community, was when he said he will stand through Israel, was it through fire and water?

Michael: Fire and water.

Jonathan: I consider that complete objectionable. Canada is a sovereign country. We don't stand with any other country through fire and water. To me, that blurs the line of sovereignty. Canada is itself. If another country pisses us off, or its policies are contrary to our values, screw that. They're no longer our ally. Personally, I think Israel is a great ally. It makes tons of mistakes, and I don't think it has a particularly good Prime Minister, but generally speaking, I see it as a good ally to have. To say "fire and water" gives the relationship an existential quality, a timeless, Utopian, perpetual quality which is outside the bounds of what we think of as the sovereign bounds between states. I object to that, but it also marks the spiritual dimension of Zionism, even Zionism among people who aren't Jewish, and I don't think that's a healthy thing. Zionism, it should be a geopolitical phenomena. It shouldn't be a spiritual phenomena.

Michael: I can honestly say you're right in the sense that if, just to go back to your point about Harper and Trudeau always being at the forefront of this discussion, I'm old enough to obviously remember when Brian Mulroney was at the forefront of this discussion as well, to use another Conservative who was obviously very supportive of Israel. If you remember old lines from the Globe and Mail, and Toronto Star, and Toronto Sun - since those were the only three papers here - they actually thought at times he went too far. The irony is, at least in the Sun's case, and halfway to the Globe's case, sometimes with Harper, he went much further than they did...and they were actually happy with some of the things that came out of them.

Personalities are just unfortunately part of the way we decipher this issue. Personalities are part of the way we look at an issue, and how it modifies, how it changes, and how historically relevant it is. I think in the case of Harper, we never really saw a Prime Minister who was much of, and I'm sorry to use the term, a Zionist as anyone else. He really, truly was like that. Again, as I said before in my opening remarks, it goes back to his father, who was very much like this, and the son was very much like this. Joe Harper, who I met once, a very nice man, had a very strong friendship with a number of Jewish people in his early days, and his later days, and he instilled that in his son. That's why Stephen Harper is that way, although obviously Harper can think for himself and took it in different directions.

I think, though, the one thing that is important in this discussion, really, is that irrespective of what the leader stands for, it's also what the party stands for. Jon keeps mentioning Sven Robinson, which is true. I can also throw in another NDPer, like Libby Davies, who to me, is sort of the modern equivalent of that, or worse. There are just unfortunately-

Jonathan: She got drummed out of the party. That's a sign of the times.

Michael: Absolutely, but she did obviously have a prominent role at one point - and with some leaders, including Jack Layton, she still was very visible. The party has to also speak for itself. Its members have to speak for itself. For example, are there Tories who were not as strong about Israel as Harper was? Of course. In the same sense, were there Liberals who were much stronger about Israel than, say, Trudeau, or Martin, or Chretien even - and Martin and Chretien were certainly fine. The answer is yes, so I think it actually has to be more than the leaders. It has to be the entire party that speaks for itself. It really does.

Karen: I also think that it's the cult of personality that has happened in politics, and the rise of the US style attack ads, and we won't discuss where all of that started, in really major ways, that has made the leader the major focus. I remember people briefing me when I finally did make the decision to get into the so-called blood sport, because I thought, "Gee, I can do that," based on my commitment. I remembered people saying, "Don't take it personally," because at the municipal level, it's about who the local candidate is. At the provincial level, it's about 75% of who the leader of the party is, and at the federal level, it's 95% of who the leader is. I can recall knocking on the door. A couple of things happened. Also, who actually spends more of the budget on media? You said that the Jewish community is now grown up. I think part of our growing up was to become so, not assimilated, but so mainstream that we also let down our guard, and so we become part of the ignorant masses many times, in terms of voting.

People become complacent. They're uninformed. They become ignorant of the actual issues, and they can then become vulnerable, they can succumb to propaganda when the sound bytes come over. Whoever has

the largest communication budget can get that across. A couple of things. Knocking on the door, having devoted my life to the struggle against antisemitism and to human rights, and freedom, and so on, and having somebody say, "I would never vote for any liberal. They're all anti-Semites," from a Jewish woman at the door. Another time, knocking at the door, and a small, elderly couple comes to the door in the condo. Holocaust survivors. They looked at me, and said, "Karen, we know you. We know your work. We know how you've been leading the trips to Israel, to Poland, to Germany, and the teaching. We've been Liberals all our lives, and we know no one could represent our community better than you...maybe next time... but this time, we feel we owe Harper our vote."

They had heard the sound bytes. They were led to believe that he was the only one who believed in the State of Israel. It didn't matter that none of the other leaders' speeches on Israel, and against antisemitism, had ever been reported in any of the Jewish papers. Only one, and so on, and so on, or that they were only reading ... As you say, you've got to expand your reading. Didn't matter. They only narrowed in on that, only heard the sound bytes, believed it, believed the other guy was hateful and whatever else he was, and the same thing in this past election. That's how they voted. To me, that's not good for the Jews. We need to maintain our knowledge, and we need to become more informed voters where it really, really counts.

Yoni: Quick comment from Jonathan, then we've got two questions that we get to.

Jonathan: Sure. I agree with a lot of what Karen just said, although it should be noted in Harper's case, it's a double edged sword. I think that there were lots of voters, including lots of Muslim voters, who voted against Harper, because they heard through their own media, and through their own network-

Karen: Yeah. This time around, I was talking about 2011.

Jonathan: Even before that, the idea was that he was this hardcore Zionist, and he was putting Muslims in jail, and detention. Harper and his team put down stakes in a big way with the Jewish community, and certain other ethnic communities, but they paid the price in other communities. You saw how thin their support was last year in the polls, and it's partially just because they were just too selective in which constituencies they went for. In terms of the cult of personality that you talked about, I'm glad you raised that, because a lot of it is very superficial. I think we're seeing that in the United States, just if I spent a minute on the US situation, was quite amazing, which is that Obama often is held up as being this Israel-hating president, when in fact, a week ago, he actually presented Israel with the biggest military aid package in the history of Israeli-US relations. Netanyahu turned it down, because he thought he could get a better deal, partially because of the way he plays the right wing American press.

Obama has given bunker busters to Israel. I think Obama very much has been stereotyped as being anti-Israeli, despite the fact that that largely rests on just one or two things. Meanwhile, Trump gets a free pass on Israel. I actually disagree with you, that Trump is somehow secretly pro-Israel, pro-Jewish or something like that. He was asked point blank. Michael, this is what you said. He was asked point blank about a month ago how we would deal with the Israeli Palestinian issue. He basically said, "I'm gonna be neutral," and that was kind of it. He didn't get that much blow back from within the Republican party, despite the fact that love of Israel is one of the few common elements.

We are going to have the first US election since I can remember where the Democratic candidate is more pro-Israel than the Republican candidate. Hillary Clinton is more pro-Israel than Donald Trump, and yet somehow you don't see editorials in the weekly standard or commentary magazine, or The Wall Street Journal, denouncing the anti-Israeli attitudes of Trump. To my mind, that's the superficial, celebrity politics that just people, for whatever reason, have been completely arbitrary about that.

Michael: If I can just quickly...look, obviously, I'm not supportive of Trump, and I've said that before, but his history, Jon, is one of the reasons why the Weekly Standard National Review, and others, don't go after him, because he actually has been supportive. Marching in the Israel parade.

Jonathan: He's never had any elected office. A real estate developer marches in the Israel parade. Wow.

Michael: I didn't say that was enough.

Jonathan: Tell the media.

Michael: At the same time, it's better than nothing.

Jonathan: Okay.

Michael: Okay. That's what I'm pointing out. Look, he isn't anti-Israel. He's "anti" a lot of things, but I have not seen that about Israel whatsoever. To say that he's less pro-Israel than Hillary Clinton. My God, you got to be kidding me, based on the Obama administration, and the way they've handled things.

Jonathan: The Obama administration has been a pro-Israel administration.

Michael: They have not been pro-Israel at all. Not been anti, but they've hardly been pro.

Yoni: We have until November to decide how we feel about the American candidates.

Karen: That would be the topic of the next discussion, before the American election.

Yoni: We need to decide whether Trudeau is good for the Jews or not in the next ten minutes, so... to the audience.

Karen: I have a concern, and I hope you will tell me I'm mistaken, but electoral politics being what they are, the fact that the Jewish population is decreasing numerically, and the Muslim population is increasing numerically, and this trend shows no signs of changing, what will be the effect of that, in your opinion, politically in terms of the Jews, and obviously Israel as well?

Michael: That's the elephant in the room, and that's what a lot of people actually don't like to talk about. I've skirted the issue as well sometimes in the past. In terms of actual numbers, because the Muslim community and the Arab community are growing, which is fine. Obviously, they're certainly allowed to have large families if they wish, while others are not. Because of that, they've become a more important political entity in Canada, the States, and other places, and will continue to grow in that way. Naturally, Jews have been important in other ways. They've helped out politically with some candidates. They've run. They've helped out financially. We know the gamut of what they've done. But in terms of actual numbers, because you're right, in terms of electoral pockets...sorry, in terms of the electoral polls, it's how many people you bring out to vote, and how many seats you win.

The funny thing is that the political left is actually moving in the right direction, so to speak, in terms of where they need their base of support to be. At the same time, there are a lot of Muslims and Arabs who are very much, for example, conservatives. They are very much on the line. Salim Mansur, Irshad Manji, Farzana Hassan, and others. I know that we can just pick these names and cherry pick them - it's very easy. But there are a lot of younger Muslims and younger Arabs who are very much in favor of democracy, freedom, and other things, and are actually not necessarily in the Liberal or NDP camp. It's a difficult balance, I agree with you, but it is something that all of the political parties are going to have to deal with, and pretty soon.

Yoni: Karen?

Karen: I'm really glad you raised that question, because I can't stress enough the importance of real dialogue groups. Some of the interfaith and intercultural dialogue groups we have -- the Canadian Association of Jews and Muslims, for example, that does excellent work in bringing people together, building relationships. We have the Canadian Arab Jewish Leadership Dialogue as well. Often people come into so-called dialogue so that they can argue with you, so that you'll think their way. It should be about -- how do you build relationships and trust, so that the other really does begin to understand why Israel is important, or what your values actually are, and how you actually work together? There are amazing programs in Israel that are doing exactly the same thing, and here we bring Israeli Palestinian and Israeli Jewish teenagers every year through Heart to Heart.

There's the Hand in Hand program, which is the bilingual and bicultural schools in Israel, trying to build the infrastructure for peace, true peace, through shared society in Israel, so that we can bring the kinds of values that are in Israel's Declaration of Independence to the fore, and stay true to having Israel survive as a safe and secure democracy. I'm very glad you raised that question. The numbers are what they are. We aren't going to be voters in the numbers to win our day, if it's us vs. them. It can't be us vs. them. It's got to be: look, these are the values that Muslims and Jews share. Let's leave the extremists, and marginalize the extremists on any sides, and I'm not making equivalencies, so let's not go there. Let's marginalize those who want to say, "Us and them, and they are all X, and we are all Y," and recognize that the majority of Canadian Muslims, the majority of Canadian Arabs, the majority of Canadian Jews want the same things from this country.

Jonathan: I very much agree with what Karen said, the last few sentences. These interfaith groups, I'm a little more cynical. I think they're seen as sellouts by both sides, and they put on theatrical productions about tolerance.

Karen: I'm not talking about those kind of groups.

Jonathan: Okay, good, because those plays are so boring.

Karen: I'm talking about real dialogue, where people really do come to understand what is important to each other, build the trust, and fight for the same things, against Islamophobia and against antisemitism.

Jonathan: All right. If you have the patience for that, okay, that's good.

Karen: Oh, yeah. It takes a lot of time.

Jonathan: These groups do have-

Karen: You can't do it in sound bytes.

Jonathan: Then I can't do it. I'm not attributing these views to the person who asked the question. I do meet many people in the Jewish community who have read one too many Mark Stein books, the premise being that somehow these Muslims, they breed like crazy, and they're all fanatical, and pretty soon we're all going to be washed away by this Muslim tide, and they're going to implement Sharia and all this stuff. By the way, there are some places in Europe where this, it's not irrational to have those fears, but Canada is not among those places. I don't think it's the elephant in room, because I think from an arithmetic point of view, both the Jewish and Muslim constituencies are extremely small.

What tends to happen is a lot of those most fearful projects are based on these ideas, Mark Stein put this in his book, that these Muslim families are going to keep having five or seven kids generation after generation. It doesn't happen. Muslims, Jews, everybody, they follow the same pattern, typically. By the second or third generation, they're having two generations. They regress to the mean in terms of their population dynamics. Muslim and Jews, between the two of them, there's maybe half a dozen constituencies in Canada where they're a serious swing vote. The idea that somehow there's going to be this epic battle for the soul of Canada between Muslims and Jews, it's not going to happen. You're going to get two increasingly assimilated populated, in both constituencies, that are going to be part of the fabric of Canadian society.

By the way, Muslim Canadians tend to be above average in terms of their education. They tend to be above average in terms of their career attainment, because they come here for the same reason that Jews came here in the twentieth century. They come here for jobs, and they come here to better their lives, and you don't do that by teaching extremism. In the United States, and in Canada, responsible Muslim parents have been some of our best allies in alerting us to the extremism of teenagers and youth who try and go to Iraq and whatnot. I think they should be recognized for doing that. These are patriots every bit as much as Jews and gentiles.

Yoni: I have 3:57 on my watch, and I'm mindful of being done by 4:00, so let's get this question in, and then let's get some quick answers as well.

Audience Member: Thank you all for saying a lot of truth things, and a lot of wise things. The question that we came to hear the answer for, some answers for today is, is it good for the Jews? We dealt a lot with Israel, and for me, I know for sure it's very important, but I don't think we dealt enough with, is it good for the Jews in Canada, because that

question always arises out of fear. Jonathan, I know what you're saying is correct, and yet we saw it happening in Europe, too, and antisemitism is increasing in Canada as well. I think that's kind of what Canadians, a lot of them, are worried about, in addition to the Zionist issue, which was not dealt with here. Karen started to deal with it in her preamble, so could you say something about, is Trudeau, in your opinion, going to be good, hopefully, but is he going to be good for Jews on topic of, can we feel safe and we Jews feel safe in this country of Canada?

Jonathan: Absolutely, and I think there are some horror stories that come from Britain, and Europe more generally, but even in Europe, a lot of these stories get terribly exaggerated in the North American media, because cynically, it plays to the advantage of hawkish publications to exaggerate them. Last week, The Economist had a very good article, basically saying, "Can we please get some perspective on antisemitism in Britain?" It is true that in the age of Twitter, every time there's any kind of incident, especially some despicable comments that were made by some people affiliated with the Labour Party in Britain, which really were despicable, and an insufficient distancing of others from those comments. The Economist pointed out that life for Jews in England is hardly the stereotype you see on our side of the Atlantic, where we take every horrible episode, and we regard that as somehow being representative of what life is like.

Even in France, public officials, unlike in the darkest episodes of European history, public officials have very much said the right thing. When these antisemitic episodes have happened, they've been firmly denounced by elected officials at the highest level, so I would caution people in Canada from looking at what's happening in Europe, and saying, "Oh, this is going to happen in Canada," because even in Europe, I think it's not as bad as it's sometimes presented. Canada, I've told people this is the least antisemitic country in the world, Israel included. I hate to say it, but some of the people who make us feel the most unsafe, there are certain groups within the Jewish community whose entire funding model is based on sustaining the idea that we live in antisemitic hellhole, and everywhere you look, some neo-Nazi or Islamist is going to deface a tombstone, or attack a synagogue, or something like that.

Yeah, once every couple of years, you really do get some idiot who throws a Molotov Cocktail at a synagogue at three in the morning. Rightly, we treat that seriously, but life for Jews in Canada, I'm not sure there's ever been a safer time for any Jew to live, in any part of the world, ever. Yeah, so that's what I'm saying. Trudeau or Harper.

Yoni: Let's here briefly from Michael and Karen.

Michael: Sure, certainly. No, I don't disagree with what Jon said. Yes, anti-Semitism is a part of life. It's a part of society, and it's not going to go away. It's something that not just the Jewish community, but all Canadians will have to deal with in some fashion. To assume that it's going to go away based on the government in play, or the individual who is the prime minister, it's not going to. In terms of the freedoms, and the rights, and the various other things we have in this country, I tend to agree with Jon. It is incredibly safe for Canadian Jews in this country. We are free to go virtually where we want, at any time of night, for the most part, and we're safe.

Jonathan: Dress the way we want.

Michael: We dress the way we want. Look - he has a tie, and I don't! So, I think that's one thing the three of us probably will agree on, is that sure, the Tories, the Liberals, the NDP, and all the other political parties have a difference of opinion about Israel, about the Jewish community, and maybe even just about the Middle East in general. In terms of safety, even though I don't personally like the Liberals or the NDP, and I would never vote for them, I don't feel unsafe with Justin Trudeau as my prime minister. He's just not my choice for prime minister. That's very different.

Karen: Okay. I agree, not with the last statement, but the ...

Michael: I wouldn't expect that.

Karen: With the essence behind it all. The fear-mongering really has to stop. And by the way, you named three speakers that people in the Jewish community often trot out from the Muslim community to speak. We also in the Jewish community have to stop trotting out the comparable Muslim speakers... In the Muslim community, they will try to have Jews who will be anti-Zionist, and so on, and they have to stop that, too, so that ... What's

happening is, you get the fear-mongering happening on both sides, and we've got to just cut through that. Of course, we can feel safe in this country, especially if we read less of Mark Stein, and we put some of that money, \$5 million budget or more than \$5 million for the Religious Freedom Office. Glad it's gone. The Canadian Race Relations Foundation had the interest only from the \$24 million endowment. You do the math. The interest is not 10%, to have even \$2 million budget, which it was in 1990 when it was conceived. But that is one agency, and there are others.

Strengthening the Human Rights Commissions, that's what made it safer for the Jews -- knowing that we could have those agencies who were countering hate crime. The research budget from the SSHRC was completely cut back, including the whole, under the Harper, including a whole panel that dealt with hate crime, and how to counter it, and with multiculturalism, and how to enhance that, and safety, and security. It is safe for the Jews. It is becoming safer. But in my last 15 seconds, I'm going to give the last word to Trudeau himself on the occasion of the 68th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel:

"The State of Israel is a thriving and vibrant country, which Canada is proud to call a partner, and steadfast ally. Canada and Israel unite in their people- to- people ties, shared values, respect for democracy, growing trade relationship, and I look forward to continuing to strengthening our strong friendship. Today is a joyous day, but let us also reflect on the threat that Israel and its people continue to face throughout the world in the form of terrorist attacks, acts of antisemitism, and religious intolerance, which we must counter. Canada stands with Israel, and will continue to promote peace and stability in the region."

I will add, 'and in Canada' -- and that, my friends, is good for the Jews.

- Yoni: Before David comes back up, thanks to our panelists, Karen Mock, Michael Taube, Jonathan Kay. Thanks for the Koschitzky Centre for hosting us here, and a little bit of shameless promotion.... The Canadian Jewish News, where I'm the editor, we are working with the Koschitzky Centre on some promotions, giveaways for the paper, so if you are not a subscriber, look outside at the registration desk for more information, and hopefully we'll give you something interesting to read. Thank you very much.
- David: Just a very brief thank you as well to the panelists, and to Yoni for a great job. It was a very stimulating, wonderfully nuanced, intelligent, and civil conversation. You're all welcome to continue on questioning one another, your favorite panelist, your least favorite panelist, in a reception that follows, so stick around, and thank you all for coming.