



אל תקרי בניך אלא בוניך

**HASMONEAN MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST**

CEO: Mr A. McClusky MA NPQH

### **Tribute to Her Majesty The Queen, Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September**

#### **(CEO Mr A McClusky to Hasmonean Girls)**

As we approach the funeral of Her Majesty the Queen - which is due to take place on Monday, I wanted to share some reflections with you both on how the sad news emerged and on its significance.

On Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September, a day we will now always remember, somebody I know who works for a national newspaper arrived at the office to find the editor and a senior colleague whispering conspiratorially. Later, they announced that 'Operation London Bridge' was underway.

This, as some of you may be aware, is the code name used by the press to prepare for the passing of the monarch. A special edition of the newspaper had already been written. They had even had a run-through to check it all two days before. Somewhere, somehow, somebody there knew something was up. The very big thing that all newspapers have to be prepared for... was about to happen.

But how did we, outside of the media's inner circle, learn of the Queen's death? Her deteriorating health had been known about for some time. But it was the rumblings about a note going around the House of Commons and the leaders of the main parties leaving the chamber to discuss it... that first started the alarm bells ringing loudly.

An announcement from the Palace about The Queen being unwell followed a little later.

When news arrived that the royal family had landed in Aberdeen to be with The Queen, there was a sense of tragic inevitability. Things, as they say, 'got real'.

News of Balmoral being closely guarded, the changing of the Guard being cancelled and BBC news presenters changing into dark suits all surely meant that it was only a matter of time. Like the Royal Standard flag that is now draped over her coffin, British history was unfurling. And so it came to pass: Her Majesty The Queen had died.

Everybody will have had their own personal response to The Queen's death. She was the mother of our nation. It speaks volumes that even many republicans have only had warm things to say about her, regardless of the way they feel about the monarchy as an institution.

So what were my thoughts on hearing the news?

My first thought was: what will it be like? This was a step into the unknown. We've never not had a queen. It felt odd to think of the United Kingdom *not* being ruled over by a woman. It's sort of how things are, or were. In all of our living memories, we've never known otherwise. My own parents were both seven years old when she ascended the throne – she was their monarch just as much as she is a monarch for me, and for you, your parents and your grandparents. We are all Elizabethans.

Prime Ministers (15 of them to be precise), world wars, pandemics... they come and go. But the Queen, she was always there, wasn't she? A touchstone of stability - or in the poet TS Eliot's words – "the still point of the turning world". She links this nation directly to Churchill – her first Prime

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Minister - and through succession to our earliest kings and queens. Whatever madness raged out there in the world, there was always a feeling that there was at least one adult left in charge. Can we really think of anyone else who transcends not only Britain's politics but global politics? President Macron sums it up very well: "To you she was your Queen. To us she was *The Queen*." Mesmerisingly, Putin was one of the first to pay his respects.

As the Chief Rabbi and The Prime Minister have said, she was our rock. She was as close as a living person gets to being immutable.

So what lesson has her life taught us? For me, it is that her sense of duty and purpose came before everything. She famously did not openly voice her views on every subject. Her impeccable tact demonstrated her respect in her role. How tempting must it have been not to keep her thoughts to herself on so many matters? She sacrificed her ego on the altar of public service; it was this that earned her the trust and respect of so many prime ministers and world leaders.

How many of us can say today that, if we were close to a hundred years old, weak and ill but faced with the prospect of doing a day's work that would also be broadcast around the world, would we rise to that challenge? But she did just that, didn't she, as she ushered in our new Prime Minister? Her reign of 70 years and 214 days is the longest of any British monarch. It is an extraordinary achievement.

One always thinks of a king or queen as having great power. But the remarkable thing about ours was that she had great humility. Her faith sustained and grounded her: it gave her a sense of being held accountable to something greater than herself which only added to her gravitas.

Her responsibility - as a custodian of the UK and its people - was part of a much bigger sense that we are all mortal and have a shared purpose, with hers being, ultimately, no different to our own. Let's listen to what she has to say about this in her own words:

*VIDEO: "We are all visitors to this time, this place. We are just passing through. Our purpose here is to observe, to learn, to grow, to love... and then we return home."*

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0017xv0/elizabeth-the-unseen-queen> (58.00-58.55)

Wisdom, girls? You want wisdom you say? Here's wisdom: look at her reign; look at how she accepted and lived up to her great sense of purpose. Think of her burdens, her challenges and her responsibilities... and how well she accepted them. Look at how she viewed her own life and her place in the world. This, all of this taken together, is one of the great texts that we must all study.

**May Her Majesty Rest in Peace.**