

Look Who Thinks He Is King of the Jews

Recent remarks that Donald Trump has been so good to Israel that he should be known as “King of Israel” or “King of the Jews” has been treated with a derisive snicker in the Jewish homeland. After all, Donald Trump is not the first one to think that he is King of the Jews.

The messianic complex has been observed in many generations. There were those who thought that Buddha and Confucius fit the description of a messianic figure, someone whose wisdom and insight would bring lasting peace to the world.

The Christians had it right, however. The early church understood that since the Kingdom on Earth had not brought peace and tranquility, the best bet was the Kingdom of Heaven.

Subsequent to the death of Jesus and the disappointment which accompanied that event, the great Rabbi Akiba declared that Bar Kochba was the messiah. The Jews were looking for salvation from increasing Roman oppression. That endorsement turned out to be one of the greatest tragedies in Jewish history. Bar Kochba did indeed lead the fourth and last revolution against Roman tyranny. The Romans brutally crushed the Judean revolt, and may have killed over one million Jews. So destructive was the Roman response to Bar Kochba that they plowed the land under and renamed the nation “Palestine.” The repercussions of erroneously declaring Bar Kochba to be the messiah still haunt the Jewish nation today.

The next “messiah” was Mohammad, but he also died, although riding his white steed to meet Allah. There was then Sabbatai Zevi. Many Jews thought that he was the messiah, however, under pressure from the Muslims, he converted to Islam.

This is but a small representation of those who either declared themselves the messiah by others. Apparently, there are some, perhaps even Donald Trump himself, who believe that he is the latest incarnation of the messiah. Psychiatrists consider the Messianic Complex as a form of narcissism, or, perhaps more accurately, bipolar behavior. In a world where powerful people believe they are the messiah, or are touted as the messiah by others, great danger lurks. Adolf Hitler, may his name forever be erased, thought he was the messiah, and others supported him with great energies. Millions of people, perhaps 50 million, died as a result of that false messiah.

There is a joke in Israel, a play on words really. A popular song among children is: *Dovid Melech Yisrael, Chai V'ickayam...., King David King of Israel, may he live....* The song is in reference to the hope for a messianic figure, who, according to both Jewish and Christian tradition, will come from the House of David. There are those who, in talking about the upcoming election in Israel, sing sarcastically: *Bibi Melech*

Yisrael.... Bibi King of Israel. I have yet to meet anybody who thinks that Bibi Netanyahu is the messiah or the King of Israel.

There are those, particularly on the far left, who conflate Prime Minister Netanyahu with Donald Trump. The two men could not be any more different. Benjamin Netanyahu has been very careful with his words, and has shown himself to be a masterful politician who has served as Prime Minister longer than anyone in Israel's history, even the legendary David Ben Gurion. Love or hate Netanyahu, he works hard to show that he is the Prime Minister of all the people, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. There are those who have legitimate gripes with Prime Minister Netanyahu, but he is likely to make a strong showing in the upcoming September elections. Israel, as a vibrant and unrepentant democracy, certainly has its politicians and citizens who will say, "Anyone but Netanyahu." At the end of Franklin Roosevelt's four elected terms, there were plenty of people who felt the same way about Roosevelt merely because of how long he had served. After the last Roosevelt administration and the ascension to the Presidency of Harry Truman, the United States easily passed an amendment limiting the President to two terms.

The tendency for citizens, religious zealots and others, to look for a messiah is nothing short of the desperation that people feel for a better world and a more fairly run nation. It is easier for the citizenry to look outside themselves and their own responsibilities than to take personal accountability for the state of the nation. Donald Trump is not, and never will be, the King of Israel or the king of anything. Rather, Americans and the citizens of other nations will have no substitute but to work hard on behalf of their nations, their communities, and their families. The king and queen reside within each one of us.

*Clifford A. Rieders, Esquire
Rieders, Travis, Humphrey,
Waters & Dohrmann
161 West Third Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
(570) 323-8711 (telephone)
(570) 323-4192 (facsimile)*

Cliff Rieders is a Board-Certified Trial Advocate in Williamsport, is Past President of the Pennsylvania Trial Lawyers Association and a past member of the Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority. None of the opinions expressed necessarily represent the views of these organizations.