

Israel News Desk

With BPF Secretary

Steve Lloyd

April 2021

Gen 49:10 "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from beneath his feet, until Shiloh comes; And to him shall be the obedience of the people.

UK – The BBC has been accused of bias in its coverage of Israel for decades. Now the public broadcaster is taking flak from British Jewry for coverage much closer to home. The cause of the biggest dispute in years has come from a recent debate on the TV programme 'Politics Live!'. The debate was whether Jews should be considered an ethnic

minority. The discussion featured four non-Jewish panellists and a Jewish commentator as a guest.

The broadcast was prompted by comments made by Labour's deputy leader Angela Rayner, who congratulated Anas Sarwar, a Scottish MP of Pakistani descent, as "the first-ever ethnic minority leader of a political party anywhere in the UK".

Many Jews protested on social media, noting that Jews had led parties, from Conservative Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli to former Labour leader Ed Milliband in 2010.

Whether or not to designate Jews an ethnic group has political and cultural implications.

This is not the first time this debate has raised its head, a similar debate arose in 2018 after Sajid Javid, who was of Pakistani descent, was again hailed as the first member of an ethnic minority to be named Home Secretary – an office previously held by two Jews.

In another report, connected to the BBC in that allegations were revealed that Nazi war criminals had not been convicted by British Prosecutors. In fact, Holocaust researcher Dr Stephen Anker stated that only one Nazi war criminal, Anthony Sawoniuk who died in 2005, had been convicted since the end of the war. This came after the BBC discovered that suspected Nazi collaborator Stanislaw Chrzanowski may have worked for MI6 which meant he was protected from justice.

Dr Anker also stated "There were, maybe, 400 suspects who might have been prosecuted and, among those, at least six to a dozen strong candidates who could almost certainly have been taken before the courts. Pole Chrzanowski, who was linked to at least 50 murders, was investigated by the authorities but no charges were brought. He died in 2017 at the age of 96 and had always denied the allegations.

IRAN – Contrary to popular belief, Jews living in Iran find it easier to practise their religion today than they did before the Islamic Revolution of 1979, according to a long-time leader of the Jewish community in Tehran. Torah reader and Scholar Arash Abaie stated that the Islamic Republic, with its deep commitment to religious law, interacts best with citizens, including Christians and Jews, who are themselves observant. Abaie added that Muslims respect Jews who pray regularly, fast, abstain from certain foods and believe in the Messiah. "They look for commonalities with Islam" he said, "and this leads to peaceful existence".

SCOTLAND – A pioneering new educational resource has been created by Vision Schools Scotland at the University of the West of Scotland to support teaching secondary school pupils about the Holocaust. The online resource was launched in March and tells the story of Holocaust survivor Marianne Grant and is freely available to all secondary teachers in Scotland via the General Teaching Council for Scotland website. It has been tailored for the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence and was created with funding from the Association of Jewish Refugees, the Gordon Cook Foundation and the Netherlee and Clarkston Charitable trust.

ISRAEL – Two dozen fragments of a 2000-year-old biblical scroll have been found in a remote desert cave in the Judean Desert. They are believed to have been hidden during a Jewish revolt against Rome. The amazing discovery of Dead Sea Scroll texts – in Greek, is the first in more than 50 years. The fragments were found in what has become known as the 'cave of horror', so called because 40 skeletons were found there back in the 1960s. As well as the fragments, a 6000-year-old mummified skeleton of a child was found. The Israel Antiquities Association also found a trove of coins from the time of the Bar Kochba uprising against the Roman Emperor Hadrian between AD132-AD136. The fragments were Greek translations from the books of Zechariah and Nahum and were radiocarbon-dated to the 2nd century AD.

YEMEN – The last three Jewish families in Yemen have been deported by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, the London-based Saudi daily *Asharq Al-Awsat* reported. This leaves only four elderly Jews in the country, the paper said.

The move marks the virtual end of a 2,600-year-old Jewish community there. The families, totalling 13 people, were now searching for a new home. They had resisted leaving but the Houthis made their departure a condition of the release of Levi Salem Marhabi, a Jew who was captured by the rebels 6 years ago. A family spokesperson said, "They gave us a choice between staying in the midst of harassment and keeping

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Salem a prisoner, or leaving and having him released,” “History will remember us as the last of the Yemeni Jews”.

Finally, for those of you who like facts and figures, when it comes to consuming matzo, the Jews in the former Soviet Union are in a league of their own.

At the top of the chart are Azerbaijan's 8000 Jews, who this year will have consumed 10 tons of it. That is 2.7lbs per person – nearly three times what the average soldier in the IDF tucks away. In Russia, home to about 155,000 Jews – the rate of consumption is slightly lower at 2.4 lbs per person and in the Ukrainian Jewish community it drops to about 1lb of matzo. Under the old Soviet Union, it was difficult to get Kosher Matzo due to storage regulations and so Jews would have to go to 'underground' sources. In fact, the Ukrainian Capital Kiev had an underground matzo bakery that operated for four decades until the 1990's.

Please continue to hold Israel before the Lord in your prayers and especially the men and women of the IDF and IAF and Navy, that they may be protected and have success.

Maranatha

Steve