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Thinking straight about Israel, the Jews and the Archbishop

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Melkite Bishop Cyrille S. Bustros of Newton, Mass., speaks during the final press conference of the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East at the Vatican Oct. 23. (CNS photo/Piotr Spalek, Catholic Press Photo)

We in the media have a genius for grabbing a small but sensational piece of a bigger picture and banging it like a cheap drum, which usually produces a fun-house mirror view of reality: Relatively small things seem huge, while bigger and more significant things shrink into near invisibility.

To take the most obvious recent example, whatever the big picture is for Islam in America, it certainly isn't an epidemic of Qur'an burnings. Yet the mere threat of such an event from a Florida pastor whose entire congregation could fit into a phone booth held the world hostage for a month thanks to saturation "will he or won't he?" coverage.

In some ways, reaction to the close of the Oct. 10-24 Synod of Bishops for the Middle East is following the same script.

The synod produced 44 propositions for Pope Benedict XVI and a 5,000-word final message, both of

which contain a bewildering array of insights and ideas for solidifying the Christian presence in the Middle East and contributing to its great dream -- which is that the tiny Christian minority, hanging on by the skin of its teeth, can somehow catalyze a democratic revolution in the region, building societies based on religious freedom and equality before the law.

Yet the only storyline that's had any traction in the American press is Israeli and Jewish backlash to a comment by one synod participant in the closing press conference on Saturday.

Read the full report here: **Thinking straight about Israel, the Jews and the Archbishop**

Read *NCR*'s full coverage of the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East: Index of stories from the Synod.

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