

Bringing water to the world

Partisan

SAM LIPSKI

IN the beginning there was *Start-Up Nation*, the book (Dan Senor and Saul Singer, Hachette, 2009). Then came, not the movie, but the movement, as the book sold in the millions and was translated into 31 languages. And as other nations rushed to Israel to discover the “secret”: how a small country became a world-leading innovation hub, scientific multiplier, and technology generator.

At first Australia was slow to join the movement. But over the past year it's been playing Catch Up Nation. High-profile Sydney entrepreneurs, Melbourne investors, and Canberra politicians have been talking up Israel's achievements. Trade missions have returned from Tel Aviv with tales of great meals and great deals. And Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who wants an “agile” and “innovative” Australia, has read the book and knows the *Start-Up Nation* authors.

Nor has the traffic been all one way. For their part, Israeli start-ups and investors have been discovering Australia. Just last week, the largest delegation of Israeli venture capitalists and start-ups arrived. Together with Chief Scientist Avi Hasson and other senior officials they participated in a Telstra-sponsored conference organised by the indefatigable Ethy Levy, Israel's Trade Commissioner in Sydney.

It's a truism, therefore, to say that the surge of bilateral interest and investment triggered by the *Start-Up Nation* movement is potentially a



The desalination plant in Hadera, Israel.

win-win for Australia and Israel. As it has been already for the emerging economic powers in Asia such as China and India.

But if in the beginning there was *Start-Up Nation*, Israel's “next big thing” promises to make even more impact globally. It's water. And surprise, surprise, it's another book that's spreading the word. *Let There Be Water: Israel's Solution for a Water-Starved World* (Seth M Siegel, Thomas Dunne Books, 2015), was published in September, and quickly made the best-seller lists in *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times*.

Siegel is a New York-based writer and businessman, and with great narrative skill he tells the truly fascinating story of how Israel, with 60 per cent desert, has solved its water problems and is now a water exporter.

The book makes clear that, contrary to what many of Israel's friends have assumed, its water problems were not all solved when the JNF made “the desert bloom” 50 years ago. In fact, as Siegel points out, as recently as 15 years ago, Israel faced severe water shortages, and was about to import water from Turkey. Fortunately, Israel decided against that solution and, among a range of other initiatives, chose desalination.

As quoted in *Let There Be Water*, Shimon Tal, a former Israel Water Commission director, sums up the results. “We have gotten ahead of the climate change question. It isn't just desalination, but with all this new desalinated water added to everything else we are doing, we are mostly immune from adverse weather conditions. Droughts have plagued the Middle East since the time of the Bible. Israel can now withstand even a long drought. Because of this, farmers and businesses can plan ...”

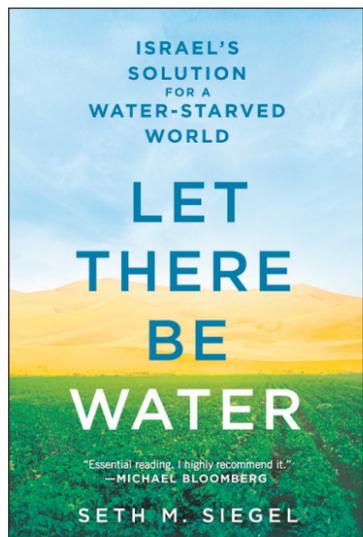
So the book is directly and immediately relevant to the developing world where at least 60 per cent of the earth's land surface isn't keeping pace between water supply and growing demand. Siegel explains how that gap threatens rising food prices, slower economic growth, and inevitable political instability.

But the book's message is also vital for many advanced economies, including the United States and Australia. The US government predicts that 40 of its 50 states will soon face severe water shortages. Some states, such as California, are struggling with four and five-year droughts which are having devastating impacts on food production and exports. And just a few days ago, the ABC reported that Queensland's drought had spread to a record 80 per cent of the state, the largest area ever officially recognised as suffering from drought in Australia.

Of course, as Siegel emphasises, not everything Israel has achieved with water is relevant “everywhere or to everyone”. In some water policy areas Australia has planned well, as have other nations. Even so, *Let There Be Water* argues persuasively that some of what Israel has done can help to transform the water story in every country.

As you'd expect, *Let There Be Water's* back cover carries praise from Tony Blair, Shimon Peres, Michael Bloomberg, and Robert F Kennedy Jr. But the blurb that resonated was from Ruhakana Rugunda, Uganda's Prime Minister: “*Let There Be Water* is the expertly and movingly told story of how Israeli specialists and NGOs greatly helped many Africans gain access to clean water.” After the book, not the movie, but the movement.

Sam Lipski is chief executive of the Pratt Foundation and a former editor of *The AJN*.



Seth M Siegel's new book.

Child abuse: shifting from blame to support

Viewpoint

MICHELLE MEYER

IN the wake of the Royal Commission and other court proceedings, our community was rocked by the exposure of key Orthodox organisations and their response to allegations of child sexual abuse.

Tzedek was established to support and advocate for victims/survivors of institutional abuse in the Jewish community. The organisation continues this work, in addition to delivering awareness campaigns and protective behaviours education in schools and youth movements.

The Jewish community has had to deal with the loss of its sense of identity as a decent and upright community. Many have also felt a strong sense of indignation and anger at the failure of our organisations to protect our children.

Where is our community now? Are we ready to apologise to our victims/survivors? At an individual level, an apology can only be meaningful if it reflects a true shift in understanding about the harm the abuse has caused.

Now that the silence about child sexual abuse has been broken, it is time to shift the narrative from blame to support. Statements need to change from “How could they let this happen?” to “How could we let this happen?” More importantly, we need to shift our response to “How can we stop this from happening again? How can we all become active participants in protecting our children?”

For an apology to be meaningful it must be accompanied by action. We need to demonstrate support for victims/survivors and promote social change. Asking for help is one of the hardest things to do. Let's start with offering assistance, but let us also invite and encourage those who need assistance to request it.

Once we make this shift, more survivors will be forthcoming in seeking our support. Let it be known that help is available, including from the Royal Commission, which is sitting until the end of 2017, or from Tzedek. And help is also available for those at risk of abusing. Abusers must be held accountable for their past behaviours, but we must also encourage potential offenders and potential recidivists to reach out for help.

When we accept that there is a problem, we are then receptive to education.

When a child discloses, we must accept that they are telling the truth (this is overwhelmingly the case), and we must accept that even a trusted individual may commit a sex offence. We can only learn what to look for, and how to respond with appropriate interventions, when we accept that sexual abuse can occur within our own environment.



Change is slow and some individuals may be more ready for it than others.

For an adult who has not previously encountered sexual abuse, a disclosure may engender overwhelming feelings of shame, anger and fear: shame that it happened in our family, our organisation, our community, anger at the victims/survivors for the resultant rifts and fear of the likely outcomes. The shame may also arise from the confronting nature of the abuse. Others may feel anger, often finding expression in blaming the victims/survivors, his or her family and supports or a government authority.

Organisations must accept responsibility for the damage caused by their negligence, requiring change in governance and leadership. Significant organisational change has occurred in the Jewish community in acknowledging the harm caused by gaps in infrastructure and policy.

It was heartening to receive feedback from a child protection professional that the necessary organisational change has been adopted in a far more timely manner and more proactively in the Jewish community than elsewhere.

In many organisations, child protection training and policy development and implementation have reduced the risk of sex offenders having access to children. Ultra-Orthodox and Progressive leaders have sat side by side, collaborating in working to make our children safer.

Some of the Jewish day schools have commenced comprehensive protective behaviours programs for parents, teachers and students. Tzedek is working with some of them in delivering a culturally relevant program, “Project J-Safe: Tots to Teens”. But we must caution that policies cannot be a “set and forget” response; cultural change needs to be ongoing.

At a societal level, we need to endorse a new norm, one that encourages standing up and speaking out. We can only truly accept responsibility for the past and the future when we stand together and know that we can count on each other's support in protecting our children.

As Hillel the elder said “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”

Dr Michelle Meyer is CEO of Tzedek, www.tzedek.org.au

MEDIA WEEK

Adams' radical agenda

IN his *Weekend Australian* column (28/11) Phillip Adams wrote, “It's not new for Australian security agencies to keep an eye on radicalised teenagers ... The young have always been susceptible to the clarion call.” This includes “... countless young Australian Jews [who] have headed to Israel ... to fight Palestinians” but it “seems our increasingly worried, watchful spooks have no probs with this” unlike for “ISIS recruits”. First of all, contrary to Adams' claim of “countless” cases, the number of Australian Jews who are not Israeli citizens who have served in the IDF is very low. But more importantly, Australian Jews who have served in the armed forces of Israel,

an Australian ally with common democratic values, are of little concern to “watchful spooks” because they don't plot against or murder civilians to fulfil a virulent anti-Western agenda.

Walker's warning

AUSTRALIAN *Financial Review* international editor Tony Walker warned (28/11) that despite past claims of “Jewish roots” by Malcolm Turnbull, “Jewish leaders in this country should not necessarily anticipate business as usual.” Asserting that “no issue in Australian domestic politics is as vexed as that of the Arab-Israeli dispute, none more sensitive than Australia's responses to Israel's provoca-

tions on issues like settlements,” Walker “advised” Turnbull “to move Australia back to a more neutral position on issues like settlements and the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to be accorded some form of recognition at the UN”. Wow, so wages, interest rates, deficits, same-sex marriage, climate change, and taxation rank lower in “domestic politics” than “settlements”! Seriously?

Spectator spot-on

IN contrast to Walker's faith in the UN, the *Spectator* magazine (28/11) editorialised the exact opposite. Lambasting the UN's “corporate hatred” of and “unhealthy obsession” with Israel and the “Jewish

people”, the editorial noted it is the 40th anniversary of the UN General Assembly's infamous “anti-Semitic” resolution declaring “Zionism is racism” which was adopted on “10 November 1975: the same date that in 1938 saw the climax of the German pogrom against the Jews, Kristallnacht, signalling the start of the Holocaust”. Fast-forward to November 2015, and “in the midst of the ongoing Palestinian knife intifada” the EU is replicating this “vilification” by insisting that Israeli settlement goods be labelled “not made in Israel”, even as “around the world there are literally hundreds of similarly disputed areas ... no other territory is subject to the EU's virtuous country of origin laws”. According to the *Spectator*, “the most

disturbing thing about these rules is that they intend to shame and stigmatise consumers ... who, specifically, does the EU think might be major European consumers of Israeli products? Especially kosher wine and foodstuffs from the agricultural regions of the territories? A year after Kristallnacht, the Jews of Nazi Europe were marked with a similar label of shame, the yellow ‘Jude’ Star of David.”

The federal government should follow the path set by its predecessor “in 1975 [when] we proudly voted No to the ‘Zionism is racism’ UN resolution”, the *Spectator* urged.