

Israel and Diaspora, a new dynamic

Two international guests at last month's Union for Progressive Judaism biennial conference in Perth gave their views of the Progressive Jewish world when they spoke with **Peter Kohn**.

FOR Rabbi Nir Barkin, the Jewish Diaspora is not merely the "rest-of-the-world" contingent of exiles who, in the traditional Zionist narrative, will eventually move to Israel, but a permanent and prestigious component of the Jewish world, living in coexistence and partnership with Israel.

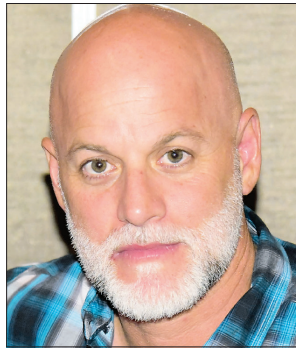
Based in Jerusalem, Rabbi Barkin, of the Israel-Diaspora department at the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism (IMPJ), specialises in tapping the dynamic of the Israel-Diaspora relationship.

Busting the best-and-rest view of the Israel-Diaspora relationship is not always an easy road to hoe, according to the rabbi, who was a guest at the Union for Progressive Judaism (UPJ) biennial conference in Perth last month.

In his eyes, the recent upheaval at the Kotel involving female worshippers who for years have clamoured for a section of the Wall where they can worship, brings the Israel-Diaspora equation into sharp relief.

The Kotel dispute – almost resolved and now flaring up again after Benjamin Netanyahu's government appeared to cave to Charedi opposition to the women's precinct – is for Rabbi Barkin a fault line delineating an Israel caught in the time warp of an Orthodox rabbinic unwilling to compromise with Progressive and Conservative Jewish values, and a North American Diaspora with a restive non-Orthodox majority.

In American Jewish suburbia, a



Rabbi Nir Barkin and Carole Sterling.

growing sense of frustration, alienation and disconnection from Israel is a trend that can have catastrophic consequences for the Jewish State, he said.

"The State of Israel is the State of the Jews, not only of those who live there."

Rabbi Nir Barkin
Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism

But the rabbi is upbeat about Progressive Judaism at the Wall. "Netanyahu gets it. His personal and philosophical journey puts him in a position where he shares the values of pluralism."

Rabbi Barkin left a career in Israel's high-tech business world after visits to a Reform congregation in Milwaukee, where he was working. The visits gave him what in 1999 was a very non-Israeli perspective on Judaism, and he has become one of Israel's most senior Progressive rabbis.



Photos: Brian Samuel

In a landmark contract signed 18 months ago, half of the budget for the IMPJ's Israel-Diaspora department is now funded by the Israeli government, "a breakthrough within itself" for Israel's Progressive movement, noted Rabbi Barkin.

The department's mission, he said, is to make Jews around the world feel more engaged with Israel as stakeholders, a reality he believes Diaspora Affairs Minister Naftali Bennett, a key driver of the budgeting deal, acknowledges, despite being the leader of the Orthodox-based Jewish Home Party.

Rabbi Barkin's program within the department is named Domim, Hebrew for "alike". Israel and the Diaspora are "not identical, not different, we're alike", he reflected. "There are so many similarities and so many differences we need to learn."

During its first phase, Domim has twinned 20 Israeli Progressive congregations with 80 counterpart shuls in the Diaspora, so each Israeli shul has four partnerships in the Diaspora. The next

stage will almost double the number of partnerships.

He sees these educational and communal partnerships as a reversal of the era when non-Israeli Jews saw their role as financial supporters of Israel.

"The State of Israel is the State of the Jews, not only of those who live there," declared Rabbi Barkin.

In the eyes of World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) chair Carole Sterling, non-Orthodox Judaism is thriving in unlikely parts of the world. She travelled to Perth from Shanghai, where Kehilat Shanghai, the Progressive congregation of China's mega-metropolis is growing, as are congregations in Beijing, Tokyo and Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation.

And in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, a renaissance of Progressive Jewish communities – in locations such as Moscow and Belarus, led by rabbis, some of whom received s'micha from Geiger College, the Progressive seminary located in the Reform movement's birthplace, Germany – is a heartening development, she said.

For Sterling, "inclusivity" is a key word in grappling with intermarriage. In her home country, Canadian Progressive rabbis do not perform mixed-marriage ceremonies, but she subscribes to what she called "audacious hospitality" in welcoming non-Jewish partners into the Jewish lifestyle.

Elected to office at the WUPJ's conference in Rio last year, Sterling, a mother of two who lives in Toronto and worships at Holy Blossom Temple, was in her element at the UPJ conference in Western Australia, even if it is in a far-flung corner of the Jewish world. "I'm always amazed at how we can sit down and half-an-hour later, we're family."

IT'S KOSHER

YOSSI ARON

Nando's PERI-PERi Hummus Dip!

NANDO'S first came to Australian shores over 25 years ago. Since then, the company has increased the number of ways for customers to enjoy Nando's famous PERI-PERi products at home. Beyond the world-famous PERI-PERi sauces, they have also ventured outside of the sauce market by introducing Australia to Nando's PERI-PERi Groove Cut Potato Chips. And now exclusively to Australia, they have released Nando's PERI-PERi Hummus Dip!

Nando's PERI-PERi Hummus Dips bring the unique flavour of the African bird's eye chilli to the chilled dip category, providing a new kosher way to become addicted to their PERI-PERi flavour! The creamy Hummus comes, with Nando's Hot or Medium PERI-PERi sauce layered on top, and is perfect for lathering into sandwiches, dolloping on salads, or as a dip for veggies.

"After conquering the chilli sauce market, Nando's Hummus Dip gives us a great

opportunity to bring our unique PERI-PERi flavour to a new audience. PERI-PERi sauce is a very versatile product – a fantastic accompaniment to any meal. Its versatility is something we have never been able to properly showcase. However, our Hummus is a PERI-fect example of a yummy PERI-PERi pairing that customers can add to any meal, without fearing the heat too much!" said Stefani Dethan, marketing manager at Nando's Grocery Australia.

"Also, with our hummus being kosher, parev and gluten-free, it gives customers that peace-of-mind that they previously may not have had," said Conley Browne, marketing assistant at Nando's Grocery Australia.

To coincide with the launch, a focused social media campaign was created for Facebook. Pedestrian TV has released an article on the new dip featuring delicious hummus recipes to trial, and Nando's are offering influencers the opportunity to get involved in the launch via Tribe.

PERI-PERi Hummus Dip is available at Woolworths (RRP \$4.99).



The Kinus Hashluchim

Mendel Alperowitz recounts the history of this annual event that now draws over 5000 Chabad representatives from communities worldwide including Australia.

LAST week saw the International Conference (Kinus) of Chabad-Lubavitch Shluchim (emissaries), at which thousands of shluchim gathered to share inspiration, ideas and goals.

Over the years, the Rebbe encouraged various meetings of shluchim in different parts of the world. During the summer of 1983, the Rebbe spoke about a gathering of shluchim going on that weekend in Israel, and urged that it would be appropriate to arrange a similar event in New York.

With the approach of Rosh Chodesh Kislev (the anniversary of the Rebbe's recovery from his 1977 heart attack) some 65 North American shluchim attended the first North American conference. This initiative continued to flourish for another three years.

In 1987, the annual event took a dramatic shift. Commenting on a report on the kinus of 1986, the Rebbe said that it's time to bring together the entire world. And so, in the winter of 1987, shluchim from across the globe were invited to attend an international kinus.

Each year the Rebbe would officially open the kinus with a special talk (sichah) in which he would usually discuss the theme of shlichut (the work of emissaries), both as it is found in the

Torah and as it applied to the shluchim.

In 1988, the Rebbe explained that not only are the shluchim participating in an international conference, but that their work back home is global as well. After all, when a shaliach in a particular city teaches someone, that individual will eventually pass on that teaching to another, who will then go on and share it with another, triggering a chain reaction of global proportions.

In 1989 the Rebbe added yet another global significance to shlichut by charging attendees to encourage all people to live in accordance with the Seven Laws of Noah, thus making the entire world a more Godly place.

While the shluchim and shluchot have dedicated their lives to serving the Jewish people, the Rebbe would often say that "everyone is an emissary". Accordingly, the kinus expanded to include a special program for lay leaders from local communities who partake of their own mini-conference, sharing notes and deriving inspiration from one another.

As the number of shluchim has doubled, tripled and quadrupled, it has become increasingly difficult to find a hosting venue for the conferences, especially for the closing banquet, which supporters and parents of shluchim may attend as well. In recent years, organisers have shown creativity by taking raw spaces such as armouries and piers and converting them into a ballroom for a night.

For shluchim, the kinus is the high point of the year, a time to refocus, relive, reflect and rejoice. **COL.ORG**

Shabbat times

Friday, Dec 2
- Kislev 2
Candle-lighting
8.09pm

Saturday, Dec 3
- Kislev 3
Shabbat ends
9.15pm