



SAJBD welcomes positive outcome to Israeli products' relabelling issue (page 3)

South African Jewish Report

www.sajewishreport.co.za



Photo courtesy www.capepod.org.za

SA Jews and world remember the 6m

The Jewish Holocaust Remembrance Day is observed in most Jewish communities around the world. In the photograph, Israeli drivers are at a standstill at the entrance to Jerusalem, as a siren is sounded across the land, marking Yom Hashoah on April 8. (Flash 90/JTA). See stories on pages 2, 11, 13.



Jemma Kahn's Symbiosis between word, image and performance

Kahn's diction is delicious. Taking you from raucous hilarity to gasped-back tears, she makes you remember what a stage play is supposed to do: tell a story.

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Absa signs multi-million rand sponsorship deal for 'Jewish Achievers'

Absa Bank signs a multi-million rand three-year deal with the SA Jewish Report for the banking group's continued sponsorship of the prestigious annual Jewish Achiever Awards.

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Karabus case has been postponed yet again

"Because the medical translator was not present; the judge has postponed the matter to April 23. Prof Karabus is extremely depressed and on edge. I'm having doubts about how much more he can take," said Michael Bagraim, Karabus' lawyer.

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Wits SRC defends disruption of Yossi Reshef concert

Wits University SRC demands investigation "into racial profiling, violence against students, external security and implementation of Israel boycott" and condemns the use of terms like "barbaric", "hooligans" and "Muslim-agitators" in referring to Wits students.

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17:42	18:31	Bloemfontein
17:41	18:31	Port Elizabeth
17:32	18:22	East London

They vowed never to forget...

DIANE WOLFSON

Approximately 300 community members were joined by over 30 diplomats, representatives from the Mayor’s Office and political parties, to show solidarity with the Jewish people on this Shoah remembrance at the Yom Hashoah ceremony in Pretoria on Sunday.

Lawrence Nowosenetz, chairman of the Pretoria Council of the SAJBD gave an emotive opening address and Ivan Sive read the prayer on behalf of the of the Jewish Ex Service League

Ya’akov Finkelstein, Charge d’Affaires of the Embassy of Israel, brought a message on behalf of Ambassador, Dov Segev-Steinberg.

“All that is absnt is the belief that this will never again arise - that lessons of such a catastrophe created a new world order where the need for places of refuge are something of the distant past. Sadly, for Jews, that is far from the truth. The necessity of having an Israel today is as dire as it was in 1948.

“As a people we number no more than 14 million. As a religion we have the longest history but constitute the smallest group. Yet we continue to be vilified and threatened.

Lyonell Fliss, the main speaker and Holocaust survivor, was born in Moldavia three years before the start of the Second World War, said “I watched as fellow-Jews were pushed, taken in groups and shot. My mother begged a young Romanian officer to save me. “The officer kept his word. I believe he was G-d’s messenger, our guardian angel.”

When was your last physical?

This week we read all about the Kohen examining people to determine whether they were afflicted by tzora’as, the leprous curse. It was a physical inspection which had spiritual implications. The person might be pronounced tahor or, G-d forbid, tamei, all depending on the results of the Kohen’s examination.

I couldn’t help thinking about going to the doctor for our annual medical examination, or a “physical”. We go through the routine check-up - height, weight, blood pressure, cholesterol and stress tests on the treadmill and up and down the little staircase.

But have you ever thought of going for a “spiritual”?

What’s our “height”? Do we walk tall? Are we proud and upright Jews, or are we apologetic; stooped and bent over by the burden of an inferiority complex?

What about our “weight”? Are we on a well-balanced diet of Torah, the

sustenance of souls, or do we suffer from spiritual malnutrition?

And how is our heart doing? A Jewish heart doesn’t only pump blood; it pumps warmth and love. A healthy Jewish heart is the emotional centre of the person. It emotes and feels the pain of another.

And healthy hearts are inspired by events that point unmistakably to the hand of G-d in the world. If we aren’t feeling what we should be, then we might be suffering from blocked arteries.

Then the doctor took my blood pressure and I immediately made the obvious connection - tefillin. I remembered the story of the simple farmer who went for his first medical check-up. When the doctor checked his blood pressure he asked what that was all about.

The doctor explained patiently that he was checking the heart rate. “But why are you holding my arm

if you want to see how my heart is?” “When I check your hand,” replied the physician, “I know how your heart is.” The hand that gives tzedakah, for example, indicates a healthy Jewish heart.

Then came the stress test - up the stairs and down the stairs, up again and down again. How do we handle the ups and downs of life? Are we smug and arrogant when we’re up and dejected and depressed when we’re down?

How do we deal with stress? Do we trust in G-d that everything has a purpose and a positive one at that? Or, do we become angry and bitter at life’s unkind twists of fate?

Finally, there was the treadmill. I really dislike treadmills. After two minutes I said to the nurse I’d had enough. “The doctor said you must do four minutes,” she informed me callously. “Four minutes?” I cried, “This feels like four hours!”

Life can be a tedious treadmill.



PARSHAT TAZRIA-METZORA
Rabbi Yossy Goldman
Sydenham Shul

We find ourselves running and running and getting nowhere fast. The treadmill, the meandering merry-go-round, the gruelling rat race where even if you win you’re still a rat - all of it leaves us wondering what it’s all about and why are we working so hard with no meaningful, consequential reward?

So, this year, in addition to going for a physical, why not go for a spiritual? Find a Kohen, a Jewish spiritual healer, who can search your soul for its healthy characteristics as well as your necessary growth-points and prescribe a spiritual fitness programme tailored for you and your neshama. May we all be healthy, physically and spiritually.

A Holocaust story of survival against all odds

DAVID SAKS

Rena Quint, the keynote speaker at this year’s Yom Hashoah ceremony in Johannesburg on Sunday, was orphaned many times during the years she spent as a young child in Nazi slave labour camps and the Bergen-Belsen death camp.

First, she lost her biological mother, in addition to her two brothers, who were deported to Treblinka and murdered following the liquidation of the Piotrkow ghetto in 1943. Then she was separated from her father, who likewise did not survive the war.

For the rest of her time in the camps, she was cared for by a succession of foster mothers, each of whom eventually died or were killed but whose heroic efforts enabled her to survive long enough to be among those rescued when the British forces liberated Bergen-Belsen in April 1945.

Anne Frank, who was interned in the same camp, died shortly before

rescue arrived. Quint’s final foster mother, whose own child had died after liberation and whose place Rena took on a passage to America, was fatally weakened by her ordeal and passed away in New York.

An estimated 1 200 people attended the Johannesburg ceremony, held once more at the Martyr’s Monument in West Park Cemetery.

Quint, in recounting her story of survival against all odds, stressed that hers was a very unusual story. An estimated one and a half million children were among the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust and those children who did survive in the main had somehow evaded capture by the Nazis.

Hardly any had, like herself, survived after enduring the ordeal of slave labour camps, death marches and eventual imprisonment in a death camp. She would certainly have died had it not been for the foster mothers, most of whom she barely remembered.

Photo by Ilan Ossendryver



Ninety-five-year-old Madeleine Lopato (Heitner), on the left of guest speaker Rena Quint, also hails from Piotrkow, Poland as does Quint. During the Holocaust Lopato lived in Brussels - from 1942 until Liberation. She came to South Africa in 1950.

Through them, she had gone on to be adopted by an American Jewish family, marry and be blessed with four children and, to date, 22 grandchildren. For the past 30 years, she and her husband, a rabbi, had lived in Israel. Hers had been a “happy ending”; for countless others, it had, alas, ended differently.

Sunday Times journalist Dominic Mahlangu spoke about his participation on a March of the Living tour to Poland last year. He said that South Africans focused heavily on their own parochial concerns, but were too silent about the multiple in justices taking place across their own borders.

Jewish Report

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Community Voices

Karabus case postponed yet again

ROBYN SASSEN

There has been another postponement in the long drawn-out United Arab Emirates court case against retired Cape Town paediatric oncologist Professor Cyril Karabus, who was due to be released two weeks ago.

“The medical translator was not present; the judge has now postponed the matter to April 23. Karabus is extremely depressed. I’m having doubts about how much more he can take,” said Michael Bagraim, Karabus’ lawyer from Cape Town.

“I suspect the delay is about an administrative workload on the part of the courts, rather than anything more sinister, but if hope goes, everything goes,” he added, referring to the current state of depression of 78-year-old Karabus.

“He needs to get his *gees* back. This will be sorted out. It was with this attitude that Karabus ran his medical practice over the years.”

An exasperated Karabus in a news bite on Tuesday evening, made it clear how perplexed and “unamused” he was at the farce playing out in the name of justice.

Outraged members of the Jewish community have responded to the appalling situation. Karabus was found guilty of manslaughter and fraud in absentia and without his knowledge after the death in 2002 of a three-year-old terminally ill leukaemia patient he treated while doing a locum in Abu Dhabi.

He was arrested last August while in transit at Dubai from Canada, and has been under house arrested pending a formal trial in Abu Dhabi ever since, after myriad postponements.



THEO KOPENHAGER

Johannesburg obstetrician and gynaecologist (from a letter to Ayla Iqbal of Informa Life Exhibitions): “I was informed two days ago that the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Conference on May 9, which forms part of the Africa Health Week, at which I was to present a paper, is run under the auspices of a Dubai-based commercial company. I was previously unaware of this and thought I was speaking on behalf of the SA Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists.

“Given the disgusting manner in which Prof Karabus is being treated in Abu Dhabi in an incredible perversion of justice, it would be a moral abdication of me to be part of this Dubai-associated conference.

“Based on this decision, and that of the SA Medical and World Medical Associations, asking their members to break ties with the health profession of the UAE in protest at the treatment of Karabus, I will not address your conference. I feel it imperative to approach other speakers concerning this matter.”



MYRON ROBINSON

East London (addressing the ambassador of the United Arab Emirates): “You promote yourself as a Muslim nation professing to follow the Prophet Muhammad, but your country acts with despicable distaste.

“Your country also maintains that it doesn’t dislike Jews - only Zionists. Karabus is Jewish. Whether he is Zionist or not, I do

not know. However, it is quite clear that he is still being detained because he is Jewish.

“This is a chilling reminder of the fact that in 1948 there were some 600 000 Jews living in the Arab world; now there are about 25 000. The rest were forced to leave or were murdered. I urge you immediately to instruct your government to release Karabus.”



AMANDA SCHOEMAN

Blairgowrie in Johannesburg: “During 1987, shortly before Professor Karabus left the Children’s Oncology Department at the Red Cross Children’s Hospital in Cape Town, he was part of a team who fought diligently for the life of my, then three-year-old daughter, Durell.

“I will always remember his kind and reassuring words and caring ways. Durell has since had two more relapses, but she celebrates her 30th birthday on April 14.”

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Welcome outcome after long deliberation, to labelling issue

The SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and SA Zionist Federation (SAZF), in a media release, welcomed the new regulations concerning the labelling of imported goods emanating from Jewish/Israeli settlement areas in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

In terms of the new measures, such products must henceforth be identified as either “West Bank: Israeli Goods” or “East Jerusalem: Israeli Goods”. This fully complies with internationally recognised technical trade requirements pertaining to place of origin, the release states.

“Unlike earlier versions of the legislation, it does not make use of politically charged and biased language, but rather used terms that are essentially neutral and descriptive.”

The SAJBD and SAZF thanked the Office of the Presidency, Cabinet and Minister of Trade and Industry Rob Davies, “for hearing and taking into account our concerns when finalising the new regulations.

“The welcome outcome of the many months of deliberation and consultation over this issue has been a balanced, sensible solution, one that addresses the requirement that the places of origin of imported products be accurately



Ahava Dead Sea products have been among those whose labelling has been contested.

identified without the addition of divisive, politically-motivated aspects that can only cause division and alienation within the South African population.”

Said Mary Kluk, chairman of the SAJBD: “It has been a long year. The issue first appeared in the Government Gazette of May 1, 2012. It is a great relief and it is very encouraging that a sense of fairness has prevailed on so many levels.

“The leadership of this community has worked shoulder to shoulder and tirelessly to bring about this success; we also commend Minister Davies for conceding that fairness must prevail.”

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Howard Sackstein, Chairman of the Jewish Achiever Awards, and Bobby Malabie, Chief Executive Marketing, Communications and Public Relations of the Absa Group.

Absa signs multi-million rand sponsorship deal with the Jewish Report for ‘Jewish Achievers’

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Absa Bank has signed a multi-million rand three-year deal with the SA Jewish Report for the banking group’s continued sponsorship of the prestigious annual Jewish Achiever Awards.

Bobby Malabie, Chief Executive - Marketing, Communications and Public Relations of the Absa Group, signed the deal with the SA Jewish Report last Thursday.

This year will be the 11th consecutive year that Absa has sponsored these prestigious awards. The deal will ensure the ongoing success of the Jewish Achiever Awards and its continued status as the premier event in the Jewish and business social calendar.

There is no other event in South Africa which attracts as many high profile business people and social entrepreneurs as the Jewish Achiever Awards.

“We are delighted to have Absa as our title sponsor secured for the next three years,” says Howard Sackstein, chairman of the Jewish Achiever Awards.

“When one looks at the customer base of Absa, you understand the large number of Jewish-owned and Jewish-led businesses which bank with the Absa Group.

“We are great partners for each other and we have both derived enormous value from our long-term partnership and friendship.”

Sackstein pointed out: “Absa has always been a great friend to the South African Jewish community and many large Jewish businesses have reciprocated with their business and their support.”

The Jewish Achiever Awards are an annual fundraising event which recognises the remarkable achievements of the Jewish community. Awards are presented in the dual spheres of both business and humanities.

Previous winners of awards include Brian Joffe (Bidvest); Adrian Gore (Discovery); Raymond Ackerman (Pick n Pay); Gill Marcus (Reserve Bank); Brett Levy (Blue Label); Steven Joffe (Gold Reef City); Philip Krawitz (Cape Union Mart); William Kirsh (Primedia); Herschel Mayers (Discovery Life); Sean Melnick (Peregrine); Abe and Solly Krok (Krok Brothers); John Copelyn (HCI); Arthur Gillis (Protea Hotels); Jeff Zidel (Resilient Properties); William Kentridge (Artist); Danny K & Kabelo (Shout Cam-

paign); Phillip Tobias (Paleo-anthropologist); Ina Perlman (Operation Hunger); Johnny Clegg (Musician); Dr Ali Bacher (Cricket administrator); and Pieter-Dirk Uys (Comedian).

The Awards have also in the past honoured both President Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu for their contribution to South Africa.

Nominations are open to the public and the awards are judged by an independent panel consisting of business people, a representative of the JSE and a representative of Absa. PKF audits the judging. Winners will this year be announced at a glittering black-tie gala banquet at the Sandton Sun Hotel on August 6.

Last year’s winners included Asher Bohbot of EOH for the Absa Listed Company Award; Selwyn Smith of Foregood, for the Absa Unlisted Company Award; and Johnny Goldberg and Marc Sternberg in the Entrepreneur category.

In the Humanities section, The Helen Suzman Lifetime Achievement Award went to the late Alec Wapnick, well-known property developer and communal stalwart, who sadly passed away shortly after the awards.

Gerald Leissner received the Community Service Award and Professor Barry Schoub the Arts Science, Sports & Culture Award.

Last year we also welcomed a new sponsor, Chivas Regal. The Chivas Humanitarian Award in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, went to John Moshal and his family for their remarkable work in the spheres of education and HIV prevention.

“The Awards are an integral feature in celebrating the ongoing contribution of South African Jewry to our country,” says Sackstein.

The South African Jewish Report is the national newspaper of the Jewish community in South Africa with a weekly readership of more than 50 000. Its readership is generally highly educated, professional, commercially active and generally tends to have significant disposable income.

The paper is available through a printed version, a website (www.sajewishreport.co.za), and a weekly e-mail version. It provides quality content on local, national and international news, the arts, sport, literature, politics, youth and social events.

Gerald Mazabow z”l - rabbi, scholar and great academic

ISAAC REZNIK

It is with deep regret that I write this obituary for the late Rabbi Gerald Mazabow z”l (pictured) who passed away on March 24, after a long illness. He was laid to rest on erev Pesach at the West Park Cemetery. The funeral service was conducted by Rabbi Avraham Tanzer, rosh yeshiva of the Yeshiva College in Johannesburg.

Gerald Mazabow was born in 1936 and after matriculating, went on to study at the Rabbi Avida Zlotnick Teachers Training Seminary.

After qualifying as a teacher, he studied for many years at the Beit HaMidrash leRabbanim in Johannesburg and received smicha from Rabbi Shlomo Rosenzweig. (He is buried in front of his mentor, Rabbi Rosenzweig, rosh Beth Din); Chief Rabbi Casper zz,tl and Rabbi Hilewitz, z”l, principal of the Beit HaMidrash LeRabbanim.

In 1973 – ‘74 he studied at the Harry Fischel Institute (Beit Midrash Gevohah laTorah) in Jerusalem, and received another smicha.

Rabbi Mazabow officiated as rabbi in various congregations in South Africa, such as Welkom, Springs, Krugersdorp, and in Johannesburg at the Berea Shul, Yeoville Shul, Great Synagogue, and also in Liverpool in the UK.

He taught in various chadorim in Johannesburg and on the Rand, and lectured at the Rabbi Avida Zlotnick Teachers Training Seminary, where he taught many Hebrew teachers who went on to teach in the Jewish day schools.

Rabbi Mazabow was an excellent teacher and his pupils still remember him, and always comment to the family what a wonderful teacher he was, and how they still remember his lessons after all these years.

He also gave many lectures to

adults in all the shuls where he officiated.

He was for many years an inspector of schools with the SA Board of Jewish Education and travelled to inspect all the chadorim in Johannesburg and the Reef, as well as the Jewish day schools.

Rabbi Mazabow held two doctorates, one in Semitics, and one in education. He was a lecturer in Jewish studies and Semitics at Unisa, at Wits and later at the Rand Afrikaans University (now the University of Johannesburg), where lecturers in other departments would often come in to listen to his lectures.



Rabbi Mazabow wrote two books, one on the life and ministry of the late Chief Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz, (“To reach for the Moon”) and one on “The History of the Jewish Communal Institutions of South Africa 1841 – 1939”.

Rabbi Mazabow’s life and career were characterised by his love for Torah; his excellence in teaching Torah and Jewish history; his dedication to his family and students; despite undergoing many hardships, he throughout remained loyal to his Yiddishkeit, and steadfast in his love of Hashem.

Rabbi Mazabow is survived by his wife Gita, children Rachelli , Menachem and David, daughters-in-law and grandchildren.

May his memory be for a blessing.

The miracle of Israel: A symphonic celebration

On the occasion of Israel’s 65th birthday, the South African Zionist Federation invites the community to join in an acknowledgement of this milestone in Israel’s development.

On May 14, 1948, at 16:00, David Ben-Gurion read the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel. The world’s newest country had been born. “Today, 65 years later, we look upon this tiny country with awe, astonishment and immense pride,” the SAZF says in a media release.

A symphonic celebration featuring some of Israel’s most renowned and popular figures in the musical world, will take place on Monday April 15, starting at 20:00 for 20:15, at the Lyric Theatre at Gold Reef City.

Tickets cost R100 each; and booking, which is essential, can be done through (011) 645-2531.

The Yom Ha’atzmaut celebration promises to enthrall and tantalise with songs, stories, snippets of history and exquisite music, coming together in a stage production of magnificent proportions.

“Conceived and produced by Isla Feldman and written and directed by David Fleminger, the production is glittering, glitzy, electrifying and exhilarating. You cannot afford to miss it!”

The Johannesburg Festival Orchestra will be conducted by David Sebba, while leading international soloists Yaniv D’Or (pictured) and Ofer Callaf, are bound to breathe new and poignant life into the songs and ballads;.

The Celebration Choir will accompany the soloists and the dancers will portray the joy and dynamism of this very special date.

Whereas 65 is the international retirement age, “for Israel it signifies the start of yet another momentous period in her history, one that we and the world hope will bring the peace so fervently desired by so many”.



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Reasons for remembrance

When an audience member proclaimed at the end of a rabbi’s speech at Yom Hashoah at Johannesburg’s West Park Cemetery, “There was no G-d at Auschwitz!”, he disturbed many others. But he posed a question that has lurked in the consciousness of Jews and others for decades: how could a G-d allow the Holocaust - the murder of six million Jews, including one-and-a-half million children?

Whatever the answer, the Shoah was a reality, and Jews of all stripes marked it on Sunday and Monday. Nationwide in Israel, traditionally motorists - religious, secular and atheist - stopped their cars and stood next to them silently for two minutes as sirens wailed to commemorate the tragedy.

In Poland, every year since 1988, thousands of Jews – this year including the IDF Chief-of-Staff – have marched the three kilometres between the death camps of Birkenau and Auschwitz in the “March of the Living”.

This not only memorialises the victims, but shows that the Jewish people were not destroyed by the Nazis. Instead, they rebuilt themselves and created the thriving state of Israel.

Also in Israel, in stark contrast, there was outrage at the group of ultra-Orthodox Jews who held a barbecue in a Jerusalem park on Yom Hashoah because they reject the state of Israel and its public events.

The Holocaust will never be fully understood, no matter how many studies are done and explanations offered by historians, rabbis, social scientists and politicians. Responses to it is bound to continue to be diverse.

This year is the 60th anniversary of the official creation by the Israeli government in 1953 of Yom Hashoah, the Jewish Holocaust Remembrance Day. That same year Yad Vashem was established in Jerusalem as the world centre for documentation, research, education and commemoration of the Holocaust.

At that time, the sheer scale of what had happened was only beginning to be understood and the major works of literature, art and film depicting the human dimensions of the tragedy were still to be created, such as seminal works by Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi and Hannah Arendt, as well as Anne Frank’s diary.

Claude Lanzmann’s seminal documentary film, Shoah, was only made in 1985, dealing with Chełmno - where gas vans were first used to exterminate Jews - the death camps of Treblinka and Auschwitz-Birkenau and the Warsaw Ghetto, with testimonies from survivors, witnesses and perpetrators.

The Holocaust has been so thoroughly absorbed into Jewish culture worldwide that many people simply assume it will continue to be appropriately remembered.

The challenge today, however, as the last of the survivors - with their personal memories - are nearing the end of their lives, is how it will be marked in the future. Will Jews two generations from now regard it merely as a folktale? And who knows what other events lie ahead for the world. The way things look right now, wars of ever greater ferocity are a real danger.

Anti-Semitism is again seriously on the rise. It is reported that globally there has been a 30 per cent increase in anti-Semitic acts over the past year. In parts of the world - such as the Arab countries and among European and American neo-Nazi groups - Holocaust denial is spreading, and the essential facts and figures are not accepted or even known about.

When anti-Israel activists in places such as university campuses use the term “Israeli genocide against the Palestinians”, it shows how little they understand about what genocide means.

We must continue marking the memorial day of Yom Hashoah. But we also need other ways to teach its lessons about the barbarism man is capable of. The creation of Holocaust centres around the world is one avenue. There is one in Cape Town, and in Johannesburg another is under construction, which will also commemorate the Rwandan and other genocides.

The warning of the Holocaust is relevant not only now, but for future generations - and not only for Jews, but for all of mankind.

Wits SRC defends disruption of ‘Israeli’ Yossi Reshef’s concert



Students make their way towards the piano recital, which they disrupted and forced to end, on March 12.

The Wits University Student Representative Council is demanding an investigation “into racial profiling, violence against students, external security and implementation of Israel boycott” and condemns the use of terms such as “barbaric”, “hooligans” and “Muslim-agitators” by Israeli supporters in referring to Wits students.

This is in response to the disruption on March 12 of a recital by Israel-born, German-based pianist Yossi Reshef, at Wits University, by student protesters, which culminated in the recital being abandoned after 15 minutes. The SRC defends the protest action as legitimate.

The action led to wide condemnation

‘The use of such terms, all by white people, reminds us far too much of our racist past in which black students and people were reduced to barbarians, thugs, cockroaches etc.’

in South Africa, as well as from Wits alumni abroad.

The Wits SRC says in a media release it “condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of words such as ‘barbaric’ (by Reshef), ‘Muslim agitators’ (by Wits Professor Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph), ‘hooligans’ (by Geoff Sifrin, SA Jewish Report editor), ‘a pack of baying hyenas frantic for blood’ (by the editor of the SA Jewish Report), ‘thugs’, ‘savages’, ‘monkeys’ and other expletives used by members of the Israeli lobby in referring to Wits University students”.

The SRC adds: “The use of such terms, all by white people, reminds us far too much of our racist past in which black students and people were reduced to barbarians, thugs, cockroaches etc. The... SRC calls on Wits University to initiate an immediate and transparent investi-

Wits’ vice-chancellor apologises for student behaviour

Prof Loyiso Nongxa, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Wits, on March 13, the day after protesters forced pianist Yossi Reshef to abandon his concert at Wits, expressed his university’s “deep regret” and promised “appropriate action” against those responsible. He also issued a public apology to the organisers.

The statement reads in part: “The University of the Witwatersrand... deeply regrets that a concert held on its campus last night was disrupted by some members of the university community and representatives of external organisations.

“The University is investigating this matter and will take the appropriate action based on its policies, processes and procedures.

“In light of this incident, the University offers a public apology to the organisers of the event and all who attended the concert. The disruption of this event points to intolerance



Wits Vice Chancellor & Principal, Professor Loyiso Nongxa

on the part of some members of the University community and goes against the core values espoused by the University.

“The University reiterates that the views and opinions expressed by the Students’ Representative Council or any other student groups on campus, do not represent the official views of the University, nor are they necessarily an accurate reflection of the views of the majority of students, staff and alumni.

“Wits University is a leading institution on the African continent renowned for encouraging dialogue and debate on often diverse and conflicting views confronting society. It provides a platform for different constituencies to express their views and opinions through considered debate and intellectual engagement in the spirit of tolerance, respect and openness.”

management to student requests prior to the event as well as conduct of university management to the actual protest and cancellation of the event;

- Whether Wits was within its right to cancel the performance in the first place in line with the principles of the Israel boycott.

The release is signed by Tasneem Essop, Wits University SRC secretary-general and Tokelo Nhlapo, the SRC deputy president.

The SRC quotes from an invitation published on Artslink.co.za, and written by Cathy Pisanti on February 19, stating: “Wits Music and Wits Theatre gratefully acknowledge the generous financial contribution of both the Israeli

It adds that in 2012, the Wits University

The treatment by management (not to engage with the official student representative body), “is highly regrettable and the Wits SRC believes that the incidents of Tuesday, March 12, could have been avoided if there was proper engagement by... Management

Inside the venue, the SRC says, students “proceeded with a non-violent protest (singing and chanting). At this point the guests of the Israeli concert felt that the event was disrupted and left the venue. The concert was subsequently cancelled. Students con-

The Wits SRC objects to epithets labelled against them in reaction to the protest. I can obviously only respond to my own words, strongly condemning the actions as sheer hooliganism. I still stand by every word I wrote on the issue. - Editor



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Mirror, mirror on the wall...

AVIVA LIORA MOSES
GENEVA

It is not just what you say, but the platform from whence you say it. And the higher the platform you occupy, the deeper the level of trust and responsibility you hold.

These were the sentiments of Dr Mukesh Kapila, former United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Co-ordinator for Sudan, that remained with me for my experience at the United Nations Human Rights Council, where my eyes were opened to the internal workings of the UNHRC, to the bias adopted towards Israel.

During March, I spent a week with 24 young Jewish leaders from around Europe in Geneva as part of the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS) ambassadorial delegate to the UNHRC.

The week’s seminars were dedicated to underscoring the role of human rights in our current-day society, the numerous violations of these rights worldwide, and the particular treatment of Israel by the UNHRC and the rebound effects that this Council’s actions have globally, specifically pertaining to the conversion of anti-Zionist rhetoric into anti-Semitic action.

I met a kaleidoscope of human rights representatives, from Dr Kapila, champion for human rights, who brought the world’s attention to the

crisis and genocide in Darfur, to Hil- lel Neuer, executive director of UN Watch, who strives for equality for all countries represented within the UNHRC.

He plays a key role in insisting on a legitimised position for Israel within a regional grouping in the Council, as well as an end to the biased position held towards it by many member states.

With further meetings arranged with representatives of the US, French and German missions, this was the key-point to be discussed: Was Israel’s decision to withdraw from the UNHRC correct, and what kind of progression can we expect in the future?

For one to understand this, one needs to contextualise Israel’s leaving, which begins with the principal purpose for our week in Geneva: our attendance at the UNHRC for the discussion of the biased Agenda Item 7.

This item proposed as the “Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories”, is solely dedicated to the delegitimation of the State of Israel, as well as an obsession with exposing the mass human rights violations inflicted upon its Palestinian brothers.

It justifies the discussion of the fact-finding missions (FFMs) to Israel, as well as allowing for the adoption of various anti-Israel resolutions by the member states to the Council.

For this reason, owing to constant

condemnation, the Israeli foreign ministry decided to withdraw from the Council as it believed there was no point in being present only to be berated.

However, its leaving poses another problem: When, or if, they decide to return, what kind of light are they going to be seen in? Would they be perceived to be conceding to the criticism and pressure, or would it be a move in the right direction and a step towards trying to normalise their position in the Council?

Given the fact that Israel is not allowed to be included in any regional grouping, one cannot expect its possible reintegration in the near future. There has to be normalisation on both sides; one can go as far as to say that Israel’s exclusion from a regional grouping is a breach of the UN Charter, where all countries are entitled to be treated equally.

However, this is not a possibility where Israel is unable to participate owing to the bludgeoning of its political arguments.

One cannot declare any single nation which is at war, to be completely free of human rights violations. However, it is this Item 7 session that provides a public vituperation of the Israeli state.

I was selected to talk on behalf of the European Union of Jewish Students, representing the Jewish student population of Europe; I called for



an end to the one-sided condemnation of the State of Israel, as well as for the search for common ground.

Owing to the widespread ignorance regarding the difference between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, it is most often seen as the same thing and therefore spurs actions such as the global “Apartheid Week”, which gathers the support of people unaware of the situation in the Middle East.

The UNHRC is the chief distorter of human rights principles. The primary champions against Israel were the greatest world human rights abusers, from Sri Lanka, to Syria, China, and Cuba.

Included among these “human rights champions” was the Maldives, where ongoing violations are commonplace. We have only to consider the young girl who was sentenced to 100 lashings as punishment for being raped by her stepfather.

Going back to the words of Dr Kapila: The platform of power that one occupies is only as powerful as the actions and words that stem from it.

Furthermore, the product of the platform is a reflection of actions which are visible to the world.

The UNHRC is the mirror within which the world gazes - directly or indirectly - through the media, which provides the fuel that generates global anti-Semitism. Until there is even-handedness in that Council and chief human rights abusers are not condemning the State of Israel, the reflection that we receive will remain distorted, and resolutions towards peace, democracy and justice will remain unfulfilled.

• Aviva Liora Moses is a South African Jewish student from Cape Town studying for a double masters degree in Spanish and Internationalism in Stockholm, Sweden. She was recently selected to go as one of 20 ambassadors with the European Union of Jewish Students to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, to attend meetings with the HRC and workshops with various international human rights activists and world ambassadors.



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Israel in the media: Slier sketches the reality on the ground

STEVEN GRUZD

A media war is being waged daily in the Middle East, and, unfortunately, Israel loses more often than it wins; it does not have enough professional media soldiers, and they don't fight well.

These were the forthright views of South African-born journalist Paula Slier, who has been based in Israel for the past eight years, covering the Middle East for the international television network Russia Today.

She was addressing a business breakfast at the offices of Sasfin Bank in Waverley last Friday, organised by the South Africa-Israel Chamber of Commerce (SAICC), which promotes business and investment between the two countries.

Having reviewed the unravelling of the "Arab Spring" in Syria, Libya and Egypt, Slier asked why the media chose to focus on the tiny country of Israel. "Don't be fooled - there is no such thing as objective journalism. Everyone has an agenda and a particular angle on a story," she said.

Television, she added, was a cruel medium, where a journalist had between two-and-a-half and three-and-a-half minutes to convey a story.

"Forget context, forget history," she said. There was just no time in television news. Guests were reduced to a 15 or 20 second sound bite. The old newspaper adage of "if it bleeds, it leads" still applied, and soldiers in tanks would never make for a sympathetic story.

Slier said that all news networks were downsizing, and journalists based in other countries were more sympathetic to Arab viewpoints. Many Israel-based foreign correspondents stayed in Ramallah in the West Bank, and were therefore constantly exposed to the Palestinian narrative. Also, journalists by their nature tended to be left wing, and saw the conflict through that prism.

Given the inevitable media spotlight on Israel, the government - especially the Foreign Ministry and the Israeli Defence Forces - was just not receptive enough to the media.

She asserted that Israel did not have enough good spokespeople who spoke fluent English. "It matters on television," she said.

Too many Israeli spokespeople came over as arrogant, and saw latent anti-Semitism in foreign reporting, and felt that putting their side of the story was futile. She also noted that many negative stories about Israel were sourced from the left-wing daily newspaper Haaretz.

Slier explained how Arab countries such as Bahrain, Libya and Saudi Arabia invested millions in public relations, hiring companies to burnish their international image, especially to US audiences.

She said the Israeli government said that it didn't have the money and faced real existential threats. She acknowledged that Israel had begun to use social media more frequently, "but so is the other side", she pointed out.

But perhaps things are improving. Comparing the 2009 Gaza incursion to the eight-day hostilities in 2012, Slier acknowledged that the IDF used Twitter, Facebook and YouTube extensively and effectively, and that journalists were taken on daily tours of Sderot, where in 2009 they'd been kept away from the battlefields. "But damage is always more dramatic on the Palestinian side."



SAICC CEO Vicky Berrington with journalist Paula Slier.



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A PITY DENNIS DAVIS DID NOT HEED ‘GATEKEEPER’ LESSONS

I always make a point of reading what Dennis Davis has to write. Agree with him or not, his arguments are valid and informative.

His latest piece on “Distance and perspective” raised some interesting points about the Jewish community, diversity and continuity. He correctly pointed out that seeing something from a different perspective could lead to better understanding and diversity. I would have hoped that Davis would have used this same yardstick when he saw “The Gatekeepers”. It is a truly fascinating documentary due to the revelations and dire warnings by former security officials.

Yet, despite all its fanfare, the documentary had almost negligible influence in Israel where former security chiefs, past and present, are all renowned for their political aspirations, their political failings and most importantly their security blunders, Ami Ayalon being the best example of political aspirations and failings.

Despite his security reputation, he handily lost the Labour primaries and subsequently in the 2009 elections lost his seat in the Knesset. Today he is a political washout still trying to justify his political failure to an electorate that has scorned him.

Avi Dichter was the Shabak head who completely misread the security situation prior to the outbreak of violence in 2000. The fact that a security chief of Dichter’s calibre was so caught up in the Oslo euphoria that he ignored all warnings about the imminent violent outbreaks, was completely brushed over in “the Gatekeepers” and so too by Davis.

Carmi Gillon who ultimately failed at protecting Yitzhak Rabin ז”ל, rather than admit his own security blunder that saw Rabin murdered by a suspect on the Shabak watch list, prefers to as

sign blame to a “religious right-wing political climate”.

Ironically enough, the present political climate has seen Yaakov Peri, another “Gatekeeper” elected to the Knesset, thanks in part and by his own admission, to his participation in the documentary.

For all its ominous illusions and security revelations, “The Gatekeepers” has been applauded primarily by those on Zionism’s political left.

Davis, to his credit, is firmly in that camp, and so his latest comments on a documentary that is produced by a politically left leaning director, interviewing figures on Zionism’s political left, focused on left leaning audiences, provided zero distance of perspective and therefore no diversity of opinion.

Shaun Sacks
Jerusalem

IS ISRAELI GOVERNMENT SHYING AWAY FROM A REFERENDUM ON REACHING A SETTLEMENT?

In the column by Mr Justice Dennis Davis, “Distance lends perspective to one’s Jewish view” (SAJR April 5), he draws attention to the comments of the previous heads of Shin Bet and states that “to enter a dialogue with a sustained critique of current Israeli politics as it pertains to any settlement with the Palestinians.” One former Shin Bet leader warns of an attempted assassination of a leader in the future.

It appears to me that the present (or past) Israeli government is shying away from a referendum to indicate a will by the majority of Israelis to reach a settlement.

According to the statement by the particular former Shin Bet leader regarding assassinations, any leader might be too fearful to try and reach a settlement. This applies equally to a leader of Israel or a leader of the Palestinians.

Then, of course, there is the problem of who gets Jerusalem, and the return of the 1948 Palestinian refugees, both of which are non-negotiable to most Israelis.

Hamas is in favour of a one-state solution. It takes the long-term view that in a few generations’ time, Palestinians will outnumber the Jews in a single state.

John Brenner
Johannesburg

LAMENT FOR THE DISAPPEARANCE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ISRAEL

I would like to register my disappointment about the direction the nationalist rightwing Zionist parties in Israel have taken with regards to social justice.

Benjamin Netanyahu, to his eternal shame, took a great party of the people - the Likud - and turned it into the party of power and privilege.

It is important to remember that the Herut/Likud movement in Israel before Netanyahu, always espoused the social policies of Ze’ev Jabotinsky who was a great believer in universal equality and individual liberty.

His social programme was based on the principles of liberalism and social justice as outlined in the Bible.

In his concern for the social order of the future Jewish state, he put the emphasis on the moral obligation of its founders to ensure that there be no hunger, no want nor deprivation.

Jabotinsky expounded the idea of five “mems” starting with the letter m. They are mazon (food); maon (dwelling); malbush (clothing); marpeh (medical care); and moreh (education).

He set forth these five basic needs as the basis for compassion and justice for all.

Netanyahu chose to drop social conscience from his party’s programme because of his doctrinaire Thatcherite libertarian dogma. His role model was Margaret Thatcher; to me she did more harm than good to Britain.

She was an anti-working class tyrant who took milk away from malnourished children in schools, who violently broke up the legitimate strike by miners, even trashing the miners’ houses and who imposed a poll tax on those without any income.

A lot I don’t agree with Amos Oz, but what he said in 2002 was spot on, namely that our biggest problem is the disappearance of social solidarity. A gross egotism is developing here, that isn’t even ashamed of itself.

Religious Zionism until recently had a great concern for social justice, but tragically moved away from it and now Naftali Bennett completely axed it from his party’s programme, causing Habayit haYehudi to follow Likud in becoming yet another party of wealth and privilege.

Bennett even lashed out at other parties for not opposing the dockworkers’ strike at Ashdod.

Now only Labour, led by Shelly Yacimovitch and the haredi parties, Shas and United Torah Judaism, care about social justice and social cohesion. Israel has sunk far from the 1960s and ‘70s when not a single Israeli child (Jewish, Arab, Christian or Druze) went hungry or without shoes.

Now Israel has the biggest gap between rich and poor of any developed country. Israel cannot be successful in the war against her enemies without social cohesion.

Why can’t there be a single political party in Israel that is patriotic and Zionist, tough on security and foreign affairs, while being geared towards support of Israel’s working classes and poor?

Where has classless pro-working class Zionism gone? Social responsibility and support for the working classes and Zionism are not mutually exclusive.

Gary Selikow, Johannesburg

MIDEAST PEACE? MORE CHANCE OF WINNING THE LOTTO

Certainly, one can only agree with Dennis Davis, President Barack Obama and participants in the “Gatekeepers” (documentary), that Israel should try even harder to secure peace with her neighbours.

(I refer to Davis’ column in the Jewish Report of April 5, headed “Distance lends perspective to one’s Jewish view”).

Okay, good idea. Apparently all that now remains is to persuade Hamas, Fatah, Hezbollah and Iran, to accept Israel’s existence as a “Jewish” state in the Middle East.

Unfortunately, against the background of the extremely volatile situation in the region, I imagine that there is more chance of my winning next week’s lotto (estimated at 14 million to 1) than of Dennis Davis’ dream coming true in the foreseeable future.

And, until then, Israel will pursue peace while remaining strong and vigilant in protection of the ancient Jewish homeland.

David Abel
Co-Chairman
Support Association for Zionism

SHALOM BAYIT WASN’T STARTED BY ZUCKERMAN AND WOLDER

Irene Zuckerman and Ray Wolder, of the Union of Jewish Women, point out that in the article “The scourge which is talked about in a hushed voice”, which appeared in Jewish Report of March 22, it is stated that the two started a branch of Shalom Bayit.

This is incorrect. Shalom Bayit is an initiative of the Co-ordinating Council of National Jewish Women’s Organisations. It was established as a subdivision of the above Council and each participating organisation has at least one representative sitting on this committee. Shalom Bayit came about as a result of “rumours” of domestic violence and women abuse in the Jewish community.

Over many years it has organised seminars and panel discussions with prominent speakers which are attended by many women.


“In so doing we have opened up this taboo subject and brought it into the public domain.”

We regret the error.

INCOMPLETE E-MAIL ADDRESS FOR INFORMATION NEEDED ON SCHLOSS (OR CASTLE) FAMILY

In last week’s paper we carried a request by Ninon Schloss from Denmark, who is searching for information about her family in South Africa. Unfortunately incomplete contact details were given. The correct address is: Ninon Schloss, Møllergyden 5, 5683 Hårby, Denmark or ninon@schloss.dk

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A symbiotic relationship between word, image and performance

Show: “The Epicene Butcher and Other Stories for Consenting Adults”, Barney Simon Theatre, Market Theatre, Newtown (011) 832-1641 Until: April 21

REVIEWED BY ROBYN SASSEN

Armed with an unapologetically rudimentary set, complete with tacky Japanese commercial kitsch and a stage within a stage on a wooden clothes horse, Jemma Kahn demonstrates almost magical skill that will hold you, focus you and touch you, like few shows can.

The Epicene Butcher is a little show with a history that stretches all the way to 12th century Bud-

dhist Japan, and comprises seven stories told with strict adherence to the kamishibai technique of travelling storytelling.

It is in this context that Kahn coalesces her theatre and fine art skills, but also her collaborative talents.

The tales told with sequential drawings on card, inserted one behind the next in the wooden screen, created by Kahn as well as Carlos Amato and other artists, embrace a diversity of genre, from pornography to complex mythology to a melding of iconic references from the Mario Brothers computer game to Shakespeare to Mandela.

The process is almost like a primitive form of film. There’s a silent



Jemma Kahn narrating a stormy moment at sea in the Epicene Butcher.

tale called Fukushima which tells of tsunamis and loss, sadness and joy without the need for a single word; all is embraced by drawings so fresh in their wit and acuity, the mere hour of the show will feel deeper.

But the magic that binds this show and brings it from the edges of theatre-making and into the mainstream, is the relationship between word, image and performance.

Klara van Wyk plays “Chalk Girl”, the facilitating character, traditionally not allowed to speak; within her parameters of performance in these rules, she gives the show a little extra pizzazz without making it silly.

Kahn crowns the work. Her diction is delicious and combined with the magnificent and carefully chosen words that comprise the stories, she injects fire and heart into everything she touches. Taking you from raucous hilarity to gasped-back tears, Kahn makes you remember what a stage play is supposed to do: tell a story.

The eponymous tale is resonant with the troubling moral premises infiltrating the similarly framed narrative fuelling Peter Greenaway’s controversial film “The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover” (1989), it’s a tale of love and sacrifice, of horror and power, of meat

and taboo, woven niftily together and stripped of anything extraneous.

The thrill of as ostensibly primitive a theatre technique as kamishibai is not only that it is so old it’s new, and so poor of artifice it’s rich with possibility, it’s also that its simplicity is so potent, it lends itself to immense complexity. The stories, written by Gwydion Beynon are exactly right for this medium.

They play with the traditions and turn them sideways and inside out, intellectually and morally, but do not ruin them by trivialising them. This one hour at the theatre will leave you feeling utterly charmed and completely lucky to be alive.



The Four Seasons: Bob Gaudio (Kenneth Meyer); Tommy De Vito (Daniel Buys); Franki Valli (Grant Almirall); and Nick Massi (Emmanuel Castis), Singing “Sherry”.

Timeless music leaves you with a song in your heart

Show: “Jersey Boys” Venues: Teatro, Montecasino, Fourways, until May 26. Artscape, Cape Town, from June 19 - July 14

REVIEWED BY ROBYN SASSEN

Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. Unless you were a fan in the early 1960s, you might be forgiven for not remembering them. The group existed as such for five years. But the original four who got together to harmonise under a lamppost in Newark, New Jersey, created some of the most loved popular music standards our world knows; songs that tower like giants over their origins.

This is the pivot upon which this supremely slick show turns.

Hear the titles of “Sherry”; “Big girls don’t cry”; “Walk like a man”; “Oh, what a night”; and in your mind’s ear or on your lips are the first words or bars of these enduring songs which have slipped into universal Western consciousness.

“Can’t take my eyes off you” is a classic wedding standard, Valli’s first hit as a soloist in 1967. Valli’s distinctive vocal range from falsetto down an octave or three, was quite unique; Grant Almirall’s ability to evoke it is beautiful and resonant.

The musical tells the rags-to-riches story of the rise and fall of this band, against a backdrop of poverty and crime. It’s a predictable tale. And while the narrative bits tend to have a grapeshot effect and are stunted by not enough contextual references, the audience breathlessly awaits the songs that will get them whooping with delight at the first bars. And it does.

The whole auditorium explodes - as the world did, when “Sherry” first emerged on the popular song front in 1962, the Four Seasons’ first charted hit, but also their first number one song.

While the character renditions and music are absolutely spot on in acuity and interpretation, under the able handling of Bryan Schimmel, musical supervisor for the show in South Africa, kudos must go

to Howell Binkley who designed the lighting, and production designer Michael Clark.

There are just so many things one can do with staging and lighting a production on a large stage that features a cast of four men in grey suits, in the quest to make it aesthetically sexy. And the result is entrancing.

In one scene in which Valli acknowledges that the phrase “this too will pass” applies to the good stuff in life as well as the bad, he stands alone onstage, a telephone linking him to bad news. He is lit gently with two spotlights, but the enormous cavity of the stage is framed by a flat projection of Venetian yellow light. Not too harsh, not too subtle. The effect is breathtaking.

Fuelled with Roy Lichtenstein- evocative images, Jersey Boys lends itself to pop art triggers of its day. In its largeness and shiny fluency, it rises to its own hype, leaving you with song in your heart, on your lips and the sway of your hips.

Arts Briefs

Looking for a catalogue on Emmanuel Mané-Katz

Johannesburg-based art researcher Nicholas Geddes has for over a decade been working on establishing the authorship of a painting he bought at an auction. He believes the painting to be a genuine work of the minor Expressionist Emanuel Mané-Katz (1894 - 1962) who was born in the Ukraine and died in Israel. There is a museum in Haifa dedicated to the life and work of this artist. Geddes is urgently seeking to borrow an out-of-print catalogue raisonné of Mane-Katz written by Robert Aries and published in the early 1970s. Geddes may be contacted on 074-194-8 662 or nickygeddes@telkomsa.net

Landscape painting by Chagall to be auctioned in South Africa

According to head of painting at auctioneer Stephan Welz & Co, Imre Lamprecht, the work of major 20th century Jewish modernist Marc Chagall, has never yet been auctioned in SA. On April 23 and 24, valued at R2,2 - R2,5 million, “Joie de Vivre Paysage de Vence avec des Fleurs” (1958), a blue landscape painting by Chagall, will be open to live and online bidding. Owned by one family who bought it from a Paris gallery, the gouache painting on paper will be auctioned by ATG Media SA. Contact (011) 880-3125 or jhb@stephanwelzandco.co.za. The auction catalogue is available for view at www.stephanwelzandco.co.za

‘The Spinster’ opens in Cape Town this week at Alexander Bar

Written and performed by Kyla Davis and directed by James Cairns, “The Spinster”, a brand new piece of physical theatre, which recently debuted in a short season at POP Art in central Johannesburg, opens this week at the Alexander Bar in Cape Town. Drawing inspiration from the political satire of Franca Rame, Le Coq’s Buffoon and female archetypes, the play is bound to rattle cages. Founder of the Well Worn Theatre Company in 2008, Davis, a physical theatre expert, is focused on creating new, stimulating eco-friendly theatre with edge, relevance and value. Contact (021) 300-1652. The season ends on April 17.

Herzlia’s Limmud format to commemorate Shoah, a huge success

MOIRA SCHNEIDER
CAPE TOWN

You could have heard a pin drop as a group of Herzlia High learners listened intently to 84-year-old refugee from Nazi Germany, Sonja Keschner recount her story at the first Limmud event to be held at the school.

Keschner’s was one of over 40 sessions on offer in what was a collaboration between Limmud, Herzlia, the Cape Town Holocaust Centre, the Israel Centre and the Jacob Gitlin Library, that formed part of the school’s Yom Hashoah commemoration.

Keschner, who was nine years old when she was forced to flee the country of her birth, remembered her schoolteacher targeting her - the only Jewish child at her school - “all the time. However many years go past, you never forget it.”

She recalled the others being told to draw a Christmas tree, but “you can’t, because you’re a Jew,” Fraulein Meier had barked.

Having secured visas for Uruguay, the family fled there in 1938. She had to learn Spanish and had lost a year of schooling.

At the age of 14, her father apprenticed her to a dressmaker - “I hated every stitch” - as he had noted that tradespeople were able to earn a living, whereas “doctors and lawyers (among the refugees) were delivering milk”.

Her mother opened a shop selling ladies underwear, with which she assisted, as all the refugee children helped their parents. “So many of us were in the same boat and as I got older, I understood my father’s reason for not

letting me go on studying,” she said.

After attending an English language school, Keschner, who is a guide at the Cape Town Holocaust Centre (CTHC), became a ground hostess for Dutch Airline KLM and later an air hostess on the South American run, as she could speak Spanish.

‘Our experience was nothing compared to the people who died in the camps, but it split up families, we lost contact and I’m very, very sorry about that.’

Reminiscing on the wonderful family times they enjoyed in Germany before the Nazis came to power, she said: “It was all gone, but we consider ourselves very lucky that we got away. Our experience was nothing compared to the people who died in the camps, but it split up families, we lost contact and I’m very, very sorry about that.”

Keschner met her husband when he was visiting family in South America and came to this country in 1956.

“When I hear of xenophobia and foreigners being attacked, it kills me,” she commented.

“Don’t people think they would much rather be back in their own country, with their friends, families and language, but they have come here to keep alive?”

Saul Kaplan, head of Jewish Life and Learn-

ing at the United Herzlia Schools, said the learners were “mind-boggled” by the choice on offer. He described the Limmud educational model as “brilliant for the future, because when learners sign up for what they want, they take ownership of that learning.

“When it comes to Holocaust education, many learners feel they’ve heard this so many times, there’s nothing new they can learn - there’s a large disconnect. The goal of the programme was to connect them to many approaches to the Holocaust through song, dance, music and lectures and every learner chose the style that was most appropriate for them.”

Director of the CTHC, Richard Freedman, regards the Limmud format for Holocaust commemoration “wonderful for this particular age group. It’s appropriate - they have a way of entering into the discussion which is on their own terms.

“It’s not being imposed on them - it gives that freedom of choice. They get different voices, different opinions, an opportunity to engage, to bring their own thought into the environment - nothing could be better than that.”

Limmud SA co-founder Viv Anstey, whose brainchild the event was, said it was bringing a community of passionate educators into the school. “We hope to make it an annual occurrence and to take the same model and use it on other occasions like Pesach or Yom Ha’atzmaut.

“It’s a rich resource for the school to use in the future.”

World News in Brief

Study: Global anti-Semitism up by 30 per cent in 2012

TEL AVIV - On the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day, a study revealed global anti-Semitism was up by 30 per cent in 2012, Israel Hayom reported.

The study, conducted by Tel Aviv University’s Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, said that in the past year there was “an alarming rise in the number of terrorist attacks and attempted attacks against Jewish targets worldwide.”

The study reported 686 anti-Semitic incidents in 2012, compared to 526 incidents in 2011. Of the attacks in 2012, 273 were physical assaults against Jews.

The largest rise in attacks occurred in economically troubled Europe. However, the US, Canada and Australia also saw a rise in attacks.

Many groups involved in attacks against Jews were associated with far-right parties or radical Islamist groups, both of which are growing in Europe.

“This situation in some countries in Europe - mostly Greece and Hungary - has got so perilous that Jews are afraid to walk down the street,” Aryeh Zuckerman, a consultant with the Kantor Centre, told Israel Hayom. (JNS.org)

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Former British PM Margaret Thatcher, ‘staunch friend of Israel’

JERUSALEM - Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who died on Monday, was a staunch supporter of Israel but had a rocky relationship with Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

Thatcher died after suffering a stroke, at the age of 87. She suffered from dementia at the end of her life, which was dramatised in the 2011 movie “The Iron Lady.”

The only female to serve as prime minister of Britain, she also was the longest continuously serving prime minister in the 20th century, leading the country and her Conservative Party 11 years, from 1979 to 1990.

She called Begin, who served two terms in the 1980s, the “most difficult” man she had to deal with, according to the Chronicle. She also strongly opposed Israel’s bombing of Iraq’s Osirak nuclear reactor.

She believed that the Arab-Israel conflict was at the centre of the Western world’s difficulties in the Middle East, pressing Israeli leaders to make peace with the Palestinians in order to cool regional tensions.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu mourned her passing in a statement.

“She was truly a great leader, a woman of principle, of determination, of conviction, of strength; a woman of greatness,” Netanyahu said.

“She was a staunch friend of Israel and the Jewish people. She inspired a generation of political leaders. I send my most sincere condolences to her family and to the government and people of Great Britain.”

Vivian Wineman, president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, told JTA that Thatcher “was always extremely supportive and admiring of the ethos of the British Jewish community. This close relationship began when her family took in a young Austrian Jewish refugee from Nazism in the late 1930s.”

“There are people, there are ideas. Occasionally those two come together to create vision. Lady Thatcher was an exceptional leader, a colleague in the international arena and a friend for me personally,” Israeli President Shimon Peres said in a statement. “She served as an inspiration for other leaders, as the first female prime minister of Great Britain she broke new ground. She showed how far a person can go with strength of character,

determination and a clear vision.”

Wineman said that when Thatcher entered Parliament representing Finchley in north London, “a very Jewish constituency”, her relationship with local Jewish institutions blossomed and continued throughout her career as prime minister. During her campaign, she fought against a golf course in the district that banned having Jews as members.

Thatcher was a founding member of the Anglo-Israel Friendship League of Finchley and a member of the Conservative Friends of Israel, according to Tablet.

Wineman said Thatcher counted a number of Jews among her closest advisers and confidants, and at one point nearly a quarter of her Cabinet was of Jewish origins. They included Nigel Lawson, Malcolm Rifkind, Keith Joseph and Leon Brittan, according to the Jewish Chronicle.

“She also greatly admired the late Chief Rabbi Dr Immanuel Jakobovits, whom she elevated to the House of Lords,” Wineman said. “She was unquestionably a great statesman of the later 20th century, and one who was a friend to the Jewish people and Israel.”

Thatcher reportedly had no patience for anti-Semitism nor those who espoused it. She was a strong supporter of Soviet Jewry.

She had a strong relationship with US President Ronald Reagan and together they fought communism, leading to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. (JTA)

Yom Hashoah: Obama commits to combat intolerance

WASHINGTON - President Barack Obama in his Yom Hashoah message recalled his recommitment in Israel last month to combating anti-Semitism and intolerance.

“Today, we honour the memories of the six million Jewish victims and millions of others who perished in the darkness of the Shoah,” Obama said on Monday in a message timed for Holocaust Remembrance Day.

“As we reflect on the beautiful lives lost and their great potential that would never be fulfilled, we also pay tribute to all those who resisted the Nazis’ heinous acts and all those who survived,” he said.

“On my recent trip to Israel, I had the opportunity to visit Yad Vashem, Israel’s national Holocaust memorial, and reaffirm our collective responsibility to confront anti-Semitism, prejudice and intolerance across the world.”

He concluded: “On this Yom Hashoah, we must accept the full responsibility of remembrance, as nations and as individuals - not simply to pledge ‘Never again’, but to commit ourselves to the understanding, empathy and compassion that is the foundation of peace and human dignity.”

In a separate statement, Representative Nancy Pelosi (Democrat California), the minority leader in the US House of Representatives, noted that the day marked the Hebrew calendar’s anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.


“This day is a reminder of all who had the courage to fight back; who refused to allow the inhumanity of the Nazis to deprive them of their own humanity,” she said.

“It is a reminder of the defiant spirit of the survivors, whose strength and perseverance still inspire us today. It is a reminder of the righteous among the nations who risked their own lives to protect the lives of their neighbours.” (JTA)

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Holocaust survivor Rena Quint – inspiration to all South Africans



**Above Board**
Mary Kluk
National Chairman

Over the past week, Yom Hashoah ceremonies were held under the auspices of the Board in all the main Jewish population centres.

In addition, and possibly for the first time ever, a ceremony was held in Grahamstown as part of a visit by a delegation from the Board, SAZF and SAUJS to meet with the staff and students of Rhodes University and other members of the local community.

This year’s keynote speaker, Rena Quint, spoke at the Johannesburg and Durban ceremonies and afterwards addressed the community in Cape Town. Like all Holocaust survivors, the story she had to tell was a harrowing one. That being said, it was deeply inspiring to hear how despite this, she was able to go on to build a successful, fulfilling life for herself, including raising a family of committed, involved Jews.

As she observed, it was this continuation of a vibrant Jewish life, particularly in Israel where she now lives, that demonstrates how the Nazis ultimately failed in their efforts to destroy the Jewish people.

Rena’s message should resonate with all people who have undergone traumatic experiences as a result of persecution and injustice. Indeed, as a result of being interviewed on Radio SAfm, she was even

Everyone enjoys a good story, but they’re not much fun when they’re filled with pain and suffering.

Almost daily a new heart-breaking story crosses my desk involving some communal sadness and sorrow. These situations are challenging, often requiring more wisdom than we humans have, and there are seldom simple solutions.

Respecting the privacy and (often opposing) perspectives of those involved, we summon all our resources to examine the complexities from every angle. Then we do our very best to help.

I want to share just one story with you.

Once upon a time the parents of three children were involved in a serious car accident. The father was left a paraplegic and his wife suffered severe emotional trauma and depression. Neither was able to work.

It’s our policy to try to solicit support from family members, but in this case, as in many others, no-one could assist. Maintaining their medical aid was a priority.

Then a holistic approach was applied, involving our financial services, healthcare professionals and social workers who teamed up to assess the family’s living arrangements and determine how best to meet their needs.

invited to speak to women prisoners on behalf of the Department of Correctional Services.

By her example, she is able to show that no matter how low we fall, or are made to fall by others, we have the capacity to pick ourselves up afterwards and rise to undreamed of heights.

While we must never forget the past, we should not allow it to engender a sense of hopelessness. Rather, we must use the lessons learned to build something positive, be it working towards creating a more just and compassionate society, rebuilding what has been destroyed or simply in the way one interacts with other people.

‘Labelling controversy’ finally laid to rest

Shortly before going to print, we were delighted to learn that the long-running “labelling controversy” had been brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

The final decision by the Cabinet regarding how products from Jewish settlements in the West Bank should be identified, is very much in line with what the Board and SAZF regarded as satisfactory.

The labelling is neutral and descriptive and not politically motivated, which is all that we wanted. In our media release we thank the Office of the Presidency, Cabinet and Minister of Trade and Industry Rob Davies, for hearing and taking into account out concerns when finalising the new regulations.

The outcome of the months of deliberation over this issue has been a sensible one that addressed the requirement that the places of origin of imported products be accurately identified without the addition of politically-motivated aspects that cause division within the South African population.

This column is paid for by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Once upon a time...

As it happened, the most practical and affordable option was to pay their bond so they could continue living in their home with domestic help. We also facilitated disability grants which helped toward food and clothing.

Counselling and home visits were routinely provided and arrangements were made to enable the children to continue in their schools.

But life evolves and with the passage of time it became clear that the children required closer supervision.

The oldest son had matriculated and our student support services financed his tertiary studies. The two younger ones became part of Arcadia’s after school programme, where homework and play is supervised. The situation is being carefully monitored and if it becomes necessary, they will move into Arcadia.

Sadly, dad has passed away. West Park took care of all arrangements and covered the burial costs.

We have finally managed to persuade mom to join our protected employment programme which will bolster her self-esteem and provide her with a productive element to her day.

This story is far from over, but it is our hope that we can provide the children with emotional and educational support that will enable them, in time, to emerge confident, productive members of our community.

Certainly this storyteller prefers happy endings.

May our partnership continue to thrive!

Feel free to contact me on feedback@thechev.org.za

This column is paid for by the Chevrah Kadisha

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What’s On

Today, Friday (April 12)

- UZLC hosts Cyril Wides who will talk on “The Afrikaans Language Also Belongs to Platteland Jews”. Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 - 14:00. Contact: Gloria at (011) 485-4851 or 072-127-9421.

Sunday (April 14)

- Big Band Society meets in the Jeffrey Auditorium at St Johns College, St John’s Road, Lower Houghton. A selection of audio and video material, featuring the great Big Bands of yesterday. Starting at 14:15. Contact: Barney, (011) 400-1996 or Jack, (011) 782-7111.
- Second Innings hosts Prof Marcia Leveson, former professor of English at Wits, who will talk on “Please Sir, I Want Some More - Charles Dickens and his Children”. Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres. Time: 10:00 for 10:30. Cost: R20 members, R40 non-members. Contact: Gre-

Tuesday (April 16)

- WIZO Johannesburg invites you to celebrate Yom Ha’atzmaut and Israel’s 65th birthday at 09:15 for 09:30. Live music and a lavish tea. Cost: R65. Contact: Sandy, (011) 645-2515.

Wednesday (April 17)

- RCHCC is screening the Academy Award nominee, “Divided We Fall”. Venue: Clive M Beck Auditorium. Time: 19:30. Donation: R70 (incl refreshments). Booking Hazel or René (011) 728-8088/8378, after hours (011) 728-8378, or e-mail: rchcc@telkomsa.net, or rene.s@telkomsa.net, or www.greatpark.co.za

Thursday (April 18)

- JWBS’ “Business Breakfast”, hosted by Investec, has as its keynote speakers Marc Wainer, CEO of Redefine Properties and Justice Malala, well-known political com-

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Monday (April 22)

- UJW House & Garden Circle Meeting takes place at 25 Christopherson Road, Hyde Park. Time: 09:30 for 09:55 sharp, when entrance closes. Donation: Members R40, visitors R50. Contact: (011) 648-1053.
- UJW adult education division hosts Prof Steven Friedman of UJ

Tuesday (April 23)

- WIZO Forum presents “Strike a Woman, Strike a Rock”, honouring the power of women - paying tribute to contemporary women making a contribution to the SA and Jewish community. Venue: Beyachad. Time: 09:30. Cost: R40. Contact: Sandy, (011) 645-2515.

Sunday (April 28)

- Temple Israel in PE hosts its Lag B’Omer - 3rd Annual Leo Baeck 5km Memorial Run/Walk & Fête at Temple Israel, 7A Upper Dickens Road, Central, Port Elizabeth. Entries open 09:00. Race starts 10:00 with a lucky draw and an auction. Enquiries: Yonah Blackman (041) 373-6642, 08:00 -

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Rabbi Bacher makes sure Milija won't be forgotten



ROCKING THE BOAT *Jack Milner*

There is line in the song Big Yellow Taxi by Joni Mitchell which goes: “Don’t it always seem to go that you don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone.”

I have so often found that line true among sportsmen, who look back on their days in the limelight with sadness. I remember spending a Sunday afternoon with the late Morrie Jacobson, as we sat in his upstairs room and sifted through his scrap-books on his days on the soccer field.

What I thought would be a one-hour interview turned into an enthralling three-hour affair with a man who just loved to talk about his playing days.

For Morrie it was a cathartic experience. It was a spiritual encounter as he called back the past and reminisced about his days playing for South Africa. He had cuttings from UK newspapers that described him as the best amateur fullback to ever visit the British shores as the amateur South African team held the mighty Arsenal to a 2-2 draw.

For me the most exciting cutting was off the front page of the Rand Daily Mail one day in 1952 in which Danny Kaye, who was visiting our country, started an international match between South Africa and Israel at the Rand Stadium with Morrie standing on his left.

As the years rolled by I used to think about Mitch Albom’s wonderful book, “Tuesdays With Morrie” and have logged it with my very own “Sunday With Morrie”.

In my job I have come across many sportsmen at the top of their game and some of them do not live up to their public image. Many are arrogant and believe the world rotates around them. But others, despite their fame, have their feet on the ground and understand that they are not demigods.

Specifically in the latter category come to mind my two most genuine sportsmen I have met who were still at the top of their games – golfer Nick Price and tennis star

Roger Federer. They are two thorough gentlemen who remain humble and appreciate everything they have.

The reason for all this was an e-mail received by the Jewish Report this week from Rabbi Sholem Bacher from the Blairgowrie Hebrew Centre to notify us that they will be having a Kiddush function this coming Shabbat in memory of Milija Aleksic.

I find this very interesting as Aleksic was a goalkeeper for Tottenham Hotspurs from 1979 to 1982 and was a member of the team that won the 1981 FA Cup.

He later came to South Africa and played for Wits University and Durban City and then disappeared into obscurity.

Most of us had heard of him, but none of us knew that he was Jewish. Sadly he passed away suddenly in October last year at the age of 61.

Rabbi Bacher said Aleksic had been involved with their congregation for many years and the rabbi had written an article about him. “In a world of sports celebrities where many have questionable character traits, it is refreshing to learn of those who were, or are good human beings, from those who knew them personally,” he added.

Aleksic was born to a Yugoslav father and grew up in a small Serbian community in Chesterton, Staffordshire. He was a childhood friend of future England international Mike Pejic. His career started with Port Vale and he played two FA Cup games for them as a 17-year-old in the 1968 - ‘69 season.

Aleksic was signed by Spurs in December 1978 for a fee of £100 000. In one tie against Manchester United, notorious “hard man” Joe Jordan broke Aleksic’s jaw in what was officially described as an “accidental collision”.

The injury left midfielder Glenn Hoddle to take Aleksic’s place in goal for the rest of the match. Despite this setback, Hoddle was untroubled in goal, and Spurs won 1 - 0 with Osvaldo Ardiles scoring the winning goal.

In 1981 Spurs won the FA Cup with a 3 - 2 victory over Manchester City at Wembley. Aleksic featured in both the original tie and the replay, which was won with a brace from Ricardo Villa and a scruffy goal from



Former Tottenham Hotspurs player Milija Alecksic will be remembered at a Kiddush function this coming Shabbat

Garth Crooks. However, he soon lost his first team place to Ray Clemence.

It is very interesting that Rabbi Bacher writes about the moment Aleksic brought his FA Cup medal to show the rabbi’s children. “The tears swelled in his eyes as he took the gold medal out of its casing to give us a close view. Milija was a medallist with passion connected to his achievements, but incredibly humble.

“A family simcha 12 years ago brought Milija as a guest to our congregation. He found himself a spiritual sanctuary, a place he could call home each Friday night. There

was hardly a Friday night in over 12 years that he was not in shul.”

There is a wonderful quote from Mitch Albom that sums this all up.

“What do people fear most about death? I asked the reb.

“Fear?” he thought for a moment. “Well, for one thing, what happens next? Where do we go? Is it what we imagined?”

That’s big.

“Yes. But there’s something else.”

What else?

He leaned forward.

“Being forgotten,” he whispered.

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Milija Aleksic, wearing a Spurs jersey, in a pensive mood.