Natan Sharansky, who heads the Jewish Agency, is at the international forefront of the battle to get Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government to reinstate their broken commitment to create a egalitarian prayer area at the Kotel. See pages 4, 5 and 6.
Local kosher chicken prices: much to crow about

ADAM MIDZUK

While South African Jews are convinced that our kosher chicken is so much more expensive than non-kosher birds in other Diaspora communities, the opposite is actually true. Johannesburg ranks comparatively among the best-priced kosher chicken in the world. However, it is certainly not the cheapest when compared to non-kosher chicken in the same city.

The SA Jewish Report did an Internet spin around the world, looking at how our kosher and non-kosher chickens compare to those in London, Paris, New York, Melbourne, Toronto, and Buenos Aires.

While prices varied, we did our best to find the most average-priced fare in the cities, both kosher and non-kosher.

Our kosher chicken was the cheapest of the sample at R80 per kg. This was followed closely in second and third position by London and Toronto, with prices equating to R82,98 and R88,90 per kg respectively. The most expensive kosher chicken came from Paris, costing the equivalent of R161,58 per kg.

Kosher chicken was also relatively expensive elsewhere, ranging from R113,17 per kg in Buenos Aires to roughly R130 per kg in Melbourne and New York.

In terms of cost to ranking how kosher chicken prices are compared to non-kosher chicken, Toronto wins first place for being the most reasonably priced. There, a whole kosher chicken costs 23 per cent more per kg than a non-kosher bird.

While Paris has the most expensive kosher chicken in terms of absolute price, compared to non-kosher chicken it was only 68 per cent more expensive. This puts it in second place for reasonable pricing.

By comparison, kosher chicken in Johannesburg costs 145 per cent more - 2.5 times the price of non-kosher chicken, fourth best, behind London at 88 per cent.

Nonetheless, the price hike of Johannesburg kosher chicken, pales with those of New York, where a single kosher chicken can cost close to five times as much as a Perdue-brand whole chicken.

Almost as expensive are Melbourne and Buenos Aires, where kosher prices are upwards of triple the supermarket price of non-kosher chickens.

Parshat Chukat

Medical symbol - from the Greeks or G-d? Ever wondered what the medical emblem of the snake wrapped around a stick is? No doubt you’re familiar with it-it’s used around the world and it’s in the centre of the Magen David of the emblem of our very own Hatzolah. But what does it mean?

I did a search on it and discovered that the snake and stick emblem has been given a name: the Rod of Asclepius. According to one site the Rod of Asclepius is an ancient Greek symbol that has become an internationally recognised symbol of medicine. The symbol is associated with the Greek demigod, Asclepius who was renowned for his unsurpassed medical prowess and healing powers.

According to myths, he got his medical knowledge through the whispering of snakes that have the ability of periodically shedding their skin and emerging bigger, healthier and stronger than before. The symbol was displayed at the Temples of Asclepius that became popular healing centres of the Greco-Roman world.

Later on, it came to be adopted by doctors all over the world.

Greek? It certainly sounds like Greek to me. I prefer to go with an alternative explanation that is no less plausible, far more Jewish, and much more meaningful. In this week’s Torah portion, Chukat, we read of the outbreak of a plague of snakes sent against the Jewish people. In order to protect them from harm, G-d instructed Moses. “Make for yourself a fiery serpent and place it upon a pole, and it will be that anyone who was bitten will look at it and live!” (Numbers 21:8)

So, the snake on the stick has Jewish origins. Very Jewish origins. G-d Himself was the graphic designer and Moses was the artist. But what does the symbol mean? In order to understand this, we need to go back to an earlier episode with snakes and sticks: G-d instructs Moses to tell Aaron to take his stick and throw it down before Pharaoh’s sorcerers. He does so, and it turns into a snake. Shockingly, the sorcerers are able to do the same. This was not some sort of power-play variation of snakes and ladders. This was about the way we are supposed to approach life.

All challenges in life, and illness is one of life’s greatest challenges. It offers us two options: the snake or the stick. The snake represents the mindset that life is out to get us. It bites. The stick represents the opposite - that life is here to empower us. It’s a tool.

When Aaron and the sorcerers let go of their sticks, they saw a snake - they became vulnerable and victims; when they were “hands-on” they had a stick - they were equipped with a tool for life.

Illness is the same. When we see illness as a cause for our downfall, we become vulnerable and victims; when we look at illness as an opportunity to grow, we have an impetus for growth.

When G-d told Moses to put a snake on the pole and to tell the people to look up at the snake in order to be healed, He was giving us an additional lesson: when we look at life via the stick, we are able to look up and see that even the snake, even the greatest challenges in life, are sent to us by our Father in Heaven.

He sends them not to knock us down, Heaven forbid, but quite the contrary, to bring out the positivity and greatness that we have within us.

What a relief it is to know that Hatzolah - and indeed the entire medical world - instead of having a symbol which is nothing more than an inessacratude of Greek, is nothing less than the inspiration of G-d.

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Medical symbol - from the Greeks or G-d?
A union made in Zion

DINA DIAMOND

This couple – whose engagement was announced on Sunday – may have shared interests – one of them being a deep love of Israel and the Jewish community.

She is Olga Meshoe, daughter of Reverend Kenneth Meshoe, a member of parliament, a defender of Israel and president of the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP). Her betrothed is Joshua Washington, son of Pastor Dimasario Goodson. In the M&G article, Goodson claimed that Jews, through their supposed “wrong perceptions” of her, had branded her as a “manager who was a puppet government”, he maintained.

The Board explained that Goodson’s book has as its central theme “that the system of international banking is and always has been, an unadulterated evil and that Jews, through their supposed underhanded, unscrupulous practices, have been guilty of foisting that evil on humanity at large”.

Among other things, said the Board, “Goodson persistently justifies anti-Jewish persecution by attributing it to the alleged criminal behaviour of Jews themselves. Blames Jews for instigating wars, revolutions and other such disasters and asserts that the Holocaust, in which six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis during the Second World War, is a ‘Jewish-spired lie aimed at exterminating reparation from Germany’.”

Said the Board: “As we have stressed in our initial correspondence with the Public Protector, such thinking is typical of ultra-right-wing and anti-Semitic ideology.”

The Board said it was concerned that in her book Goodson “made outrageous and false statements about the Public Protector and their supposed endorsement of Goodson’s book. Goodson was investigated by the Hawks in 2015 for breaching the Reserve Bank Act that year, after the publication of another book, “Inside the South African Reserve Bank - its origins and secrets exposed”. Last week Milhouse instructed Parliament to change the Constitution, with wording she instructed Parliament to change the mandate of the Reserve Bank.

Goodson is no stranger to controversy. Notorious for his anti-Semitic “banking conspiracy theories”, he has expressed his admiration for the social achievements of the Third Reich. His racial accusations are cast not only on Jews. In 2013 he was asked to give a historical overview of South Africa at a memorial service in Lancashire. He told his audience that Jews were responsible for all the financial ills of the world. A YouTube video of this event shows him continually making use of phrases like the unwelcome “flood of Jews”, “the connivance of Jews”, “the unsound business practices of Jews”. The Rothschilds’ “malevolent banking empire” takes a persistent beating throughout.

Goodson said that when the ANC came to power “each Cabinet minister has a Jewish adviser who writes their speeches. A lot of these people can’t write their name. The black government is just at front. It is a puppet government”, he maintained. Goodson claims in this talk that a manager told him: “These blacks are very good with theory. They will learn, pass their exams, but when it comes to the practical implementation, they are totally useless.”

He concludes his talk by painting a bleak picture of the future of South Africa, saying that the percentage of whites had declined and “by the end of the century there will be no white people. Whites are the cement keeping the country together. As they decline, everything is going to unravel.”

Goodson had spewed his “inflammatory views” to the Mail & Guardian in 2012, which included his admiring the economic policies of Hitler. He told of his belief that international bankers financed and manipulated the war against Hitler because they saw his model of state capitalism as “a threat to their unanimous ways”, and that the Holocaust was “a fiction invented to extract vast amounts of compensation from the defeated Germans”.

In the M&G article, Goodson claimed the genocide of millions of Jews during the Second World War was a “huge lie.”

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Joshua Washington and Olga Meshoe, favourite guest at Shabbos tables, is an avid supporter of the Jewish community and of Israel. She is currently studying for her MBA in the US.

Olga is the chief operating officer of DEISI International (Defend Embrace Invest Support Israel). This organisation was established to create a platform for all people to be educated and exposed to the truths regarding the Middle East conflict and the right of the State of Israel to exist within safe and secure borders.

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**Public Protector’s cohort is not just anti-Jewish…**

**SOUTH AFRICA’S PUBLIC PROTECTOR**

Mkhwebane this week denied punting notorious Holocaust denier Stephen Goodson’s book on the history of banking, in which he blames Jews for all the ills in the banking system.

In his book, A History of Central Banking and the Enslavement of Mankind, he makes outrageous claims, placing Jews at the centre of the so-called “rip” that permeates international banking.

“A must-read book”, Mkhwebane wrote on her Facebook status, showing a photograph of the cover of Goodson’s book.

“The post was informing the friends about the book she will be reading. It was not promotion,” insisted Milhouse’s spokesman Cleopatra Moswa this week.

However, the Public Protector and Goodson have been in close talks. This emerged last week when Milhouse released her shock report into the apartheid-era Bankorp, where she had “no evidence” she consulted with Goodson’s book, her spokesperson’s response was that the Public Protector “has a right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought and opinion about any matter which she conducts in her private capacity”.

She said she would be meeting the Jewish Board of Deputies to address these “wrong perceptions” of her supposed endorsement of Goodson’s controversial book.

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Netanyahu alienates Progressive Jews over the Kotel

OWN CORRESPONDENT

The South African Union for Progressive Judaism (SAUPJ) and the South African Association of Progressive Rabbis (SAAPR) have "condemned the decision by the Government of Israel to suspend the implementation of its own decision to establish a dignified space for egalitarian prayer at the Western Wall".

Progressive Jews in South Africa have joined the massive international protest against this decision. The Jewish Agency for Israel, itself, is at the forefront of this protest.

The Israeli Cabinet on Sunday suspended this already government-approved plan to establish the pavilion at the Jerusalem holy site, which was to have had joint oversight by all streams of Judaism, following calls by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s ultra-Orthodox coalition allies to scrap the deal.

"By most counts, there are about 14-15 million Jews in the world today... On Sunday, the prime minister of the world’s only Jewish state made clear to many millions of them: Israel really doesn’t want you," wrote Times of Israel editor David Horovitz.

He cited the Israeli Minister of Health Yaakov Litzman’s declaration: “The government’s decision to freeze the Western Wall arrangement sends a clear message to the entire world: it effectively says that Israel doesn’t want you.”

“Israel should be doing everything it can to avoid alienating its core supporters, its own flesh and blood,” said Horovitz, who was intimately involved in making the now-nixed Western Wall deal, said that the problem was Israel’s refusal to recognise Reform Judaism.

"It all exploded because the State of Israel did not recognise the Reform," he said.

Sharansky, who was intimately involved in making the now-rivised Western Wall deal, said that the problem was Israel’s refusal to recognise Reform Judaism.

"It all exploded because the State of Israel did not recognise the Reform," he said.

"This will definitely hurt the Jewish people’s connection to the story of Israel and the Diaspora-savvy prime minister, in capitulating to the narrow-minded demands against his better judgement, showed that the existence of the State of Israel - has explicitly called on the Israeli Cabinet to walk back a decision. The Jewish Agency also cancelled a planned gala event at the Knesset to which Netanyahu was invited. The agency’s board also passed an unprecedented resolution calling on the government to reinstate its previous commitment to create a permanent Western Wall prayer platform for non-Orthodox Jews.

"The prime minister himself is no ultra-Orthodox zealot," writes Horovitz. "The prime minister, politically, however, has quite evidently decided that his future depends on keeping the coalition’s two ultra-Orthodox parties happy."
Egalitarian minyanim - a South African perspective

HOWARD FELDMAN

Forty years ago, Jewish Johannesburg was a different place. The community was largely “Traditional” in observance, which meant that they drove to an Orthodox shul on a Friday night, but picked the bacon bits out of their salad on a Saturday.

Peach adherence meant removing the bread from the cheeseburger and Yom Kippur ended with a Yom Kippur dance that required preparation from mid-afternoon. Hardly a woman covered her hair (or pretty much anything else) and satin kippot had a firm and noticeable pocket crease.

Today things are more than slightly different. Despite tremendous political and economic uncertainty (as well as criminal), the community is thriving. Multiple Jewish day schools, yeshivot, shuls, aged homes, a sophisticated and caring welfare system, a Jewish newspaper, its own Jewish radio station, Beth Din and Hatzolah all thrive.

A spirit of inclusiveness is what defines the community. And although everyone still complains about the cost of kosher chickens, there is a sense of pride of what has been culminated in a strong and dynamic force that is there is a sense of pride of what has been culminated in a strong and dynamic force that is there. It is a sense of pride of what has been culminated in a strong and dynamic force that is there. And although everyone still complains about the cost of kosher chickens, there is a sense of pride of what has been culminated in a strong and dynamic force that is there. And although everyone still complains about the cost of kosher chickens, there is a sense of pride of what has been culminated in a strong and dynamic force that is there. And although everyone still complains about the cost of kosher chickens, there is a sense of pride of what has been culminated in a strong and dynamic force that is there. 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Finding unity in our diversity

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is the week the media in Israel has been filled with every angle on how Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reneged on, or suspended his agreement to create a special egalitarian prayer area at the Kotel, where Jews can pray in the way that befits their tradition.

The Jewish Agency is furious about this as its chairperson, former human rights activist, Natan Sharansky was a central figure in formulating the plan for the prayer section.

Because of this broken promise, the Jewish Agency and other religious leaders snubbed the Prime Minister by cancelling a scheduled dinner engagement with him. They are not against the government, but its decision that puts a further wedge between Orthodox and other sectors of the Jewish world.

Sharansky explained: “Five years ago, the Prime Minister asked me to lead a joint effort to bring about a workable formula that would transform the Western Wall into - in his own words - ‘one wall for one people’.

After years of intensive negotiations, we reached a solution that was accepted by all major denominations and was then adopted by the government and embraced by the world’s Jewish community.”

He believes that last week’s “change of heart” will make the Jewish Agency’s work in bringing Israel and the Jewish world closer together, much more difficult.

Looking at this from a South African perspective where most religious people are Orthodox, this is not likely to mean a big deal. But it is. You just have to read the article on page 4 to see how upset it has made the local Progressive Jewish leaders.

What Sharansky was really trying to bring Jews of all religious persuasions, political leanings and views, together as “one people”.

That makes sense to me. We may all choose to practice our Judaism in slightly different ways. Some of us may choose to wear a sheitel, others may choose to drive on Shabbos.

Some in our community won’t watch television and make a point of putting on tefillin every day. Others see the inside of a shul only on Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. And those are just the Orthodox community.

I may not feel comfortable praying in the midst of men and I certainly haven’t considered putting on tefillin myself, but that is my background or a path I chose.

But I believe every Jew has a right to practice Judaism and be a part of this greater community.

It is about unity in diversity! It is about accepting that we are all different and we may not agree with the way someone else does things. As long as that person does it with integrity, honesty and morality, surely they have a right to do it.

When people, like Steven Goodman - the Holocaust denier who appears to have influence over our new Public Protector - considers Jews, they don’t care how we pray or the nuances in our traditions.

Goodman doesn’t care whether we are Chabad, Ohr Somayach or Modern Orthodox. He sees us as Jews, all the same and paints us with his Nazi-sympathising brush.

He is not alone. All those people who look down their noses at Jewish people, couldn’t care about our differences - to them, we are all the same.

We aren’t, though. We are a fascinating, colourful, opinionated (in the most positive sense) and diverse-thinking community and that makes us wonderful.

We all know the saying: “Two Jews, three opinions” - What about the story of the Jewish man who was found on a desert island after living there for four years? He had built two shuls: one in which he prayed and the other into which he would never set foot.

We all shudder at this, knowing it epitomises how we are. We also know that if that person praying in the “other shul” needs help, we are going to move mountains to help him.

But isn’t it time we realised that we are just brothers and sisters from the same family? We need to care for each other and look out for one another - see our similarities and not just our differences.

I hope that Netanyahu gets off his political high horse and backtracks, because it is right. “One people, One wall”.

Let him and all of us find unity in our diversity!

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Kroot Maundor

Editor

Israel is becoming energy independent

PAULA SLER

T

ere is a joke that asks why didn’t Moses go right to the oil fields instead of left to the olive groves.

The answer is that being a man, he refused to ask for directions. This could explain why some 60 per cent of the world’s oil reserves are found in the Middle East, but none of them exist in Israel.

But jokes aside, it means that for decades Israel has been forced to rely on foreign sources of energy and suffers from the vulnerability that comes with that.

A case in point is when the Arab Spring in Egypt erupted in 2011 and Cairo curtailed its exports of natural gas to Israel because of energy shortages at home. Those supplies are not expected to resume anytime soon, especially in light of Egypt’s announcement that it was indefinitely suspending its gas supply agreement with Jerusalem.

But in the end, it seems Moses might not have been so off the mark. There’s a lot of excitement in Israeli financial circles that recent natural gas discoveries off the country’s coasts could be a game changer.

Nearly 20 years ago two small natural gas fields were found off the beaches of Ashkelon and then in 2009 and 2010 significantly larger ones were discovered in the waters off Haifa. They are among the largest offshore fields in the world.

Natural gas is fast becoming a popular alternative to oil or coal. It can produce about 20 per cent more electricity than oil or coal and is more environmentally friendly. Currently in Israel, 60 per cent of the country’s electricity derives from natural gas. The goal is to reach 80 per cent.

Challenges aside, these discoveries offer Israel a level of energy independence it has never known. Not only does the country now stand to become more energy independent, but it could also become a major gas exporter. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly said hundreds of billions of dollars will find their way into Israeli coffers, to in turn be used for welfare, health and education.

But most importantly, the new gas fields will make Israel a global energy player for the first time in its history, greatly altering its political and economic clout throughout the world, especially Europe.

Already the world’s longest underwater pipeline that would carry gas from Israel to Cyprus, Greece and Italy, to the tune of six-and-a-half billion dollars, is in the works. This would bring Israel’s natural gas into the European market and has the support of the EU’s Climate and Energy Commission.

It says it would help limit Europe’s reliance on Russian-supplied gas. Moscow in the past has used its large reserves to play politics. After a pricing dispute with Ukraine, Moscow cut off gas exports to Europe, prompting The New York Times a few years ago to run the headline: “Russia Cuts Gas, and Europe Shivers”.

Jordan has already signed a $15 billion, 15-year letter of intent to import Israeli natural gas, the first country of which were sent earlier this year. While less desirable to the Kingdom from a political point of view, such an agreement represents the most expedient and least costly option for Jordan to compensate for its loss of Egyptian gas.

And it’s still not so unforeseeable that Cairo itself may someday obtain natural gas from Israel, though so far Egypt has rejected such deals on political grounds. But there are challenges. At the moment, a single pipeline connects the one gas field, Tamar, to the Israeli shore. Should a technical problem arise or a Hamas or Hezbollah missile hit it, those on the receiving end would be in darkness. It also costs billions of dollars to develop these offshore fields and there have been problems over regulation in the past.

At the moment two main companies control the drilling, with critics arguing they will be able to impose exorbitant prices. The Israeli and Palestinian markets are relatively small and if Europe doesn’t materialise as a major buyer, it will be difficult to interest more companies in financing further exploration. At the moment, there is also an oversupply of gas and prices are low.

But exciting for Israel is the geopolitical implications. Of course, some countries will never buy Israeli gas, but those who do, like countries in Europe, might land up becoming more lenient towards Israeli policies.

The question of course remains whether or not this new political clout will lead governments to back away from their support of the BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement and criticism of the Jewish State. But even if it doesn’t, when you do the math, the promise of these new discoveries does seem to make Moses’ wanderings that little more successful.

Paula Slier is the Middle East Bureau Chief of RT, the founder and CEO of NewsHour/Meedia and the inaugural winner of the Europcar Woman in Leadership Award of the South African Ahda Jewish Achievers.
The man who turned Judaism outward

With this week being the yahrzeit of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, we pay our respects by running this personal tribute to him by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation of the Commonwealth, which was penned in 1994.

A great leader died and the Jewish world has become a smaller place. History will chart the achievements when, in the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, my own tribute is simple. This was a man who changed the religious landscape of Jewish life.

We first met in 1968. I was an undergraduate, visiting American Jewry to seek out its intellectual leaders. They were impressive. But my encounter with the Rebbe was unique. In every other case, I asked questions and received answers. The Lubavitcher Rebbe alone turned the interview around and began asking me questions. What was I doing for Jewish life in Cambridge? What was I doing to promote Jewish identity among my fellow students?

He was passionate and unmistakable. I then realised what was remarkable about the Rebbe was the exact opposite of what was usually attributed to him. This was not a man who was interested in creating followers. Instead, this was a man who was passionate about creating leaders.

He himself was a leader on a heroic scale. Chosen to succeed his late father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, as head of Lubavitch in 1950, he set about reconstructing the movement in the inhospitable climate of secular America.

At that time it was widely believed that Orthodoxy had no future in the United States. No one had yet found a way to make traditional Judaism a living presence in America. The Lubavitch movement was a different story.

Like all classic rabbinic leaders, the Rebbe began with teaching. He sent his followers out to places and communities which had never known a Chasidic presence. He began with university campuses. Already, in the early 1950s, he expressed his concern at the shortage of rabbis throughout the Diaspora, and in the failure of yeshivot to direct their alumni to congregational work.

Behind all this activity lay a compelling vision, never mentioned publicly. It was a vision of the Lubavitch movement as a network of schools and yeshivot, as a centre of religious and secular education, creating a network of schools and yeshivot. Then he took the decision that was to change the face of Lubavitch: He created an international money-making campaign. Few international organisations can have been more tightly led by a single individual on the most slender resources.

It would be hard to find a historical precedent for this massive effort to reignite the flame of Judaism in a secular world. If today we are familiar with the phenomena of baalei teshuvah (religious returnees) and Jewish outreach, it is almost entirely due to the pioneering work by Lubavitch, since adopted by many other groups within Orthodoxy.

The Rebbe was preoccupied by the challenge of religious leadership. In a conversation we had in 1978, he expressed the Lubavitch’s concern at the shortage of rabbis throughout the Diaspora, and at the failure of yeshivot to direct their alumni to congregational work.

He encouraged me to enter the rabbinate and to train other rabbis and was particularly supportive of the work of Jews’ College. He himself turned his followers into leaders at the earliest possible age, and, if the decision to empower youth exposed Lubavitch to risks, it also gave it a vigour and energy that were to be found nowhere else in the religious world.

Behind all this activity lay a compelling vision, never formally articulated but clear nonetheless. The Jewish world, particularly the Europe from which he came, had been devastated by the Holocaust.

In the aftermath, one thing had happened but another thing had not. Jews had returned to the Land of Israel. But they had not returned to the faith of Israel. In Judaism, physical and spiritual return, are inseparable.

In the modern world they had become separated. This was the fracture he sought to mend. Where others devoted themselves to building the Jewish State, he dedicated himself to rebuilding the inner state of Jews. The Lubavitch movement was tireless in drawing connections between contemporary events and the Torah portion of the week.

His followers will not miss the significance of the fact that he died at the beginning of the week of Hukkat, the Torah reading which records the poignant decree that Moses would die before leading his people into the promised land. As Israel was to Moses, so the messianic age has been to Judaism’s greatest leaders: a destination journeyed towards, glimpsed from afar but not yet reached.

Others will argue about the Rebbe’s controversial stances on the great Jewish issues of our time. I simply mourn the loss of a commanding intellect, a majestic presence, a man of spiritual fire and personal warmth, one of the very few in history whose influence was felt throughout the Jewish world, the man who turned Judaism outward and dedicated his life to bringing to post-Holocaust humanity the living presence of G-d.

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SA JEWISH REPORT

Tribute
From the outside the Chabad community - described by many as the world's most successful and influential Jewish movement - may seem unusual and shrouded in secrecy. Rabbi David Eliezrie, American author of The Secret of Chabad, flew into Johannesburg this week to mark the Rebbe's yahrzeit and provided some insights into the movement.

“The day the Rebbe passed away in 1994, there were 1 032 Chabad couples around the world,” says Rabbi Eliezrie, who is executive director of North County Chabad Centre in California, speaker and the president of the Rabbinical Council of Orange County and Long Beach. “Today we have over 4 500 couples.”

Known as chibbitzim (emissaries), these couples are rabbin and rebbeits who are sent to locations far afield, to spread Judaism and Chassidut through providing leadership and establishing infrastructure for Jews who generally lack communities or are in danger of assimilation.

“As Chabad was emerging, the world was being transformed practically the American Jewish community which is very different to the South African narrative and other countries,” he explains.

Rabbi Eliezrie wrote his book to explain this phenomenal growth and demystify the movement. It took him over 10 years to write and involved more than 200 interviews. The Secret of Chabad was published in 2015, has sold over 20 000 copies to date and was a finalist in the National Jewish Book Award in the US.

“I felt that people really didn’t understand, firstly, the scope of what we were doing, and secondly how rapid our growth was. Today we’re the largest Jewish organisation in the world, we’re in 52 countries including the likes of Morocco and Hong Kong.

“I also looked at the struggles and the difficulties in how a Chassidic rabbi takes a group of a few hundred families and turns them into a Jewish paradise, it’s a remarkable story.”

In his book, Rabbi Eliezrie explains what motivates and drives him and his wife and people like them, and looks at the Chabad business model. “In South Africa, it’s more structured, but in America we had to create a totally new infrastructure as there Orthodoxy is limited to certain urban centres - the Jewish community in the US is dominated by the more liberal movements.

The book also looks at how we do it globally and examines the Russian story - what Chabad did in the Russian underground in keeping Judaism alive in the former Soviet Union. It shows how it’s emerged from the shadow to be a major force of Jewish life in Russia.”

Rabbi Eliezrie argues that there’s more mystery than misconceptions surrounding Chabad’s success. “In today’s world, it’s hard to find ideology that’s sustainable,” he explains.

“People are feeling a sense of affinity with people with real ideals. They may not want to live the way that rabbis are living, but they want them as their role models.”

Chabad’s growth has also been driven by generational perpetuity. “According to a study we did for the LA Times, 67 per cent of the children of the Chabad shlichim become Chabad shlichim themselves, which doesn’t exist today in any other religious segment, even outside the Jewish world.

“People - at least in America - don’t understand the business model. It’s more of an entrepreneurial partnership model than a board-driven model, which is a very different concept in institutional management.

“Chabad also has a fundamentally unique concept in institutional management.

From the religious Zionists, and so on.”

“The Haredi world wants to detach itself from society, as they feel that they endanger their way of life, but we’re willing to engage the society while keeping ‘Torah as the prime principle’.

“Chabad has really profound things to say about this big question of how to live as a Jew in a modern age. In the Chabad world, there are values in the secular society that we don’t agree with, but we’re willing to engage that society while keeping our principles central.

“People are feeling a sense of responsibility that we feel for other Jews; we’re putting our lives on the line for them. These are very crucial things that people don’t understand.”

Acknowledging the phenomenal nature of South African Jewish life, where tradition and Orthodoxy is common and kosher restaurants are accepted, Rabbi Eliezrie explains the difference in America.

“South Africa has a community where 90 per cent of Jewish kids go to a Jewish day school, in America it’s 10-15 per cent. Most Americans are not turned off to Judaism; they’ve just not turned on. They know nothing about it; they don’t see the relevance of Judaism in their lives. They therefore don’t feel a sense of identification.

“Since the 1980s when the Jews first came to the US, we’ve seen a process of assimilation. What we have to do is bring them meaning by showing them how Judaism relates to their real lives in the real world.

“Chabad’s a movement of big ideas, it’s not an emotional movement, it’s an intellectual movement. There are profound ideas that are animating the movement and changing the way Jews live their lives as Jews.

“It gives space for people who want to be involved with Judaism and connected to tradition, but they also want to do it at their own pace and to be encouraged.”

Rabbi Eliezrie stresses the great power of South African Jewish. “South Africa has an unusual Jewish community that’s very traditional. Everywhere in North America where South African Jews go, Judaism goes through a renaissance.”

Yet, even though South African Jewry is very strong, Chabad is still important in the country as it strikes this balance. “When you’re looking for rabbinical leadership, in Chabad you find a sense of real commitment to the people, the willingness to engage the world around them and the willingness to love every single Jew as they are, even though they may be different to them.

“There’s quality in leadership. Chabad shlichim are there for life when they come to a country - that resonates with people, they feel they’re really here for them.”

Rabbi Eliezrie argues that Modern Orthodox has an even greater engagement with secular culture than Chabad does; in the US most Modern Orthodox congregations are made up of Orthodox-observant people.

“In Chabad centres outside core urban areas, almost 90 per cent of communities are not Orthodox-observant. We’re willing to create congregations of communities; this is the revolution in American Jewish life today.

“We’re holding the standard of Jewish tradition and we’re growing.”

He also explains the different role of women in Chabad as opposed to Modern Orthodox. “In the Modern Orthodox world they’re struggling with the role of women. In Chabad, women are very empowered. One of the Rebbe’s major principles was that he never sent single people, he always sent a couple to a new location and it was a partnership.”

Ultimately, while they’re built on a common core principle, each Chabad community is unique.

“Each shul where there’s a Chabad rabbi, you’ll find something different,” says Rabbi Eliezrie. “The common denominator is a culture of accepting Jews where they are, not judging them and not trying to put them into a box; yet maintaining a fidelity to Jewish tradition.

“There’s always a sense of welcome and of caring about people, which is the real central foundation of the movement.”

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Fifty years of opposition

DAHLIA SCHEINDLIN

Fifty-four, marking the anniversary since the 1967 war, has swept the Israelis, both left and right. The latter is dreaming up even more creative ways to celebrate Israel's triumph, while the left is grasping for ways to remind a largely apathetic public about the ill of occupation. The often-overlooked fact is that 50 years of Israeli occupation is also a half-century of opposition. The core goal of ending occupation has failed, and there is no political resolution. But the history of opposition holds elements of success: the often-derided "peace industry" has produced not just dialogues and demonstrations, but has helped legitimate ideas in Israel that form the core principles for resolving the conflict.

Opposition to Israel's policy in the territories captured in 1967, go back to the war itself. Its principles for resolving the conflict. Its core goal of ending occupation is also a half-century of apathetic public about the ills of occupation. Shortly after the war, the scientist cum conscience-philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz railed against prolonged military rule over the Palestinians, arguing that Israel would lose its Jewish majority and Israelis would turn into security-obsessed occupiers, while destroying Palestinian society.

In 1970, a nascent movement of IDF pre-recruits protesting their service in "the territories" emerged. In 1978, a letter signed by several hundred officers protested government policy "perpetuating its rule over a million Arabs", which they argued "could harm the Jewish democratic character of the state." In 1978, just five per cent of Israeli Jews polled, supported withdrawal from the West Bank and 91 per cent rejected the establishment of a Palestinian state. There were already over 5,000 settlers.

During the 1970s and '80s, three core ideas emerged from the left: the notion that the occupation was bad for both Israelis and Palestinians; that settlements were damaging to peace; and that there should be a Palestinian state. The establishment of a Palestinian state - or the two-state solution - endured. The PLO formally adopted the notion (implcitly) in 1988. Opinion in Israel began to shift. By the 1993 Oslo accords, Israeli Jewish public support for a Palestinian state was roughly one-third. By the mid-1990s public support reached half, then topped 60 per cent in the 2000s.

Losing momentum, changing direction

The failure of peace negotiations in 2000 and the second Intifada saw severe violence on both sides. Settlements had ballooned and by 2000, there were roughly 300,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israeli human rights activists tended to formally steer away from advocating specific political frameworks for resolving the conflict. They sought a human rights standard that could transcend politics, that they could demand of any party in power.

Some leftists wondered if the improvement of peace settlement juggernaut, with the infrastructure and IDF land takeovers, continued to spread. An idea, long found only on the fringes of the left in Israel, reappeared in public discourse: one single, democratic state with equal rights for all. Both the Israeli and Palestinian leadership were formally against it.

By 2016, the number of settlers had roughly doubled since 2000, approaching 600,000. The two-state solution appears more unlikely every day. Although settlements represent the bullseye target of left-wing opposition for decades, some feel that instead of fighting windmills, there is a need for new solutions.

In recent years, some have begun to envision a modified version of two states, based on two governments for two peoples, with different national identities and a geographic border. But instead of a hard separation, this approach envisions a porous border. Citizens of either side would be allowed to cross for travel, leisure, work or even residency. This approach allows for citizens of each side to live as permanent residents in the other state - under local laws, with full rights, but national voting in one's country of identity (Arab citizens of Israel can choose their citizenship, or retain both).

Jerusalem would remain unified, the capital of two states. Security co-operation between Israeli and Palestinian security forces can continue as it is today. The word "confederalism" or "confederation" scares many. But the initiative has sparked interest and curiosity among settlers and other right-wingers. An organic social community has grown up around the idea, called "Two States, One Homeland".

DAHLIA SCHEINDLIN is an international public opinion analyst and strategic consultant, specializing in progressive causes, political and social campaigns in over a dozen countries. She will be presenting at Limmud. Limmud Johannesburg takes place from August 4-6; Limmud Durban August 9; Limmud Cape Town August 11-13.

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SA JEWISH REPORT
The institutions of the South African state have been captured in a “silent coup” by a corrupt, powerful elite. As a result, a “shadow state” has emerged which is threatening the country’s constitutional framework. These are the views of Professor Ivor Chipkin, of Wits University’s Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI).

Chipkin is one of the lead authors of the recent academic report into state capture, Betrayal of the Promise: How South Africa is being stolen. He was being publicly interviewed about the findings of the report by author and researcher Antony Altbeker on Tuesday evening.

Chipkin says the motivation for the report was to “join the dots” of the many journalistic accounts of corrupt activity that already exist in the public domain, and to organise these into a single coherent account of state capture.

“We were trying to move the analysis away from endless stories of corruption. We wanted to make sense of the fact that this is not simply criminals who have seized the state’s power and are looting for their own private interests. Rather, we need to understand that there is a political project that creates the context in which some of this criminality happens that creates a space for illegality to occur,” Chipkin said.

This political project is given a cover of legitimacy by the concept of “radical economic transformation”. Chipkin argued that while it was necessary to reconfigure the South African economy, the concept of “radical economic transformation” was being used to attack democratic institutions and subvert the law.

Chipkin argued that the early conception of black economic empowerment (BEE) and affirmative action, were premised on the idea that you can “cajole, push and incentivise black business to transform itself by putting in place quotas and incentives.”

However, while this resulted in the emergence of a small, black upper class, it also led to “massive economic exclusion” of poor, uneducated people. Because of this imbalance, Chipkin believed there was a sincere attempt on behalf of the ANC government to transform the economy after Polokwane.

Chipkin argued that the early conception of black economic empowerment was the use of public procurement as a mechanism for incentivising local production, Chipkin explained.

By leveraging the significant procurement budgets of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), government sought to achieve two aims. The first was to displace white business and the second, to incentivise a new black industrial economy.

However, he said, this resulted in procurement contracts being channelled to “black-owned companies, irrespective of price and irrespective of experience”.

He added: “Here is where things get very complicated. We argue [in the report] that this model of transformation radicalises when it comes up against the Constitution, the law, and when it comes up against National Treasury.”

Chipkin explained that given Treasury’s constitutional mandate to ensure due process is followed with regards to state procurement, this new transformation strategy is met with increased resistance from the Minister of Finance. “As a result, from 2011 we start to see the government increasingly moving outside of legal norms and procurement begins to actively flout the law. This is motivated by political self-righteousness, and the idea that the rules of the game are rigged against black people, so the only way of achieving real break-throughs is to break the rules,” he posited.

Chipkin noted that this period also saw sustained assaults being made against public institutions, particularly those with significant investigative and prosecutorial capacities.

“The first example of this was the attack on the South African Revenue Service (SARS) in December 2014, which had begun to investigate tax evasion among politically connected individuals, including those operating in the illegal tobacco industry (Chipkin noted that the Zuma family is alleged to be involved in the illicit trade of cigarettes).

These attacks took the form of fabricated intelligence reports of a “rogue unit” in SARS, and other spurious allegations, such as spying on the President and (even) running a brothel.

These allegations were then used to suspend the entire senior leadership of SARS and to lay criminal charges against then Deputy Commissioner Ivan Pillay and Pravin Gordhan, the former Commissioner and later Minister of Finance.

Similar moves were made against public institutions, particularly those that already exist in the public domain, and to organise these into a single coherent account of state capture.

In parallel to these attacks on independent institutions, a “shadow state” has emerged, where key decision-making has increasingly moved outside of legal norms and procurement with increased resistance from the Minister of Finance.

This has resulted in a “repurposing of state institutions” away from governance and towards large-scale rent-seeking and patronage distribution.

Chipkin argued that the Constitution must not be seen as a barrier, but rather as an enabler of transformation in South Africa.
Ultra-Orthodox threaten to leave government if conversion bill is endangered

SUE SURKES

Health Minister Yaakov Litzman on Wednesday threatened to take his party out of the governing coalition if a bill cementing the ultra-Orthodox monopoly over religious conversion, does not become law.

The bill, approved by Cabinet ministers on Sunday, but slammed by non-Orthodox Jewish groups in Israel and overseas, will pull the government’s recognition of private conversions, namely those not conducted by the Chief Rabbinate, if it completes passage through the Knesset.

It would negate the conversions of the Geyur Kahalacha private Orthodox conversion court, which was established two years ago, largely in order to help Jews from the former Soviet Union who qualified as Jewish in order to immigrate to Israel but who cannot marry under the auspices of the rabbinate, because according to Jewish religious law, a Jew who is not a convert must have a Jewish mother.

It would also rule out conversions by the national-religious Tzohar organisation.

Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who heads the Yisrael Beytenu party, which represents many immigrants from the former Soviet Union, opposes the bill. On Sunday, he said that in its current form, the legislation would deter anyone interested in growing closer to Judaism from converting.

But on Wednesday, Litzman warned: “If they want to appeal against this or that, we won’t allow it - we’ll leave the coalition if we have to.”

He also lashed out at Reform Jews, who have been vocally protesting a second controversial Cabinet decision this week - to scrap a plan for a pluralistic prayer pavilion at Jerusalem’s Western Wall.

“They don’t run for elections here in a democratic way like I and my colleagues do,” he said.

If they did, “I’m not sure they would get 1 000 votes”, Litzman added. “There are coalition agreements; everything is open and everything was on the Knesset table.”

Litzman heads the Agudath Israel party, part of the United Torah Judaism ultra-Orthodox faction in the Knesset.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu needs the support of both Yisrael Beytenu and the ultra-Orthodox parties to keep his governing coalition stable.

Capuring Israel's beauty and diversity

When the world sees photographs of Israel, they are often accompanied by reports of conflict and violence. But a photo exhibition that opened last week at the Jerusalem Theatre, is bound to make people see Israel in a more flattering light. The images, which will be on display until July 28, show Israel’s people and geography from a variety of angles - from flocks of birds descending on the Hula Valley to a little boy carrying a rainbow flag.

OVER 2 000 TERROR ATTACKS THWARTED WITH CYBERTECH

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF

The Shin Bet has used cybertechnology to prevent more than 2 000 terror attacks since the beginning of 2016, the internal security agency’s head said at a conference on Tuesday.

The opportunities that the cyber world present to the organisation are dramatic, Nadav Argaman told the Cyber Week 2017 conference at Tel Aviv University.

Using unspecified technological means, the Shin Bet, along with other Israeli intelligence agencies, have prevented terror attacks in Israel and also passed on information to stop terrorists elsewhere in the world.

He told conference-goers that groundbreaking cybertechnology has also helped to protect against lone-wolf attacks - not directed by terrorist groups but sometimes inspired by social media incitement - that would have been unpreventable using traditional intelligence-gathering means.

“Our rivals focus on connecting computers to the physical world, and we are creating an effective preventive defence system,” he said. “We’ve carried out dozens of smart and successful operations.”

Argaman said his agency protects against threats from world powers, terror groups and individual hackers.

He also warned that hackers who attempt to attack Israel are in for a surprise. “We are not only defending, but also attacking hackers in the world,” he said. “Hackers who operate against Israel around the world, find they experience unexpected problems.

“We learn the patterns of activities of the enemy and know how to surprise him with counterattacks in many different ways,” Argaman said.

“We will continue to thwart threats in distant locations, and hackers who work against us should be prepared for surprises, not only in cyberspace but also in the real world. Anyone who attacks us will get a total response,” he said.

Israel recruits the best minds in the world, Argaman said, and is competitive in the private market. However, he added, its agencies must remain quiet about their capabilities in order to stay ahead of those trying to attack.

Shin Bet head Nadav Argaman speaks at Cyber Week in Tel Aviv on Tuesday.
Attorney who represents Hebron shooter to defend bomb hoaxer

Attorney Yoram Sheftel.

The parents of the Israeli-American teenager charged with making thousands of threatening calls to schools, Jewish institutions, hospitals, airlines and other targets in numerous countries for two years before his arrest in March, have hired prominent lawyer Yoram Sheftel to defend him.

The parents of the teenager, who may not be named in Israel by court order, claim that the state is deliberately providing a psychiatric evaluation of their son, until they can say "He is crazy" and have a break down.

The district psychiatrist was supposed to submit its report on May 19, but was granted a postponement, and then a subsequent postponement. On July 3, a hearing is scheduled on whether to keep the suspect in jail until the end of proceedings against him, and on July 18 a hearing is scheduled to discuss the case itself.

The parents cited an incident several weeks ago when their son, who was being taken back to jail after a psychological evaluation in Ashkelon and was in a traumatised state, attempted to break out of the police van that was transporting him, smashing a door.

They said a prison service guard smashed him in the face with a rifle butt, drawing blood. They also said he was lifted up by his handcuffs, causing him considerable pain.

A spokesman for the Prisons Service said he was aware of the incident, and that the suspect “went wild” in the van, and that officers had no choice but to use force to restrain him. The spokesman said he had never heard of a previous incident in which the door of these reinforced vans had been broken in such a way by a detainee.

If the family believed unreasonable force was used to subdue him, said the spokesman, they had the right to file a complaint about the incident.

The spokesman added that the family “may well be right” to argue that their son should be held in a more appropriate facility. “But that is a matter for the courts.”

Sheftel said he was indeed kept in a “special facility” in the jail - stressing, however, that this was not solitary confinement - “to ensure that he cannot harm himself or others”.

The suspect’s parents said they decided to hire Sheftel after explaining the case to him and recognising that Sheftel “understood right away” what was at stake and that their son “is more than million per cent not fit to stand trial... This is unmistakable within a minute when you see him.”

Asked how they would pay their legal fees, they said they would take out loans.

Sheftel is currently defending IDF soldier Elor Azaria, convicted of manslaughter in the killing of an injured and disarmed Palestinian assailant in March 2016. Azaria is appealing his conviction and 18-month jail term.

Sheftel defended John Demjanjuk against charges that he was the notorious Treblinka death camp guard Ivan the Terrible. Demjanjuk was convicted and sentenced to death in 1988, but the verdict was overturned on appeal by the Supreme Court five years later.

Does her work encourage Israel’s enemies to resort to their own “lawfare” against Israeli targets?

Times of Israel is being kept in a more appropriate facility. “But family “may well be right” to argue that their son should be held in a more appropriate facility. “But that is a matter for the courts.”

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The suspect’s parents said they decided to hire Sheftel after explaining the case to him and recognising that Sheftel “understood right away” what was at stake and that their son “is more than million per cent not fit to stand trial... This is unmistakable within a minute when you see him.”

 Asked how they would pay their legal fees, they said they would take out loans.

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Does her work encourage Israel’s enemies to resort to their own “lawfare” against Israeli targets?

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Numerous buildings across Israel are potentially as vulnerable as London’s Grenfell Tower, the residential high-rise where a June 14 fire killed at least 79 people, The Times of Israel has been told.

Israel’s Fire and Rescue Authority said there may be hundreds of buildings nationwide that are similarly vulnerable, but that it has no idea how many there actually are. And even if it were able to establish which buildings are at risk, it is not empowered to do anything to alleviate the danger.

Indeed, just last year, despite strong opposition from the fire department, the Israeli government amended regulations and allow certain construction projects to use the same flammable material suspected to have been a major factor in the deadly London blaze.

Avid a national operation to identify buildings with insulation paneling akin to the 24-storey Grenfell Tower, which has so far seen the evacuation of some 650 London apartments in other buildings deemed unsafe, Israeli officials admitted that dangerous loopholes exist in the county’s own fire safety regulations. Those loopholes bear striking similarities to questionable practices currently under scrutiny in Britain.

In June last year, a small fire broke out in an apartment in a multi-storey building in Ramat Gan, quickly spreading along the exterior and climbing up to other floors. Twenty-eight firefighters battled the blaze for over five hours as it consumed apartments on 10 floors on the south side of the building and spewed burning debris onto the street below, destroying several cars.

Dozens of residents and workers in the joint apartment-office building were treated for smoke inhalation after they were rescued, using ladders and cranes.

The fire likely would not have been able to spread the way it did if it were not helped by flammable insulation paneling lining the building’s exterior. According to the fire department, it was the same paneling that contributed to the Grenfell inferno. The polythene composite panels, found in both buildings, have been widely blamed for the rapid spread of the London fire.

A source in the Haifa Municipality, told The Times of Israel that an apartment building in the city that caught alight during a rash of wildfires that spread across Israel last November, also used similar material in its insulation panels. The fire department, however, said investigations of that fire did not show the use of any prohibited materials and no polythene residue was found at the site.

Experts point to loopholes in construction inspections that allow those renovating buildings to use cheaper, non-flame-resistant material, putting apartment-dwellers at risk of fires spreading from apartment to apartment.

Last week Thursday, UK Prime Minister Theresa May’s office said that some 600 buildings in the UK may have been fitted with flammable external panels like the ones believed to have contributed to the Grenfell Tower fire. By last Sunday, officials said 60 buildings in 25 areas were found to be unsafe, and that all buildings checked thus far had failed safety tests.

The cladding in the Grenfell Tower is an aluminium and plastic composite - polythene. It was used in hundreds of Reynobond panels which were fitted to the outside of the London high-rise last year. Reynobond panels come in three types - one with a flammable polythene core and two with fire-resistant centres.

As in Britain, building regulations in Israel prohibit the use of the polythene Reynobond panels during initial construction, but loopholes have allowed for it to be used unchecked in some cases during renovations, where contractors are specifically looking to cut costs.

A simple internet search shows that Reynobond panels have been used in projects all over the country, including in massive residential and corporate construction projects in Haifa, Rehovot, Tel Aviv, Herzliya and Petah Tikva. The company declined repeated requests from The Times of Israel to disclose which type of panel had been used at those sites.

Reynobond representatives for both the international office and the Israeli distributor, also declined to comment on which type of materials the company provides to Israel and whether the company has ever imported the controversial Reynobond panels in question.

The Standards Institution of Israel, which is responsible for testing and certification of all products used in Israeli building projects, could not confirm testing these Reynobond panels and said that specific results were not public information.

According to Haim Tamam, head of the Israel Fire and Rescue Services Safety and Investigations department, it is impossible to estimate how many buildings in Israel may have been renovated using the dangerous and non-approved paneling material. There could be hundreds, he acknowledged, saying that under the current conditions certain buildings were “as vulnerable” as Grenfell Tower.

Without permission from the fire department, including confirmation that all construction materials are approved, contractors cannot get permission to begin.

But once a building has already been built, Tamam said, it is more complicated to oversee changes made during renovations.

HUNDREDS OF ISRAEL’S BUILDINGS ‘AS VULNERABLE’ AS GRENFELL TOWER

**APF AND TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF**

**LONDON**

British children’s writer Michael Bond, creator of the much-loved fictional character Paddington Bear, has died at the age of 91, his publisher HarperCollins said on Wednesday.

Bond’s famous series about a friendly teddy bear from darkest Peru, sold more than 30 million copies worldwide and was turned into a blockbuster film in 2014.

“He was a true gentleman, a bon viveur, the most entertaining company and the most enchanting of writers,” Ann-Jarine Murtagh, executive publisher at HarperCollins Children’s Books, said in a statement.

“He will be forever remembered for his creation of the iconic Paddington, with his duffel coat and Wellington boots, which touched my own heart as a child and will live on in the hearts of future generations,” she said.

The inspiration for the character came on Christmas Eve 1956 when Bond, a writer and BBC cameraman, saw a lonely-looking teddy bear in a shop near his home close to Paddington railway station in London, and bought it for his wife.

Bond based Paddington’s arrival at the train station on his memories of Jewish refugees arriving in London just before the outbreak of the Second World War, the British newspaper The Telegraph quoted him as saying in a 2014 interview.

“...I remember their labels round their necks and then I remember going to the cinema and seeing on the newsreel that Hitler had moved into some new country and seeing footage of elderly people pushing prams with all their belongings in them.

“Refugees are the saddest sight, I still think that,” he told the paper.

With his books, the impeccably polite stonecutter waystays up at Paddington Station with a battered suitcase containing a nearly-finished jar of marmalade, and a label on his blue duffel coat reading: “Please look after this bear. Thank you.”

Bond told the Telegraph that another character, Dr Gruber, Paddington’s friend who owns an antique shop, was inspired by a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany.

Bond said that the character, Dr Gruber, was inspired by a real person, Dr Gruber. I wanted someone foreign because he was based on my first agent, a lovely man, a German Jew, who was in line to be the youngest judge in Germany, when he was warned his name was on a list, so he got out and came to England...
Moscow’s Schneerson Collection goes online

In 1922, a few years before he fled the Soviet Union, the sixth Chabad-Lubavitch Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, petitioned the Russian government to return 35 cartes of books that had seized seven years earlier.

The books had been passed down to his father, Rabbi Sholom DovBer Schneerson, by his grandfather and had belonged to the sixth Chabad-Lubavitch Rebbe in Lyubavichi in the face of advancing German troops and placed the books in storage in Moscow.

In the 1922 letter on display at the Jewish Museum in Moscow, Yosef Schneerson explains that he placed the books in storage because he did not have anywhere else to keep them. But when a few years later he wanted to take the books back, the government refused to return them. Instead they moved the books to a public library in Moscow.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Chabad sued the Russian government in an American court for the return of the books, and in 2013 an American judge ruled that Russia should pay a fine of $50,000 per day for failing to do so.

The Russian government, in return, opened its own case concerning seven books from the Schneerson Collection that were loaned to the Library of Congress in Washington DC in the 1990s, but were never returned to Russia, Khvostova said. Instead, the Library of Congress gave the books to Chabad.

The Russian government did take a step towards a resolution of the matter, when they invited a Chabad librarian to Moscow to pick out the books that had belonged to the Schneerson family. He selected the 4,651 books, which were moved from the Russian State Library to the Schneerson Collection at the recently opened Jewish Museum and Tolerance Centre in Moscow.

The letters are currently on show at the Jewish Museum in Moscow. American court documents mention 12,000 books, but Khvostova says she isn’t sure how they came up with this number.

Manuscripts, letters and photos still inaccessible

However, the manuscripts, letters, documents and family photographs of the Schneersons were not handed over to the Jewish Museum.

Allegedly, Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson left these letters and documents behind in Poland when he fled to America during the Second World War and they ended up in the hands of the Nazis.

When the Soviet Union won the war, the Red Army took them to Moscow. The letters are currently kept at the Russian State Military Historical Archive in Moscow, and have all been scanned.

The handwritten manuscripts of Chabad-Lubavitch rebbes, are still in the Russian State Library because the Jewish community didn’t mention them specifically, Khvostova said.

“The Hassidic community wrote a letter to (Russian President Vladimir) Putin and they requested ‘the books from the Schneerson Collection’ - so the manuscripts remained at the Russian State Library,” she said.

Visitors can see the manuscripts at the library, but a written request needs to be made in advance and few people bother to do so, Khvostova said.

So far, only the published books from the Schneerson Collection have been made available online, but they are already being used by researchers outside of Russia.

“We always find something new in the margins of these books,” Khvostova said.

“We see children’s drawings, scribbles, and even people practising their handwriting.”

The books are kept in special cardboard boxes - microorganisms can’t survive in this acid-free cardboard, Khvostova said - in a temperature-controlled room with a gas-operated fire extinguishing system that ensures that the precious volumes wouldn’t be damaged even in case of a fire.

Not many Russians come to look at the books. These religious works are in Hebrew and are not of much interest even to Russian Jews, most of whom aren’t literate in the language.

The Schneerson Collection can be viewed online by visiting the site of the Russian State Library, clicking on “Online Catalogue,” then “Databases.” The collection can be searched through in either Hebrew or Russian.

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Two buildings, three opinions: A dialogue between Jerusalem’s buildings

STEVEN KRAWITZ

T
e Talmud states that 10 measures of beauty came down to the world and nine of them were given to Jerusalem and one to the rest of the world. The natural setting, the light and the spiritual perfection, all contribute to Jerusalem’s beauty. Today the built environment also adds to the unique beauty of the city.

The original master buildings in Jerusalem were the First and Second Temples, expressing the very history and ideological battles of the past. The First Temple was destroyed in 586 BCE, and the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 CE.

The First Temple was built by Solomon and was considered the most beautiful and most sacred building in the world. It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE.

The Second Temple was built by Herod the Great and was considered the most beautiful and most sacred building in the world. It was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE.

The Third Temple is a hypothetical future temple that is expected to be built during the final redemption of Israel. It is believed to be the most beautiful and most sacred building in the world.

These buildings had a profound impact on the development of Jerusalem and its architectural legacy. The First and Second Temples were built using stone, and the Third Temple is expected to be built using stone as well.

The built environment of Jerusalem has a unique identity and character, influenced by the natural setting and the history of the city. The city has a rich architectural heritage, with buildings from different periods and styles.

The city’s architecture is a reflection of its history and culture, and it continues to evolve and change over time.

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The Salgados appear to be perplexed by the objections. “We’re doing this to create more parking and space for our customers,” says Alvino. Johnny, who says they only have “their customers’ best interests at heart,” adds, “We are giving the community something they want. Every second person complains about parking.”

The Salgados say rumours have been spread that they plan to build a three-storey building while they insist they are only planning to build their new shop and parking.

After pursuing some objections and checking with the Council, SA Jewish Report (SAJR) went back to ask Alvino why the rezoning application specifies “three dwelling units” and a height of “three storeys.” Salgado referred SAJR to his town planners, Steve Jaspan and Associates (SJA), who are handling the rezoning.

Kevin Wilkins, a resident, said that their client’s “primary objective” was to erect a “purpose-built” store for Freshfellas and to offer better parking for its customers. However, Wilkins confirmed that the rezoning application did also specify dwellings and offices and a height of three storeys. The zoning application is for a building “no different to the Weinprop building next door, which has businesses on the ground floor and offices and flats above,” he admitted.

What are they planning to build?

“It’s not completely untoward, given the area and what’s built just past. We are applying for shops on the ground floor and, possibly - I don’t know that they will - do the same for any dwelling units or offices. They may be nice to have, or maybe not,” says Wilkins. The City would, however, insist on the provisions of on-site parking.

The Weinprop building houses Briceo restaurant, the huge new Nushaum’s retail butchery and other retailers. It also has two floors of office and residential space.

No parking specifications are available as no building plans have been filed. The City’s parking requirements are 1.3 bays per flat; three per 100m² of office and six per 100m² for retail.

If the Salgado brothers have, in fact, changed direction and are only planning to build an 80m² shop, they would still have to provide 48 bays - 18 more than they are planning - unless the City allows them leniency.

However, the public may be rightfully be concerned that a second Weinprop building could end up on the site, also that the present Freshfellas is let for retail and that the
GILLIAN KLAWSKNY

It wasn’t long ago, he was just a piglet, but now Bradley Nowikow has grown into Mr Rat. This may sound confusing, but Bradley is an actor at the Children’s Theatre and recently played Piglet in Winnie the Pooh and is set to play Mr Rat in the upcoming musical, The Adventures of Mr Toad.

A practising lawyer, Bradley (31) found his true calling a few years ago when travelling abroad. “I saw a few productions overseas and realised that this is what I’d like to do as a profession. I had acted in a production of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory in primary school at the age of eight, but then I took a 20-year hiatus,” he says.

In pursuing an acting career, Nowikow completed an advanced acting course at the University of Johannesburg. Other than his recent animal experiences, he is new to the National Children’s Theatre (NCT).

The NCT, however, is an integral thread in the tapestry of South Africa’s arts and culture heritage, taking young imaginations on unforgettable journeys and honing the skills of young thespians and children who dream of being in the theatre. Established in 1989 by Joyce Levinsohn, award-winning pioneer of children’s theatre in the country, the NCT has always had significant Jewish connections.

Headed for the last five and a half years by Moira Katz, the NCT is known for the invaluable role it plays in developing a love of theatre, both in its young audiences and in the actors and actresses who start off their careers on its stage.

Katz, who holds a teaching diploma in speech and drama, is a training and communications specialist, having lectured both at Wits and later at Wayne State University in the US, where she lived for six years.

On her return to South Africa, she became the first secretary for the NCT Trust at Levinsohn’s request, while also running her own training and development company for supervisors and managers.

“When over 20 years later the Board of Trustees asked me if I’d be interested in becoming the new CEO of the NCT, I saw it as a new challenge - and it remains a challenge every day,” she says.

Under Katz’s leadership, new processes have been implemented, the company’s two “Heritage Houses” have been cleaned up, a puppet theatre has been started, a puppet theatre has opened and there are also plans underway for an outdoor amphitheatre.

Katz has also brought her passion for educational development to the NCT. “We do a lot of theatre in education,” she says. “I really believe that children who attend theatre classes, even if they don’t want to become actors, do the most wonderful work and achieve so much.

“They learn critical thinking skills, to use their imaginations creatively, to integrate with all different kinds of children of all races, and to act out different themes; they really have an advantage over other schoolchildren.”

While Katz says that the NCT used to welcome large numbers of Jewish children to the theatre, that’s no longer the case and she’d love to increase the numbers that come now.

“We have Saturday morning acting classes for about 150 children in different age groups from the ages of five to 17 and we’d love to extend these to classes during the week or to Sundays and offer them to Jewish children.”

There are many opportunities for children who attend these classes and want to become professional actors. There’s also a Shakespeare Club that meets on Saturday afternoons.

“We give people who are looking for a chance, an opportunity to act on stage. Along with Bradley in the cast of The Adventures of Mr Toad, we have a 19- and a 20-year-old who have never been in theatre before but have great promise; we give many actors that first chance.”

Nowikow says he finds children’s theatre particularly rewarding. “Kids don’t come with preconceptions and aren’t as critical as adults. Once they enjoy a production, they become so immersed in it and it’s great to have an audience like that - on stage you’re enjoying it with them and it makes your performance that much more effective and rewarding.

“But if they don’t like something, they’ll also tell you! Children’s theatre’s been a great learning curve for me, starting out.”

Nowikow is also enjoying acting with the children’s cast of The Adventures of Mr Toad, which is based on the beloved children’s book The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Graham.

Asked what audiences can expect from the production, Nowikow says it’s ultimately a big adventure, as the name suggests. “It’s also a story of camaraderie, where characters all come together to help each other out.

“The set will be amazing, we have car crashes, a horse and cart and much more. It’s a very funny British script, adults will enjoy it too - there are even a few Monty Python elements in it.”

Nowikow eventually plans to go to Canada and get into film. “Theatre is where you learn and get your grounding, though. I actually prefer it to film,” he says. “Attaining success in the acting industry is ultimately about being proactive and putting yourself out there.”

• The Adventures of Mr Toad runs from June 20 until July 23 at the National Children’s Theatre. To book, call the theatre on (011) 484 1584/5 or e-mail bookings@ncct.co.za.
These are the 2016 winners – who’s next?

**OWN CORRESPONDENT**

These are the 2016 winners – who’s next? From then on, it’s count down time to find out who this year’s cream of the crop are at the glittery black-tie banquet on Sunday, August 13. This function, to pay homage to business and industry as well as in various other fields, is the highlight of the Jewish social calendar.

The South African Jewish community has always been basking in its glow and the awards recognise the tremendous contribution Jews have made – and are making – to the fabric of South African society.

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### The Absa Listed Company Award went to Michael Metz of KAP Bedding

Metz’s attitude to life is that his work is his play and his leisure is his labour, so to speak – though he’d add that none of those would be worth much without his close-knit family and his Jewish values.

Starting with a small family business, he built it into one of the country’s largest bedding brands. Metz is the divisional CEO of KAP’s integrated bedding division. KAP is a group of manufacturers, consisting mainly of companies acquired since 2004, as well as the industrial assets of Steinhoff Africa.

Metz was appointed chief of KAP’s bedding division after the acquisition of his family business Restonic by KAP Industrial in 2015.

### The Absa Unlisted Company Award went to Dionne Ellerman Hirschowitz, a member of the iconic Ellerine family

She runs one of the largest privately-owned businesses in South Africa, namely Ellerine Brothers, as well as the associated Eric Ellerine Trust.

Hirschowitz, who has a B Com, LLB degree and is a graduate of King David Linksfield, lived in London for 11 years working at Stehman Property, before returning to South Africa in 2006.

The core business activities of Ellerine Brothers and associated companies are equity investments, property investments and management, and private equity investments.

She has also worked hard to raise awareness about the role of women (particularly Jewish women) in the workplace.

### The Absa Lifetime Achiever Award in honour of Helen Suzman went to the Donald Gordon Foundation (DGF), represented by Wendy and Hylton Appelbaum, for the Foundation’s remarkable philanthropic work.

Wendy, the daughter of Sir Donald Gordon, is a trustee of the DGF, one of the largest privately-charitable foundations in Africa. Wendy was a trustee of the Helen Suzman Foundation and is a member of the Global Philanthropists’ Circle. Hylton is a trustee of the Foundation, Kagiso Trust and various other organisations including The Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund.

The DGF, whose beneficence is legendary, is clear about its mandate: to fund higher education institutions with a particular (but not exclusive) focus on business education; medical education and training; cultural effects and the performing arts; conservation and the environment; and human welfare, with a particular focus on the poor and needy in the South African Jewish community.

### The Chivas Humanitarian Award in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris is open to all South Africans who have made South Africa a better place. Iconic struggle lawyer George Bizos, SC, the 2016 winner, was a popular choice.

Bizos, (87) the indefatigable prominent human rights lawyer, was part of the defence team at the 1963-64 Rivonia Trial and was a close friend of President Nelson Mandela. He defended Mandela, Govan Mbeki and Walter Sisulu. The defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment, but spared the death penalty.

### The KIA Community Service Award winner

was also a popular one. Marlene Bethlehem has, over many years, earned her stripes as a community leader par excellence.

Bethlehem’s vivacity is truly remarkable - and over the last five decades a preponderant part of it has gone the way of the South African and international Jewish communities. Her passionate love for the local Jewish community and for Israel, shines through all her actions.

Bethlehem was also one of this country’s leading sportswomen and participated in three Maccabahs (1957, 1961 and 1985) and played with much success (as Marlene Gerson) on the international tennis circuit.

### The Ricemark Art, Sport, Science and Culture Award went to arguably the best surfer this country has ever seen, Shaun Tomson

Tomson has been listed as one of the 25 most influential surfers of the century and as one of the 10 greatest surfers of all time.

Recalls the affable Tomson: “You look around while you’re surfing - and you don’t see too many Jewish boys on the top of 25-foot waves. Actually, being Jewish and being a surfer is a bit of an oxymoron, isn’t it?”

He added: “When I used to travel around the world and it was a Jewish holiday, I’d look around, say, for somewhere where I could join a seder at Pesach. Which was fine, but the people I was involved with, and competing with, and so on, they thought I was from another planet...”

### The Creative Counsel Young Jewish Entrepreneurs Award went to the duo, Greg Blend and Grant Friedman, with their Startid Property Group, founded in 2013.

The two young men at the age of 27, and both products of King David schools, went to the formidable Barry Taitz of Blue Cellular.

The Creative Counsel Young Jewish Entrepreneurs Award went to the duo, Greg Blend and Grant Friedman, with their Startid Property Group, founded in 2013.

The two young men at the age of 27, and both products of King David schools, Blend Linksfield and Friedman Victory Park - both boast B Com degrees. Their company specialises in property investment, management, development and re-development and is going like the proverbial Boeing. They say a great deal of their success is that they manage their properties in-house. They also partner with larger tenants in co-

### The Absa Entrepreneur Award

went to Barry Taitz of Blue Cellular.

Blue Cellular is a story of hope and determination, of a “small man” making it big in business, the story of a man with a dream who just never would give up.

In 2012, Weiner founded “Warm the World”, a charity that donates blankets to the needy and empowers women by paying them for knitting and sewing the blankets.

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A Galaxy of Stars

Closing date 30 June Nominate now!

Absa Jewish Achiever Awards 2017

Call for nominations

The award categories are:
• Lifetime Achievement Award in honour of Helen Suzman
• Humanitarian Award in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris*
• Kia Community Service Award
• Jewish Report Art, Sport, Science & Culture Award
• Absa Entrepreneur Award
• Absa Unlisted Company Award
• Absa Listed Company Award
• The Creative Counsel Young Jewish Entrepreneur Award
• Europcar Jewish Woman in Leadership Award

Nominations should include:
* The nominee’s name, telephone number and e-mail address
* The award for which the nominee is nominated
* A short motivation for the nomination

To nominate please visit:
www.sajr.co.za and click on the nominations banner
or email: nominations@sajewishreport.co.za

Nominations close on June 30, 2017

*Awarded to either a Jewish or non-Jewish person who has contributed substantially to the betterment of the lives of the people of South Africa.
Hitler as model: Who is the Public Protector protecting?

Geoff Sifrin

While Public Protector Busisiwe Mkwebane's aggressive demeanour and politically suspect agenda offends many, care must be taken not to automatically dismiss everything she says because of dislikes, or for her apparent embrace of certain views of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denier Stephen Goodson.

Her putting of someone like him, has led outraged Jewish leaders to demand she distance herself from him.

We live in complicated times in a country struggling to find its way, where important debates are often stilted by people shouting at each other down.

Mkwebane is particularly unpopular when compared to her predecessor Thuli Madonsela, who won the hearts of South Africans by confronting the country's most powerful people on the issue of state capture.

For Jews, it is alarming that Mkwebane seems to be oblivious to the inflammatory implications of aligning herself with somebody like Goodson - a sinister sign for someone occupying so politically sensitive a position.

She has referred positively to a Goodson book entitled A History of Central Banking (and the Enslavement of Mankind), Adolf Hitler and former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi appear on its cover.

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Luxury escape from the city

OWN CORRESPONDENT

City Sightseeing Bus Green Route
Ride the open-top double-decker City Sightseeing Bus Green Route from Rosebank station to Constitution Hill. Hop off at the Military History Museum where there are loads of tanks, planes and trucks for kids to clamber over, pay a visit to Johannesburg Zoo, always a winner with little kids, and then join the City Sightseeing Red Route at Constitution Hill: citysightseeing.co.za/johannesburg

City Sightseeing Bus Red Route
The hop-on hop-off City Sightseeing Bus Red Route, starts at Constitution Hill. Popular stops for young families include the Gold Reef City theme park, the SciBono Discovery Centre and the Origins Centre. Between stops, kids can listen to their own specially-designed radio commentary and keep busy with the puzzles provided in the kids pack.

Soweto minibus
Linking up to the City Sightseeing Bus at the Apartheid Museum the Red Soweto minibus makes a whistle-stop tour of South Africa’s most famous township, stopping in at all the major sights. An easy way to give your kids a brief introduction to the unique history and culture of Soweto.

Combination tickets for the open-top City Sightseeing bus and the Soweto tour, cost R420 for adults and R220 for kids.

Children’s Theatre
This July you are spoiled for choice when it comes to children’s theatre productions. Catch Cinderella Kids at the People’s Theatre in Braamfontein (until July 30), the Adventures of Mr Toad at National Children’s Theatre in Parktown (until July 23) and look out for shows for young kids and teens at this year’s 969 Festival at Wits Theatre (July 14-30, wits.ac.za/witttheatre/whats-on-969-festival).

Young kids will also love the energetic Smurf’s Live show at Emperor’s Palace (July 13-30) and Puss in Boots at Gold Reef City (July 1-23).

See Homo Naledi at Maropeng
The remains of the recently discovered new species Homo Naledi, are on display at Maropeng in the Cradle of Humankind.

The extensive exhibitions have been designed with kids in mind and include numerous fun, interactive and educational displays.

Storytime at the bookshop
Take the little ones down to Love Books (lovebooks.co.za) at the Bamboo Lifestyle Centre Maboneng for a kids story-time session every Saturday at 10:00. Also look out for Saturday story-time at Bridge Books in downtown Johannesburg (in the City Central building opposite the Rand Club, bridgebooks.co.za) where story-time sessions include a reading of the new picture book Ballerina Dreams.

Challenge the family at an ‘escape room’
A cross between a game show and a Sherlock Holmes novel, ‘escape rooms’ are a fun way to challenge the whole family to work together to solve clues and puzzles in a race against the clock. Ideal for kids aged 12 and up, challenges vary in difficulty. Try Lostland in Rivonia (lostland.co.za), or Escape Room in Dunkeld (escapeoom.co.za).

Scavenger Hunt
A July tradition, between the city’s historical and cultural attractions, is the scavenger hunt. The most popular is the “Wits in the City” scavenger hunt which starts at the Wits Art Museum and involves solving quirky clues to win a prize.

Flash Mob
At Constitution Hill, the anti-apartheid museum, on July 21st, the QuashQuartet, South Africa’s 1st all-male a cappella group, will be performing a flash mob in the castle. You don’t want to miss it.

Art and fun
The Arts on the Green festival, now into its third year, attracts thousands of visitors to Constitution Hill. On July 30th, the festival will feature a range of entertainment, art and cultural events, with installations, workshops, performances and much more.

The Kids’ Day at the Festival is on July 28th and features a programme of music, art, story telling and workshops.

Wits Art Museum family walkabout
Join the Wits Art Museum family walkabout on the third Saturday of each month at 12:00. The kids get to learn about historic and contemporary African art and get creative at the sketching table. It is essential to RSVP by e-mail to info.wam@wits.ac.za beforehand.

Wits Art Museum
www.johannesburg.inyourpocket.com

30 June – 7 July 2017
School Holidays
SA JEWISH REPORT 17

LAURICE TAITZ-BUNTMAN

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he July holidays are here, bringing with it the big question: What can we do with the kids over this break? Here are some fun ideas.

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Wits Art Museum
www.johannesburg.inyourpocket.com

LEO TURVEY HAS WRITTEN A COMPILATION OF THREE STORIES

1/Life’s Intentions: is about three women and how they affect the life of an entrepreneur. The first woman is so much in love with her husband she is prepared to forego her own career to be with him. Her second is formed to their mutual benefit. His Rabbi introduces him to a visitor attending the synagogue. A business relationship is formed between the two and the third woman finds herself attracted to him.

2/The Man From Stoke Newington: is the story of a 19-year-old patriotic Jew who volunteers for the British Army prior to the Second World War. He is captured in Holland, from there he is sent to Auschwitz, survives and returns home to find his father is sick. He returns to find he has never known her. He goes to visit attending the synagogue. A business relationship is formed between the two and the third woman finds herself attracted to him.

3/Close To Reality: is the tragic tale of a young Jewish child and how she succumbs to anorexia due to family strife. She is committed to Groote Schuur Hospital and then to Valkenberg, falls in love and is forced to have an abortion. She desperately seeks love and affection, which she finds through teaching and caring for children, aged three to six. When she finally finds the man she wants to marry she is thwarted.

Leo’s book is available at the Jacob Gillin Library, the SA Zionist Federations Issy Maisey’s library in Johannesburg and at Highlands House, and promises interesting and delightful reading.

TURBINE ART FAIR
Now in its fifth year, this contemporary African art fair has become a city fixture, attracting thousands to the Turbine Hall in Newtown. On Saturday July 15 and Sunday, July 16, the fair hosts a special kids art corner.

There’s also a special programme of art workshops for the fair kids aged 6 to 11 and for those 12 years and up. turbinartsfair.co.za

› Laurice Taitz-Buntmam is the publisher and editor of Johannesburg In Your Pocket. www.johannesburg.inyourpocket.com
Sharing the warmth

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Great Park youth involved in the bar- and batmitzvah programme, together with learners from King David, distributed over 1 000 blankets and jackets at other Afrika Tikkun facilities. Raeleen Tradowsky has involved the King David Foundation in partnering with the community-wide Lag B’Omer event, at which the blanket drive took place.

Rabbi David Handan of the Great Park Synagogue, said that there is no bar- or batmitzvah gift as valuable as the one we gave.

Musical maestro Bryan Schimmel unravelled his rollercoaster life journey to the WIZO Women Inspired last week.

He was an “inspired” guest at the home of clinical psychologist and media personality, Doreen Weil – “Dr D” – in Johannesburg. There, he related his very poignant life story, taking his audience along on his heroic journey of overcoming a host of challenges, which included starting off with a bad speech impediment, being a recovered crystal meth addict and being HIV positive.

The chilly morning did not deter a “bumber crop” of guests who were warmed by a blazing fire and the heart-warming experiences of their guest. Schimmel uplifted the listeners with an audio-visual display of his work. He then relayed the important role his mother played in quite literally saving his life, and in helping him to beat the enormous odds stacked against him. He told how he turned his life around. His journey is as inspiring as the follow-up performances.

After a standing ovation, Wel pointed out the value in sharing one’s vulnerabilities and how people need to take lessons from Schimmel’s story in order to learn and to grow in our own lives.

As a fitting encore, Schimmel treated his audience to a stunning piece on the piano. An enriching morning well spent.

Schimmel’s story touches many a woman’s heart

Lee Joffe, Joceline Bassender, Bryan Schimmel, Doreen Weil and Andrea Wainer.

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Letters

**VERY ‘UN-JEWISH’ BEHAVIOUR OF THREE JEWISH BUSINESSMEN SLATED**

Many examples in history and in recent times, show Jews acting publicly in a manner which is very different to the manner in which they treat their fellow Jew. This phenomenon is understandable in so far as it portrays the individual in a positive light to the general public, but is unfortunate when it compromises a fellow Jew.

We have a pertinent example in Johannesburg, which demonstrates this behaviour. A Jewish single mother with two children was retrenched in 2011 and was finding it very difficult at her age to find a job in order to support her family and service the bond on her modest home in the north-eastern suburbs of Johannesburg.

She took the decision to acquire an overseas clothing franchise and to open a ladies boutique. The franchise was granted and required that she sign a five-year lease for the premises in order to restrict any other interested party from opening within a reasonable radius from her store, which was situated in the CBD.

A lease was entered into with a company which owns a substantial portfolio in the CBD and the boutique was opened with the investment of all her savings, as well as her inheritance, to help make the business a success.

The boutique traded in the premises for three years and paid rent, including agreed annual increases until the devaluation of the rand and the recession forced her to close the business.

During the three years, she was aware of other tenants coming and going and even though leases had been signed, the outstanding amounts were written off, for whatever reason.

The owner of the property is a prominent Jewish businessman, his MD is a well-known Johannesburg Jewish executive and the credit controller is a retired well-known Jewish businessman.

Between these three Jewish community members, they see fit to take this action and to walk out overnight and are never prosecuted, even though they could be forced to contribute to outstanding monies, but a single Jewish mother who paid rent for three years until she was forced to close down, is being subjected to this action.

Lionel Marcus

Johannesburg

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**OWN CORRESPONDENT**

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**Friday (June 30)**

- Sixties – 70s: Sharon Stas (from Soweto) and her children performed a variety of Sixties hits. Venue: Uthandu Centre. Time: 16:30 – 18:00.
- Brian Schimmel hosts the MSDA/Great Park youth involved in the bar- and batmitzvah programme, together with learners from King David. Venue: Uthandu Centre. Time: 18:00 – 19:30.

**Saturday (July 1)**

- Saturday Night (July 1) at the Uthandu Centre for a special event. Venue: Uthandu Centre. Time: 19:00.
- Second Singing lesson on ‘This One’s for You’ by Aminah Bala. Venue: Great Park Synagogue. Time: 17:30.

**Monday (July 3)**

- Sydney Kahn Pre-Pro-Yom Yirtzeit holiday, runs from Monday July 3 to Friday 7, from 08:00 – 12:30, for ages 16 months – 4 years. The curious 650 per week per chld R170 per chld per day. For two children, the cost will be R 400 for the week. Phone: (011) 640-011 or e-mail hello@sydpreschool.co.za
- ‘Viva Verdi’ with a presentation by Roger Scheuble on his sailing trip around the world. Venue: Bet David, Morningside. Time: 17:00.
- Fay Smaller and Ros Berman (011) 632-9701.

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**Community**

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**WHAT'S ON**

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**Disclaimer**

The letters page is intended to provide an opportunity for a range of views on any given topic to be expressed. Opinions articulated in the letters are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, staff or directors of the Jewish Report. Guidelines for letters: Letters of up to 400 words permitted. Provide your full name, place of residence, and daytime phone number. We do not publish letters under noms de plume. Letters should preferably be e-mailed. Letters may be edited or shortened.
Celebrating South Africa Day in the spirit of ubuntu

JENNY MILLER

Sydenham Hebrew Pre-Primary School last week held its own South Africa Day at the school and celebrated in the true spirit of ubuntu.

South African flags, ethnic clothing, rugby jerseys, cricket shirts and face painting, were the order of the day.

But the celebrations wouldn’t be complete without pap and gravy and with the singing of Nkosi Sikelel’iAfrika.

Proudly wearing their South African colours are Gavi Porter; Jaron Riesnik; Chad Diamond; and Jarren Rosenthal.

Photo: Ingrid Seeff

OWN CORRESPONDENT

King David Pre-Primary School Linksfield recently hosted a Book Week which enthralled the learners and reinforced the importance of reading books from an early age.

Every group - from playgroup through to grade R - learnt about a specific book theme or a well-known author.

The week featured a book market, a talented performance by Hooked on Books and a presentation by dynamic, young author, Refiloe Moahloli, who interactively read her book “How many ways can you say hello” to the children.

The week ended with the children coming to school dressed as their favourite characters from the books they love the most.

Charlie Katz; Noah Kitzner; Shyla Hermann; Refiloe Moahloli; Shira Boruchowitz; and Mia Kitzner.

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Instilling a love of books

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Cricket for KD chess whizzes

OWN CORRESPONDENT

The learners at King David Linksfield Junior Primary are getting better and better at chess. The school’s Junior B chess team came second in the 2017 league. The players attended the official prize-giving on Monday night at Grayston Preparatory School.

This is a game in which mental clarity and dexterity is required for solving problems. It teaches the children to analyse consequences and formulate future tactics, as well as develop their memory skills.

It also helps in improving concentration and academic performance in the children.

Jesse Shapiro; Raphael Kaplan; Yariv Miller; and Ethan Slavin.

Front: Ben Peretz.

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Checkmate for KD chess whizzes

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Sydenham Hebrew Pre-Primary School last week held its own South Africa Day at the school and celebrated in the true spirit of ubuntu.

South African flags, ethnic clothing, rugby jerseys, cricket shirts and face painting, were the order of the day.

But the celebrations wouldn’t be complete without pap and gravy and with the singing of Nkosi Sikelel’iAfrika.

Proudly wearing their South African colours are Gavi Porter; Jaron Riesnik; Chad Diamond; and Jarren Rosenthal.
Maccabiah ban on woman cricketer lands up in court

JACK MILNER

The 20th Maccabiah begins in Israel on July 4 and already the cricket event has been mired in controversy. A decision by the Maccabes Games Organising Committee to ban a girl from playing in the Israeli junior cricket team, has ended up in court.

Naomi Eytan, 14, has played in the Israeli national under-19 cricket team all season - the only girl in the squad of the top 15 youth players in the country. With the Maccabiah set to start early next month, she expected to join her teammates as they battle against Jewish cricketers from around the world, but was told by the organisers that she can’t play because it is “for men only”.

Backed by the Israel Cricket Association (ICA) and many fellow Israeli cricketers, she’s now campaigning to beat officialdom and take her place on the field. The ICA is vowing to appeal to Sports Minister Miri Regev.

Eytan, from Tel Aviv, told the Times of Israel that she first heard about the decision to prevent her playing two weeks ago. “I am very angry and disappointed that they won’t let me play,” she said.

Eytan’s mother, Carmel, said they did not deliberately plan to make a public campaign to reverse the decision, but that word spread through social media among local cricket players who have been very supportive. “There has been so much support it is very moving,” she said.

Eytan explained her position: “If there was a girls’ team I wouldn’t have a problem, but there are no girls in Israel who play cricket and I was chosen to represent Israel as one of the 15 best. What kind of message is the Maccabiah sending to girls and to the world? Instead of being proud of me, they are sending me home because of rules and regulations that is unclear who made up.”

The decision has caused a furore among the Maccabiah’s 8,000 participants and, according to regulations and not public support she has received from many local and international regulations.”

“It is not a rational request in relation to gender separation were intended to make the sport fair and safe. “There will not be a precedent set for Eytan,” he said.

The ICC regulations concerning transgender players. “Most relevantly for present purposes, because of the significant advantages in size, strength and power enjoyed (on average) by males over females from puberty onward… it is necessary to have separate competition categories for males and females in order to preserve the safety, fairness and integrity of the sport for the benefit of all of its participants and stakeholders.”

If necessary, Hessing said, the Maccabes Games Organising Committee is prepared to defend its position in court.

Carmel Eytan dismissed as “unreasonable” a decision to ban her daughter on the basis or regulations concerning transgender players.

“The ICA has put itself squarely on Eytan’s side,” with director Naor Gudker appealing to Maccabiah officials to show some flexibility.

“In the past, a female player from Beersheba played together with the men in the European championships after organisers let her,” Gudker said. “I am optimistic that perhaps the decision will be changed. She is a talented and outstanding girl and it is a shame. I would expect them to let her play.”

ICA Chairman Steve Leigh said he intends to contact Culture and Sports Minister Regev about the matter. “We selected Naomi for the team based on professional criteria, and we didn’t think that it required a special request from the Maccabiah,” he said.

“I hope you can help me because I understand that we need to fight for equality and that women really can’t do what men can do - meaning, they are capable but the world does not always let them.”

“We were surprised that she can’t participate and it is unclear who the minister is a politician and a woman, and she’s in a position to help, and so we’ll ask her to get involved.” Eytan also sent a letter to Galia Holloch, president of Na’amat, an Israeli women’s rights organisation. “I worked hard, I practised, and I was accepted to Israel’s youth cricket team. One girl among 14 boys. I was so proud! But then reality gave me a slap across the face…

“I hope you can help me because I understand that we need to fight for equality and that women really can’t do what men can do - meaning, they are capable but the world does not always let them.”

Eytan and her mother, who is a spokesman for the Na’amat Israeli women’s rights organisation, along with Na’amat itself, filed the request at the Tel Aviv District Court against the Maccabes Games Organising Committee and Maccabiah International.

Although it is rare, women have played in men’s cricket teams in semi-professional and even professional leagues. Most recently British-born Sarah Taylor in 2015 played a match for Northern Districts against Port Adelaide in Australia.