

# WELCOMING A WOMAN WHO TURNED ISRAEL INTO A FORCEFUL NATION

Sitting next to me in my sukkah is Golda Meir, President of Israel between 1969 and 1974, a time when Israel had a population of nearly seven million swelled by Russian immigrants who came, like she did to make a new life for the family. But soon after arriving on Kibbutz Merhava, Golda turned away from the traditional life of woman and mother to become involved in politics, firstly as the representative of the kibbutz in the Histadrut, then secretary of that organization's Women's Labour Council and then the Knesset in 1946. Your appointment as President came when President Levi Eshkol died in February 1969.

As the President, and a woman and



Labour's Mapai leader, you seemed more interested in shifting Israel from a tiny, emerging Jewish state to a forceful nation in the Middle East than dealing with equity for women. If you were alive today would you give violence against women and girls more of your attention and how could you

enshrine women's rights into law? In my view it is imperative to have a viable Jewish state but also Israel has to be a country where all men and women can live freely and equally side by side.

You dealt firmly and swiftly with the invading Egyptian, Jordanian and PLO forces during the war of Attrition, and cried bitterly, knowing that young Jewish lives would be lost. Would you act as decisively and forcefully to the extreme right in Israel and advocate that their stance against Israel be declared illegal? As the rising tide of anti-Semitism in Europe and the USA swells, I see forceful measures as the only way forward in bringing an end to anti-Semitism and anti-Israel views.

I am a feminist most of the time, in that I believe that men and women should have equal access to a bank account, a divorce (a gett), equal pay, equal status in one's religion but I also recognise that men should be recognised for their strengths. As a member of NCJWA I strive to help women and girls attain a life that is fair and happy, and is close to their potential best. Under your leadership you did push for paid maternity leave for women. If you became a member of today's NCJWA and saw the work done by Days for Girls, Mum for Mum, with Aged Care, our Interfaith and Social Justice Initiatives, would you like to become involved? Which one of our committees would you like to join to make changes happen?

## JANET MERKUR

**Janet Merkur is a descendant of survivors of the Holocaust who arrived in Sydney in 1951. She works as an educator of teenagers with disabilities in regional schools, and is author of over twenty history textbooks and biographies, including a family biography, 'Sunflowers', which is held in many libraries across the world. She is the Chairman of the Australian chapter of the Kindertransport Association, and a trustee Governor of the JCA. She is Co-President of the NCJWA NSW Section and is a Board member of the NCJWA.**

### **Editors note:**

Definition of feminism - ([Source Merriam Webster Dictionary](#)) -

*1: the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes*

*2: organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests*

Therefore, recognising the strengths of men is consistent with a mainstream feminist identity or mainstream feminist ideology.