

IRAN, TRUMP AND TURKEY

Israeli scholar shares thoughts

REBECCA DAVIS

THE American exit from the nuclear deal with Iran, Israel's relations with Iran and the US, and, of course, Donald Trump, were just some of the items on the menu discussed by the president of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategic Studies, Professor Efraim Inbar, in Australia last week.

During his schedule on a brief visit to Melbourne and Sydney, Inbar addressed a dinner hosted by staunch supporters of Israel, Greg and Anne Rosshandler.

Reflecting on Iran, Inbar commended the US decision to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

"Trump leaving the deal is recognition that is long overdue. [The] deal is a bad one ... that gives great advantage to Iran and it is not ending its nuclear program," he said, before turning his attention towards the US-imposed sanctions against Iran.

"The Americans want to maintain a harsh sanction regime. But experience shows that economic sanctions are generally not effective," Inbar added, citing the obsolete impact of decades-long US sanctions against Cuba.

"We shouldn't forget also, that every sanction of the regime can be circumvented.

"And for the right amount of



Efraim Inbar speaking on a previous trip to Australia.

Photo: Peter Haskin

money, you'll find a lot of factors, a lot of people, a lot of states that will circumvent those sanctions for what we call transaction costs."

Trump as a leading character on the international political stage was also explored – his actions and penchant for social media platform Twitter, not the display of "regular diplomacy".

"[Trump is] wanting to take steps that rock the boat – and indeed he rocked the international scene. There is a lot of tension ... This is a big change from [former president Barack] Obama who preferred multilateral activities."

Turning his attention closer to Israel, Inbar examined the Syrian conflict, emphasising Russia's dismay with Iran in the region, and predicting Israel's continued military objectives to "destroy

[Iran's] presence in Syria".

Iran's struggle for hegemonic power was further analysed in relation to the interplay of power with Turkey.

"Nowadays, [Turkish President Recep Tayyip] Erdogan, an Islamist, is aligning himself with Iran for ideological reasons, but also for practical reasons. He wants to reduce his energy dependence on Russia by buying Iranian energy," said Inbar.

"But if Turkey comes to its senses it might become a counterweight to Iran and eventually again an ally of Israel, as we've been in the '90s ... Despite the fact that they are very anti-Iranian, it seems that America is not willing to put in resources in order to stabilise or help their allies in the Middle East, which puts a greater burden of course on Israel in the near future."

BREAKING THE SILENCE

Betar to stage protest

PETER KOHN

MEMBERS of the Betar youth movement have rejected an invitation to air their views on Breaking the Silence (BTS) and the New Israel Fund (NIF) at a roundtable event tomorrow (Friday) and will instead stage a protest outside the Glen Eira Town Hall.

The roundtable event is due to feature the executive director of BTS, Avner Gvanyahu, whose organisation claims to have evidence of abuses by Israel Defence Forces soldiers against Palestinians.

His visit to Sydney and Melbourne has stirred heated debate within the Jewish community in recent weeks.

Protesters plan to stand under a Betar banner outside the town hall before the event and hand leaflets about BTS and NIF to attendees as they arrive.

Betar director Eli Janover told *The AJN* that although his organisation was invited to take part in the roundtable, the decision was made not to participate. "I don't believe having this sort of platform is the right way to go about it.

"We don't want to show that Betar is somewhat supporting the organisations in any way. The only way that we saw fit to get our message across was to show

that we are opposed to it without entering the venue."

However, he said Betar "is not against freedom of speech ... not against criticism of Israel".

Janover said no other groups planned to be joining Betar for the protest as at the beginning of this week.

Betar emailed its members with links to websites that counter claims made by BTS and to urge a peaceful, silent protest. "We don't want to prevent people from entering the venue.

"We don't want to drown out people with shouting," Janover said.

But conceding that passions could run high, he said, "There isn't much we can do to control the people that come but if it does get out of hand, I can pull out Betar and remove Betar's logo from the out-of-hand event but I doubt it will get out of hand."

Describing Betar's refusal to take part in the event as "a shame", NIF Australia executive director Liam Getreu told *The AJN*, "What makes us strong is our diversity and our differences of opinion within the community.

"Whether it's on the left or the right, we should always be willing and open to talk to people and hear from them, particularly when they're veterans of the IDF like Avner [Gvanyahu]."



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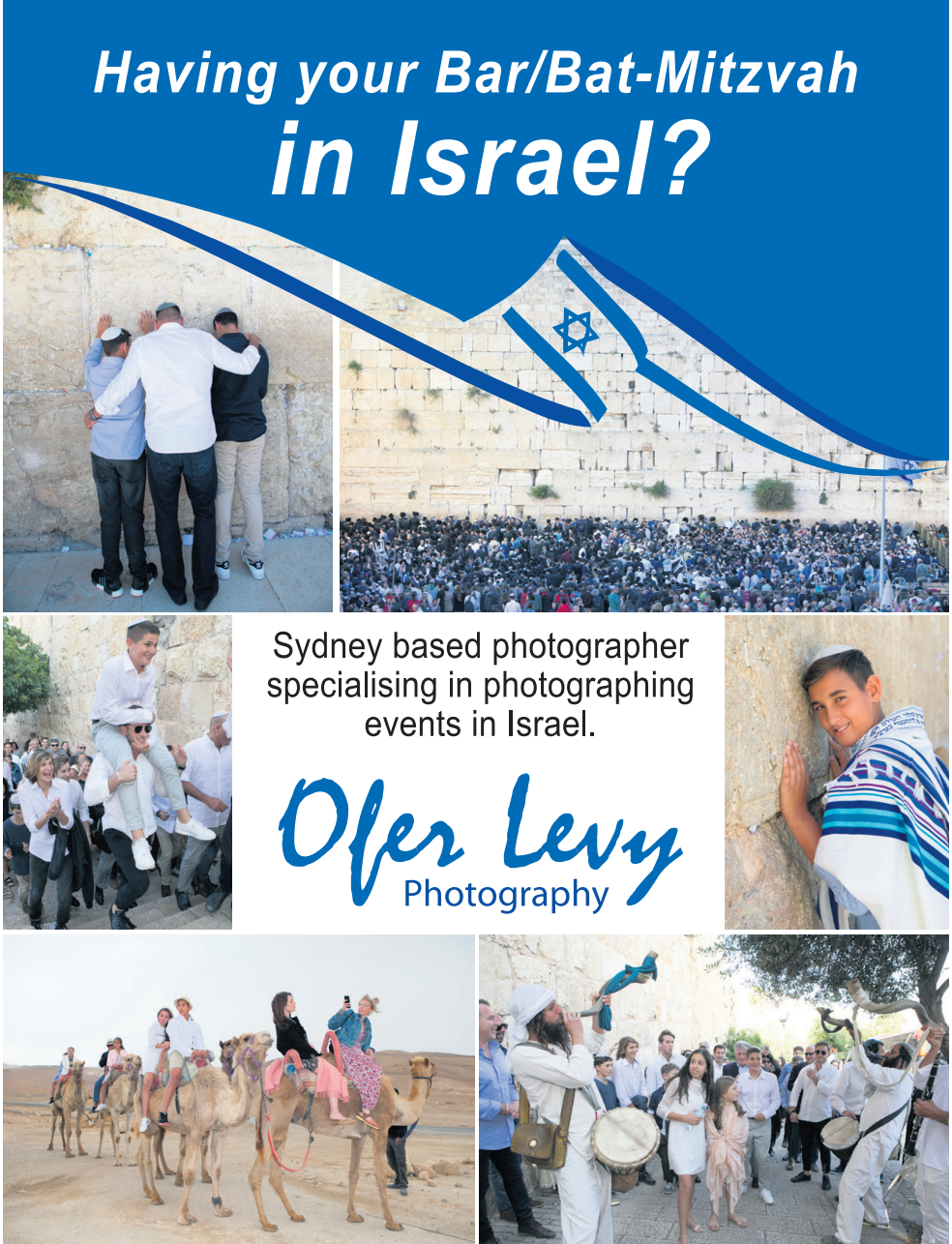
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