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# Jewish Report



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Friday, 18 November 2011 / 21 Cheshvan, 5772

Volume 15 Number 42

## Israeli, Palestinian ambassadors laud ME symposium in CT

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### YITZHAK RABIN - HIS LEGACY LIVES ON

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated 17 years ago. It sent shockwaves through the world, especially when it became known that the assassin was a Jewish Israeli. At a memorial service last Thursday in Johannesburg, the guest speaker was former Israeli minister and member of the Knesset, Ophir Pines-Paz, seen here with Deputy Israeli Ambassador Yaakov Finkelstein.

(PHOTO: JEREMY FELDMAN) **SEE PAGES 4 & 8**

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**EDITOR** - Geoff Sifrin  
geoff@sajewishreport.co.za

**COMMERCIAL MANAGER**  
Sue Morris  
sue@sajewishreport.co.za

**Sub-Editor** - Paul Maree

**Ed Co-ordinator** - Sharon Akum  
carro@global.co.za

**Sports Editor** - Jack Milner  
jackmilner@telkomsa.net

**Books Editor** - Gwen Podbrey

**Arts Editor** - Robyn Sassen  
robyn@sajewishreport.co.za

**Youth Editor** - Alison Goldberg  
alison@sajewishreport.co.za

**Cape Town correspondent**  
Moira Schneider: 021-794-4206

**Pretoria correspondent**  
Diane Wolfson: 082-707-9471

**Advertising - (011) 023-8160**  
advertising@sajewishreport.co.za

Britt Landsman: 082-292-9520  
britt@sajewishreport.co.za

Manuela Bernstein: 082-951-3838  
manuela@sajewishreport.co.za

**Freelance Advertising Executives**

Marlene Bilewitz: 083-475-0288  
marlene@sajewishreport.co.za

Adi Lew: 083-407-8034  
adi@sajewishreport.co.za

**Classified Sales**  
Charissa Newman  
jrclassified@global.co.za

**Manager: Distribution**  
Britt Landsman

**Design and layout**  
Frankie Matthysen  
Nicole Cook

**Website**  
www.sajewishreport.co.za  
Ilan Ossendryver  
IC-Creations  
ilan@ic-creations.com

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PARSHA OF THE WEEK

Sharing our goodness and blessings

**PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH**  
**Rabbi Yoni Lipschitz**  
*Mizrachi Shul*

TEXAS GOVERNOR Rick Perry, in the Saturday night debate on CBS, explained his radical new approach to American foreign aid, proposing that all aid be reduced “to zero” and then re-implemented only once the country made a good case for their aid.

In this week’s Torah portion, Chayei Sarah, Avraham sends his trusted and learned servant Eliezer to look for a wife for his beloved son Yitzhak.

Eliezer sets out on his journey to find a wife for Yitzhak and stops at a well where young eligible girls come to draw water.

Eliezer sets up a test for possible suitors: “I will ask for some water, the young girl who says drink and I will give your camels (some), this will be the wife for Yitzhak.”

Rashi explains that this was not just any test. Eliezer was testing for the character trait, of gemilut chesed, acts of loving-kindness.

When looking very carefully at this test, we will notice that there are actually two tests and not one. The first part of the test was to give Eliezer a little water to drink and the second part to give water to the camels.

The Maharal explains that the ultimate chesed is sharing of goodness without having anything lacking. It is giving without any strings attached, giving without the expectation of reciprocation.

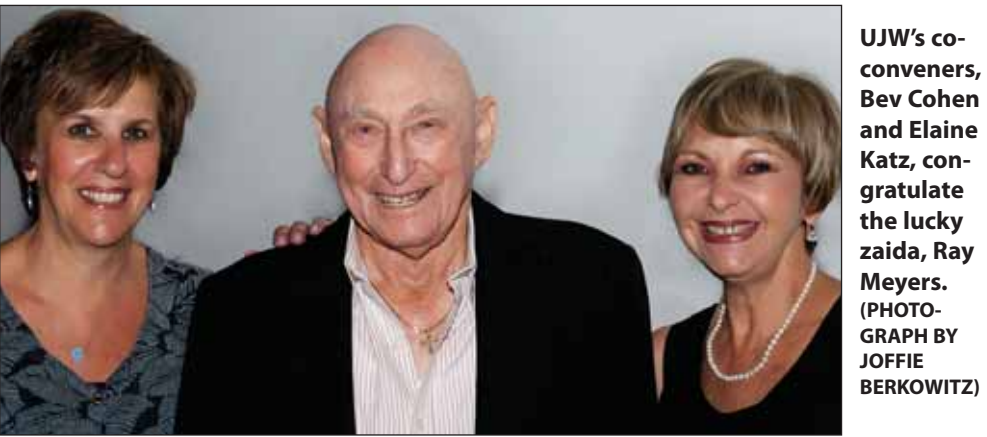
True chesed is giving without wanting or expecting anything in return. This is what Eliezer was looking for in a wife for Avraham’s son Yitzhak. When Rivkah offered water to Eliezer she was not doing chesed, she was merely responding to Eliezer’s request for some water. When Rivkah offered to give his 10 thirsty camels some water, which was not a simple task; she did so on her own accord.

She offered, because she wanted to share her water, her goodness with others and did not expect any reciprocation. This is chesed in its purest form. This is the chesed of Avraham’s household.

When a country gives foreign aid, the government of the day acts only in the interest of the country or because of public opinion. Countries do not offer aid because they want to share their resources with another country. Foreign aid is purely to position the country; it is all about politics. It’s about what the country can get out of giving. This giving is sorely lacking, it is giving in order to receive.

Our rabbis teach us that the ultimate chesed is doing chesed for someone who is unable to repay, for example, when we do chesed for someone who is mentally handicapped or for someone who has passed away. This is the ultimate chesed because reciprocation is not possible.

The Torah is teaching us to emulate Hashem, to do chesed for others not because we want something back in return but to do chesed for others just because we want to share our goodness and blessings from Hashem with others. This is the ultimate chesed and the chesed which has the power to change the world.



UJW’s co-conveners, Bev Cohen and Elaine Katz, congratulate the lucky zaida, Ray Meyers. (PHOTO-GRAPH BY JOFFIE BERKOWITZ)

Ecstatic Ray Meyers off to his kin in Texas

ROBYN SASSEN

THIS YEAR’S celebration of the Union of Jewish Women’s 80th anniversary, hosted a very special announcement: the winner of the annual Bobba and Zaida of the Year competition, which went to an overwhelmed and completely delighted Ray Meyers (84), a resident of Sandringham Gardens, who will be at his grandson’s graduation in Houston on December 16.

“The fact remains,” said co-convenor of the UJW, Elaine Katz, “in the face of emigration, many are left behind. The Bobba and Zaida programme each year has hundreds of applicants who are desperately keen to visit their children, their grandchildren, their great-grandchildren.

“With the able assistance of Ingrid Woolf the social worker associated with Kosher Mobile Meals, under the UJW’s auspices, the process is conducted on a very serious and professional basis.

“Each applicant is interviewed very carefully.” Each winner gets the whole catastro-

phe by way of support for the scheduled three-month-long trip: a new set of luggage, the flight tickets and assistance with getting visas, wheelchair assistance at the airport, and lots of goodies thrown in.”

Said Woolf: “We simply fell in love with Ray, but the process is sensitive and a lot of people get very disappointed if they do not win. We assess the winning grandparent on age, stage and finances, but ultimately it is a committee decision.”

After recovering from the happy shock, Meyers bubbled: “I knew it was me, because they put me in the front row, but when they called my name and I had to climb those stairs to get on stage, my knees buckled a bit. I have a granddaughter who is an editor for Fox News in Monterrey Bay,” he explained. “My grandson is graduating from college in graphic art, at Houston University.”

The reality is that, with two children in different continents, it is incumbent on the winner to choose which child to visit. Meyers also has a daughter in New Zealand.

Mbalula denies disparaging remarks about Jews

Minister of Sport and Recreation Fikile Mbalula, has met SA Jewish Board of Deputies President Zev Krengel and Executive Director Wendy Kahn, to discuss recent reported comments about power relations and control in the code of cricket.

The Board said in a media release that at the centre of the discussion were the reported comments on Jewish and Indian people, by the minister, at a recent media briefing. The president of the Board expressed the concerns of the SA Jewish community regarding these comments.

The Minister reassured the South African Jewish community that these remarks were incorrectly communicated and that they were not a reflection of his beliefs and his intention.

He reiterated his commitment to the values of non-racialism and tolerance.



SA Jewish Board of Deputies President Zev Krengel and Executive Director Wendy Kahn, Flank Minister of Sport and Recreation Fikile Mbalula (PHOTO: SUPPLIED)

He acknowledged the role the Jewish community played in the Struggle in South Africa and the contribution towards SA cricket.

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# ME conflict under loop at Parliamentary portfolio committee meeting

MOIRA SCHNEIDER  
CAPE TOWN

A SYMPOSIUM on the Middle East conflict, hosted by the parliamentary portfolio committee on International Relations and Co-operation, on Wednesday at the Cape Town Lodge, heard a host of diverse views, without pronouncing on the matter, at the conclusion of the meeting.

This forum for debate had been welcomed by both the Israeli and Palestinian ambassadors.

The symposium's purpose was to enable the committee to formulate a response to the continuing conflict and to make a recommendation to Parliament as to what action to take in this regard, according to Hargreaves Magama, chairman of the committee.

This is the third such engagement facilitated by the committee on the subject, following the Palestinian application for full membership of the United Nations.

Participating were Mary Kluk, chairman of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD); Chris Eden, chairman of Bridges for Peace; Dave Wilken, chairman of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ); Ben Levitas, chairman of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) (Cape Council); Zackie Achmat of Open Shuhada Street; and representatives of the Egyptian community of South Africa, the Palestine Solidarity Committee of South Africa and Cosatu.

The Israeli and Palestinian ambassadors, as well as Johann Marx, chief director, Middle East, in the department of International Relations and Co-operation, stated their official positions. Marx said the South African government "strongly supports" the Palestinian request for international recognition as a state and for full membership of the United Nations.

"I call on the people and the government of Israel not to see it as a threat but as a way of leveling the playing fields," he said.

The keynote address was delivered by Na'eem Jeenah, researcher at the Afro-Middle East Centre. Israeli Ambassador Dov Segev-Steinberg was positive about the concept of such an event. "Any forum where we can discuss the political situation in the Middle East, where we can speak to the Palestinians, is a good forum."

"This is what Israel is always aiming for - having direct discussions with our neighbours, the Palestinians. We'll give our views, they'll give their views and this is the way."

"They should listen to us, while we are listening to them and hopefully they will return to the negotiation table as quickly as possible. Unilateral behaviours contradict all agreements that have been signed before with them," he said.

Segev-Steinberg added that it was "very important" that Israel's friends such as the Christian Zionist organisations, the SAJBD, the SAZF and others, were showing their support for the country at the forum and bringing its cause to public attention.

Palestinian Ambassador Ali Halimeh was equally hopeful regarding the potential of



such an event to contribute towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict. "This is what we need - to continue to dialogue and discuss our issues."

"It is the best way of resolving our problems," he told Jewish Report. The fact that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas had applied for membership of the United Nations, did not mean that he had dropped the idea of negotiations with Israel.

**Zackie Achmat (Open Shuhada Street); Mary Kluk (chairman SAJBD); and David Jacobson (executive director SAJBD Cape Council), listen to presentations at the symposium on the Middle East conflict in Cape Town on Wednesday. (PHOTO: MOIRA SCHNEIDER)**

On the contrary, Halimeh said, it would "help to pursue these negotiations, because we know (that) without negotiations, it's going to be difficult to resolve our problems".

Approaching the United Nations was a means of gaining "more international recognition", he stated. "It is not to delegitimise the State of Israel or to isolate it."

Magama told Jewish Report that the committee had endeavoured to ensure a fair rep-

resentation of both parties "from the very outset. That's why we've had two follow-up engagements on this issue."

"Initially we did not have the Israeli embassy. We decided it was important for them and for others who perhaps shared the same perspective, to breathe on the matter."

In the light of this, how would he explain the decision to have Jeenah - who holds definite views on the matter - as the keynote speaker? "In South Africa, is it possible to find somebody who doesn't have strong views on this particular matter?" Magama responded.

"His role is really to lay the basis for further engagement by both (sides). He's not going to communicate a country's position, nor Parliament's view."

"It's purely on the basis of his qualifications - he's a well-known scholar on the Middle East," he said.



**Israeli Ambassador Dov Segev-Steinberg.**



**Palestinian Ambassador Ali Halimeh.**



**Na'eem Jeenah.**

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# Sixty three years on: The Machalniks remember...



The erection of Israel's first radar set at the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot, made of completely improvised equipment, with the South Africans who made it: Maurice Ostroff (second from left) and Ellie Isserow (second from right). Photograph from the collection of E Isserow.



Machal crew alongside the wreck of an enemy plane brought down by them, with South Africans Reuben Narunsky (second from left) and Danny Rosin (second from right). Photograph by Israel AFC Industries; from the collection of S Levin.

ROBYN SASSEN

RECENTLY, the hour-long film documenting the 804 South African volunteers who went to fight for Israel's life in 1948, debuted. Spearheaded by co-producer Sharit Krengel, and created with the support of the SA Zionist Federation, the film was made by Pulp Films, directed by Etienne Naude and is available on DVD through the SAZF.

The audience reflected three generations - the original Machalniks, no longer the strapping young idealistic men they were 63 years ago, but still filled with the fire of commitment in remembering the roles they played in Israel's fight for survival, back then - supported by their children and grandchildren.

Introducing the event, chairman of the SAZF Avrom Krengel commended the project's value. "This was probably the greatest moment of South African Jewry," he said, commenting on the fact that per capita, South Africa's 804, was highest in the world.

Machal, an acronym for "Mitnadvei Chutz L'Aretz" - "volunteers from abroad" - was supported by 4 700 men and women, Jews and non-Jews, from 56 countries. The outcome of this battle for the soul of Israel was not predictable.

Co-produced by Sharit Krengel and Jason



George Jamieson; Ellie Isserow (IAF, mechanical artisan, radar unit); Dave Lozowsky and Sid "Chick" Green. (PHOTO: ILAN OSSENDRYVER)

Hoff, this project has been several years in the making. The producers were poignantly cognisant of the fact that every year that passed was another in which essential Machalnik voices were lost forever.

Sharit Krengel added: "Our purpose has been two-fold: to pay tribute to the 804 who gave of themselves so that Israel is part of the cultural inheritance of my generation, and for posterity. The Machalniks were ordinary people who did extraordinary things."

The film is constructed to give an account of the choices the volunteers faced when they rallied to the cause. Using interviews with Sir Martin Gilbert, Prof Milton Shain and Machalniks, in the medics - there were 51 South African doctors and 37 nurses - infantry, navy and air force - it allows the men and women themselves to explain what happened between May 1948 and October 1949.

"South African Jews didn't have assimilatory pressures," Shain explains; volunteer nurse, Ruth Stern adds how the need to do something for Israel spread through South Africa "like wildfire".

What could it have been, other than the hot-blooded machismo that spurred these young men to fight in this rag-tag army, with the odds steeply stacked against them and Israel, beleaguered as she was by attacks from six enemies simultaneously?

Was it religious? Political? Did it have to do with duty? The thrill of combat? The willingness to share expertise? Was it just emotional? Was it all of the above?

Ellie Isserow and Maurice Ostroff speak of

how they constructed a radar control with improvised manual equipment, using bicycle pedals and a lawnmower engine.

The film explains how the Israel Defence Forces initially constituted the Palmach, Irgun and Lehi, diverse ideological positions; it celebrates the seven South Africans killed in 1948.

"Each journey was long, dangerous and secret," one interviewee adds. "It was sheer bloody hell," Isserow pulls no punches. "We changed from boys into men in hours," adds Mendel Cohen. "It was like a wild west comedy," another Machalnik adds. "We were idiots!" says Hymie Goldblatt. "I was too terrified to be scared," adds Mendel Cohen. Concurr Michael Manor: "We took chances because we were young."

Many Machalniks made aliyah. "Ein brera" - no option - became the catchphrase. "It was beyond a miracle," adds Isserow. "It was like a second creation."

• This film supported by the SAZF echoes a project undertaken by them in 1969, when they commissioned journalist and Machalnik Henry Katzew to document this history. "South Africa's 800" was completed in 1977, but relegated to archives in manuscript form. It was only in 1997 that Maurice Ostroff picked up a copy of it at Telfed in Tel Aviv and motivated for it to be self-published in a small edition.

• There will be a screening of "804" at the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre in Oaklands on November 20, with guest speakers, producer Jason Hoff and director Etienne Naude (011) 728-8088.

## Remembering Rabin, a man ahead of his time

DAVID SAKS

SEVENTEEN YEARS have passed since the Jewish world was shocked by the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (pictured), but despite the passage of time, there was still a sizable presence at last Thursday's Yom Rabin memorial function at Beyachad.

If the peace process he took the lead in initiating has become moribund, Rabin's vision of a peaceful future between Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in their own states continues to resonate in Israeli society.

The keynote address was delivered by Ophir Pines-Paz, former Israeli minister and member of the Knesset. Messages from the SA Zionist Federation and the State of Israel were delivered by SAZF Vice-Chairman Reeva Forman and Israe's Deputy Ambassador Yaakov Finkelstein, respectively.

The ceremony commenced with the recitation of Yizkor, the lighting of a memorial candle by Nathanel Gozlan and Ross Engers, followed by a rendition of Kel Maleh Rachamim by Jordan Moshe and the recitation of kaddish by Rodney Richard.

Pines-Paz described Rabin as a leader of iron integrity, determination and courage, one who always took personal responsibility for what happened under his leadership no matter what the cost.

He was also a fundamentally pragmatic man who had the ability to adapt his policies



in line with the realities of the day. While remembered primarily as a military leader who later led his country into a new era of peace negotiations, his domestic policies likewise testified to his vision for a just, prosperous Israel.

Much of what he had achieved was in closing the socio-economic gaps between rich and poor, including promoting the upliftment of the Arab-Israeli population. Pines-Paz believed that had Rabin been in office today, the social protests that convulsed Israel earlier this year would not have happened.

In understanding that achieving two states for two peoples was the only way to preserve Israel as a Jewish democracy living in peace with its neighbours, Pines-Paz believed that Rabin was a man ahead of his time.

The proof of this, he said, was how one by one, those who had once opposed him - the current prime minister included - had come to adopt this very platform. Through this, he said, the legacy of that remarkable man lived on, and would continue to light a path through the darkness in the ongoing quest for peace.

The proceedings concluded with the screening of a recorded message from former US President Bill Clinton, the singing of Shir-La'Shalom by Rodney Richard, accompanied by pianist Evelyn Green, and Hatikvah.

• See editorial on page 6

## AROUND THE WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

### BELARUS SYNAGOGUE VANDALISED AGAIN

BABRUYSK - A synagogue in eastern Belarus has been vandalised for the second time. The windows of the synagogue, in the city of Babruysk, were smashed early Monday morning, Radio Free Europe reported.

On November 11, the day after commemorations around the world for Kristallnacht, a swastika and the words "Death to Jews" was painted on the synagogue's fence.

About 50 people, most of them elderly, belong to the synagogue, the shul's secretary, Maya Savatseyeva, told Radio Free Europe. (JTA)

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# Efforts underway to improve the three Rs in SA schools

ALISON GOLDBERG

CONSISTENTLY poor literacy levels in primary schools in South Africa, as measured by international and national surveys, and despite increased expenditure and innovative new policies over the past decade, are being addressed at last. The key problem is quality of teaching in all 11 official languages.

Brahm Fleisch (pictured), professor in the Department of Education Policy at the Wits School of Education and adviser to the Gauteng Primary Literacy Strategy (GPLS), gave some cause for optimism last week on the subject how to improve primary education. Gauteng is leading the way, spending R200 to R250 million per annum on these new measures.

Addressing the Union of Jewish Women, in terms of the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), one major change he mentioned was that from 2012, English would begin to be taught countrywide in many township and rural schools as a first additional language from grade 1, in parallel with African languages.

Fleisch, the author of Primary Education in Crisis, says important findings have been revealed by a number of studies.

The PIRLS Study (2008) of literacy levels in 55 countries required the testing in South Africa of 30 000 grade 4 and 5 pupils. South Africa came last with a score of 302 compared to an average of 500. The Russian Federation was the highest performer.

Where internationally 94 per cent of children reached the minimum level of literacy, in South Africa for example, only 55 per cent reached it in Afrikaans; 52 per cent in English; eight per cent in isiZulu; and four per cent in isiXhosa and Sepedi.

In another study, the SA Consortium for Measurement of Educational Quality II and III (SACMEQ), reading and maths tests were conducted in 2000, 2007 and again in 2011. They showed compared with African countries with lower GDPs, such as Tanzania and Kenya, South Africa also underperforms.

“The score has not changed substantially between 2000 and 2007 when there was increased expenditure on education and the introduction of innovative new policies,” Fleisch said.

Within South Africa, SACMEQ III in 2007 showed great disparities within the country itself, such as between Limpopo, which underperformed the Western Cape. The test, for grade 6 Limpopo learners, showed they were struggling to make sense of the most elementary reading in English.

The application of systematic teaching methods to disadvantaged schools, points to the future. South Africa’s illiteracy and maths problems, according to the country’s own Annual National Assessment (ANA) of these capacities in grades 1, “confirmed everything we knew”. In grade 6 for instance, as much as 70 per cent of learners “are not achieving” required language standards; in grade 3, the figure is 53 per cent.

Chief among the reasons is not only insufficient numbers of skilled teachers, particularly in the foundation phase (grade 1-3), but the vast majority of teachers are women over 40, trained in a period when there was a weak syllabus in the homeland training colleges, and who acquired their own reading skills through a collective reading practice.

Research, Fleisch said, showed that the main experience of learners in disadvantaged schools, which included Department of Education and Training (DET) and homeland schools, was via collective reading aloud instruction.

By contrast, learners in middle-class schools, which included former white, Indian and Coloured schools, received systematic reading instruction, which focused on the development of fluency and comprehension.

The difference was: middle-class schools used graded or levelled readers, such as the Ginn and “Mark and Kath” series, taking

children through some 20 or more titles of those in the space of a term. There were no complete sets of those readers in either English or in any of the African languages in disadvantaged schools, Fleisch said. No publisher had produced such a set in any of the nine African languages.

Also required was the need for systematic phonic practice, of which there were a variety of models, such as Letterland, and where training was deficient. The use of Dolche (irregu-

lar) word lists for children to learn, was especially important in learning English, where many words were not phonetically spelt, for example, “blue”.

Extended writing was being insufficiently practised. While middle-class schools put considerable emphasis on homework, this was not the case in disadvantaged schools.

Over the last 18 months, educationalists had realised that the problem of illiteracy in South Africa had to be tackled on a number of levels to move from existing practice to a simple reading approach.

Each teacher needed to know what the level of achievement was of each of their learners, what was expected, and principals needed to understand the problems in classrooms. The core of the new strategy was to ensure schools had appropriate reading resources, which besides the readers, included building classroom book collections in schools, and from which children could take home books to read to their parents.

The Gauteng Department of Education had employed 120 teacher coaches - to be increased to 360 - to work with teachers on a one-on-one basis, and this had had an enormous impact already.

To provide homework and parent support, as part of the government’s extended public works programme, 4 000 homework assistants had been appointed in Gauteng to visit schools after 13:00 to listen to children read. The number of grade R classes would also be increased in the province.



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SOCIAL SCENE

# Child prodigy Bortnick wows SA audiences

ALISON GOLDBERG  
PHOTOGRAPH: ILAN OSSENDRYVER

CHILD MUSICAL prodigy and celebrity, 10-year-old Ethan Bortnick from Florida, USA, pictured here with Chabad Miracle Drive's Rabbi Dovid Masinter at a special Miracle Drive performance on Tuesday evening at the Yamaha Theatre in Sandton, wowed South African audiences both here and at the Lyric Theatre at Gold Reef City in Johannesburg this past week.

Rabbi Masinter, who drove Bortnick's visit to South Africa, identified this extraordinary young pianist, singer and composer, to inspire parents to identify their children's G-d given talents and share them with the world.

This is part of Chabad's four-year-old, non-denominational programme: Grow Your Life, also designed to encourage parents to spend more with their children.

Bortnick's visit to South Africa was sponsored by musical instrument manufacturer, Yamaha, and supported by Scoinshop (of

the SA Gold Coin Exchange). He is still to appear in a matinee charity performance this Sunday at the Lyric, where 300 disadvantaged children will be admitted free. Tickets are available at Computicket.



Bortnick has had numerous appearances on the Jay Leno Show, Oprah Winfrey, Martha Stewart, Good Morning America and other shows. With stage presence aplenty, he showcased his wide repertoire of jazz, top-ten chart stoppers, the classics and his own compositions - 10 of which will feature in a film he has just made - as well as his amazing ability to make people laugh.

Bortnick has a desire to help other children. By performing, inspiring and educating, he has helped raise \$30million for charities around the world.

# Great Park mikvah welcome addition to shul amenities



Rabbi Shmuel Simpson; Rabbi Dovid Bedil; Rabbi Sholom Ber Groner; Rabbi Siggy Suchard; Rabbi Meyer Posen; Rabbi Dovid Hazdan; Julian Michaels (architect); Tyrone Zinman (mikvah project director); and Ian Clasen (builder).

“AS WE approach the centennial year of our Great Park community, and just after celebrating the 11th anniversary of the opening of our magnificent new campus, our new mikvah is finally coming to fruition,” Rabbi Dovid Hazdan of the Great Park Shul said in a media release.

“Building began just before Rosh Hashanah and the mikvah will hopefully be operational after Pesach.”

He said the mikvah had been motivated by a growing group of young dynamic women “who are passionate about this new addition to the Great Park campus”.

He says the mikvah will have the feel of a modern spa “and will encourage and inspire many more women from the Great Park community and beyond, to embrace the experience of the mikvah in an environment that will meet exceptional standards of aesthetic beauty and comfort.

“It will also be the only mikvah in the broader Oaklands area (of Johannesburg) that will be in walking distance on Shabbat or Yomtov.”

Rabbi Meyer Posen, a world authority on mikvaot, is ensuring that the mikvah will conform to the highest halachic standards and specifications. He is working closely with Rabbi Suchard and Rabbi Klein of the Johannesburg Beth Din.



Sandringham Gardens GM Ingrid Olmesdahl, Chairman Simon Chilchik and guest speaker, Reeva Forman.

# Sad farewell to GM Ingrid Olmesdahl

CELESTE EVERITT  
PHOTOGRAPH SUPPLIED

INGRID OLMESDAHL, general manager at Sandringham Gardens, retired from the Home at the end of October, after more than 10 years at the helm.

To show their appreciation Sandringham Gardens' residents held a surprise farewell tribute tea for Ingrid. International businesswoman Reeva Forman, gave an inspiring motivational speech and resident Fred Miller, made a beautiful painting for Ingrid which was presented to her on behalf of the residents by Simon Chilchik, chairman of the resident's committee.

# ORT SA affords learners opportunities with top SA firms

ORT SA is educating learners, mainly from the townships on its award winning programme “Geared for Life”. ORT SA said in a media release that seta requirements entailed the learner to work shadow players in the industry as part of their work readiness programme.

Mr Price, in their introductory programme called “The Red Cap Foundation”, embraced this opportunity to take on 70 of the 360 ORT SA learners in their stores through-

out Gauteng. The response in their stores has been very positive.

A learner who fulfils the quality requirements of Mr Price training, could potentially have the opportunity of earning in excess of R2 000 per month during the festive season.

These learners have excelled in their theoretical study and have now been given an opportunity in the working world to make a real contribution and gain on-the-job experience.



Mr Price Clothes Store, is an active participant in the ORT SA “Geared for Life” programme. Some of the participants are: Koketso Chidi; Dineo Hlongwane; Mr Price Store manager, Shaun Moatsh; Queen Ramatanama; and Kethiwa Shabangu.

## COMMUNITY BUZZ

LIONEL SLIER  
082-444-9832, fax: 011-440-0448,  
lionel.slier@absamail.co.za

### BRANDFORT

From Betty Levin:

“I would like to add my account of the 17 years that I lived in Brandfort.

“I was married to Maurice Levin who ran the business, M Levin and Co, together with Maurice's brother, Alec, and Abraham Schlome.

“Alec and Lily Levin had two sons, Selwyn and Michael. Morris and Betty Levin had a son, Neville and a daughter, Jennifer. Abraham and Nellie Schlome had two children, Laura and Mark.

“M Levin & Co were general dealers and it was known as ‘The White Shop’. The shop was situated in Voortrekker Street. Across the road was the ‘African’ trade shop also known as M Levin & Co.

“Next to the ‘African’ trade shop was a jewellery business and gift shop known as Alma Jewellers, owned by the same company.

“The local bookshop belonged to Mr Wilhelmus Verwoerd, the father of Dr Hendrik Verwoerd who was prime minister of South Africa from 1958 to 1966, when he was assassinated.

“Wilhelmus Verwoerd who was a Hollander with a broad Dutch accent, was a very colourful character. He always wore a bowtie, a smoking jacket and was never without his cigar.

“At a Chamber of Commerce dinner at the Commercial Hotel, run by Mr and Mrs Kessel, I was seated next to Mr Verwoerd and I observed that he enjoyed the pickled and chopped herring.

“He whispered to me: ‘Some people are not eating these delicacies, do you think I could have theirs?’ After this I regularly made a point of sending him pickled and chopped herring for which he was most appreciative. We became firm friends.

“Another interesting character was the state-president of South Africa, Mr C R Swart, who presided from 1961 until 1967. He owned a farm just outside Brandfort and the name of the farm was ‘De Aap, die plaas van C R Swart’.

“We got to know him very well, as he dealt with us and he would regularly bring in his farm workers. He had a good sense of humour and one day I said to him: ‘You should have been an actor,’ to which he replied: ‘I was an actor and went to Hollywood and appeared in two films.’”

To be continued.

• Indeed, C R Swart did appear in silent films in Hollywood.

### JOHANNESBURG

There is a proposal to rename Savoy Park in the north-eastern suburb of Savoy Estate, Johannesburg, after the Weinberg family. The family had a long history in the “Struggle” to free South Africa from the shackles of apartheid.

For Eli, Violet and daughter, Sheila, involvement in the Struggle cost them a lot in terms of personal freedom and police harassment. Eli was a professional photographer and also an active member of the Communist Party and of the trade union movement from 1933 - 1953.

The Communist Party was one of the many organisations listed in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act (1952). In 1964 Eli was arrested with Bram Fischer and sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

During the 1976 riots he sought refuge in Tanzania where he died in July 1981.

As a young girl, Sheila was involved in the Struggle as both her parents spent time in detention. She was a member of the Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee, the Black Sash and the Five Freedom Forum and was also a member of the provincial legislature from 1994 - 2004 in the new South Africa. She died the same year, aged 59.

The Weinbergs had earlier suffered a tragedy when their young son died as a result of an illness.

The Weinbergs lived in High Street, Orchards which, it was jokingly said, was the area where many of the white Struggle comrades and many leftists lived.



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**Ian and Viv von Memerty:** "Loved the whole cruise - congratulations! You made so many people happy."

**Shelley and Steve Yablon - New York:** "Where are we going next?"



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	7 August	Linz, Austria	(AM) Linz Tour; (PM) Gmunden Excursion OR Cesky Krumlov Excursion OR Salzburg Excursion
	8 August	Passau, Germany, Vilshofen, Germany	Walking Tour Passau, "Oktoberfest in Vilshofen"
	9 August	Vilshofen, Regensburg, Prague	Disembark, transfer to Prague via Regensburg
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# Shalom, chaver

SOME HISTORICAL events are so dramatic that people forever remember exactly where and when they heard the news, and what they were doing. Such was the assassination of US President Jack Kennedy in Dallas, Texas in 1963. Or the terrorist bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11, 2001. Or in South Africa, the moment Nelson Mandela was released from 27 years in jail and walked out holding the hand of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela.

For Jews, such an event was the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin 17 years ago on November 4, 1995, which was commemorated at a ceremony last Thursday at Beyachad in Johannesburg.

The narrative goes something like this – adapted for different times and places: “I was driving down Seventh Avenue on my way to a restaurant just before Fourth Street and stopped at a red traffic light, when SABC news carried the first item as: ‘Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has been gunned down after a peace rally in Tel Aviv. A man has been arrested.’ I stopped my car in shock.”

“It must be an Arab,” was the initial assumption. Who else could it be? Then came disbelief when it was later revealed that a Jewish Israeli had shot him – one of our own. The action of a madman changed history. The peace song “Shir L’shalom” had been sung at the gathering. A bloodied copy of it was found on Rabin’s body.

He was the right man at the right time. Rabin personified the best qualities of a straight-talking sabra of the old kind who successfully made the transition from a military leader - he was Chief of Staff of the IDF - to a political leader at the highest level and became a giant figure in international affairs.

The moment US President Bill Clinton - who worked closely with Rabin and Yasser Arafat in the search for a peaceful accord between Israelis and Palestinians - said the words in Hebrew: “Shalom, chaver” at Rabin’s funeral, will never be forgotten. For years those words were carried as bumper stickers on Israeli cars.

What if Rabin had lived? Would his vision of a peaceful settlement in a two-state solution have come to naught in the maelstrom of the Middle East? Or would he have forged the way to the peace suggested by his famous handshake on the White House lawn with Arafat, in front of a smiling Clinton?

The recriminations caused by his assassination continue to reverberate in Israeli society even to today. The fact that his killer was an Orthodox Jew still evokes a certain distrust of right-wing religious Israelis among their secular and leftist countrymen. Other Israelis are resentful that the left claims Rabin’s legacy as its own, when many right-wing Israelis want peace as much and endorse the two-state solution.

For older South African Jews who were part of the Zionist youth movement generation which produced the hard-core “chalutzim” who built early Israel - whether they belonged to the left or the right - Rabin also represented the egalitarian ethos of that old Israel. Not for him the expensive lifestyle and bling of today’s politicians and celebrities – a man of the people, among the people. He shared this down-to-earth attitude with one of his most virulent opponents, former Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who lived a frugal life all through his years, despite the high office he held.

The memory of that frugality evokes anger in many South Africans today when they compare it with many of our own politicians in government living the high life, with their expensive cars, disdainful blue lights, surrounded by bulky security officers, luxurious mansions and Rolex watches.

Ultimately, Rabin was only human. If he had lived, he might not have maintained the determined, courageous image we have of him. Who knows how he would have reacted to our confusing, complex times. Nevertheless, even after all these years, he remains a role model we cherish – and still miss.

## OPINION AND ANALYSIS

FORUM FOR DIVERSE VIEWS



SAUJS students demonstrators at the District Six venue of the Russell Tribunal.

# Changing the narrative: Media and the Russell Tribunal

STEVEN GRUZD AND CHARISSE ZEIFERT

THE RECENT Russell Tribunal on Palestine (RToP) was a classic example of propaganda masquerading as fact. This was political theatre at its best, staged to sway views through the use of biased, selective and emotive information.

It marshalled high-profile activists and peace laureates - and the rarity of a Holocaust survivor condemning Israel - to convey its central message that Israel equals apartheid. With no legal force and untouchable luminaries, it would seek a win in the court of public opinion.

The RToP presented a formidable challenge to Jewish communal structures in South Africa. Although two previous RToP sessions in 2010 in Barcelona and London passed by with barely a blip, this time - with proceedings held in the country where apartheid was invented, and staged in the District Six Museum that chronicles forced removals - the RToP was poised to generate considerable publicity.

We tried to walk the narrow tightrope between containment and counter-narrative. We sought to deprive the RToP of the media oxygen it craved, while pointing out its blatant one-sidedness, exposing the “Tribunal” as a “kangaroo court”. The media would be a major front in this battle of ideas, and we needed to change the story.

Given the context, it would have been unrealistic to expect the RToP to get no coverage at all. Therefore, Jewish communal organisations felt it vital to ensure that another side was heard.

We set out to calmly dissect the RToP as pre-cooked propaganda, without standing or legitimacy to pass judge-

ment. We also emphasised that the complex Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires constructive, consensual dialogue and negotiation to resolve, not one-sided condemnation.

We used a cartoon kangaroo called Russell, clad in legal garb, to declare our key message: “No to kangaroo courts, yes to constructive dialogue”.

Russell the Kangaroo also was active on the social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter. This mischievous marsupial dismissed the RToP as a frivolous kangaroo court. Russell quickly garnered a sizeable following (according to Facebook, more than 41 000 people read one of his posts at the height of the campaign).

In this interactive environment, Russell could rapidly provide information, links and comments. He gave the community a space to express themselves, mobilise, and make light of the RToP.

He also spread the satirical video made by SAUJS on the Russell verdict, posted pictures of students hopping around Cape Town in kangaroo suits and responded to RToP proponents on Twitter.

While a few felt the social media campaign was obscure, negative or “too little too late”, this first foray into cyberspace holds lessons for future Israel activism in South Africa and beyond.

While initial press and electronic reports used the judicial imagery, almost all noted that the Tribunal had been criticised. Over the course of the week, the “kangaroo court” image moved from the periphery to the centre, as seen by headlines in The Times “Tribunal a ‘kangaroo court’” (November 7); the Daily Maverick “Russell Tribunal deliberates

Apartheid Israel amid ‘kangaroo court’ claims” (November 7) and The New Age “We’re no ‘kangaroo court’”. Once the other side forced to use the phrase, even in denial, half the battle is won.

Many key media opinion-makers recognised that the Tribunal was contested terrain. Although the story played out mainly in the Cape papers for over a week, both sides were usually given. Most other media paid the RToP scant attention or chose to ignore it completely.

The Business Day editorial on the morning of the “verdict” summed it up: “The Russell Tribunal... should not be given undue prominence: This is not an impartial body, but a nongovernmental organisation with an agenda, it has no legal standing internationally, and any conclusion reached by the ‘jury’ should be seen in that light.

“The danger in indulging such crude attempts to sway public opinion is that they tend to alienate people rather than promote dialogue. The only acceptable means of achieving a peaceful settlement... is negotiation, but demonising Israel merely puts obstacles in the way of reconciliation efforts.”

While a few offensive and venomous pieces did appear, and more may yet surface, the Russell Tribunal ultimately failed to deliver what it promised. Instead it was a small news story of little interest to the average South African, in light of our own, more compelling, politics.

*Steven Gruzd is senior researcher and diplomatic liaison and Charisse Zeifert is head of communications at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.*

## AROUND THE WORLD

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### POLLS SHOW STRONG US SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

NEW YORK - Two new polls show a majority of Americans have favourable views of Israel.

A survey by the Anti-Defamation League survey, which it commissions every two years, found that 49 per cent of those polled have greater sympathy for Israel than the Palestinians, a slight increase from the 45 per cent figure reported in the previous survey. Only 18 per cent favoured the Palestinians.

A similar figure was reported in a separate survey commissioned by the pro-Israel media group The Israel Project. That survey found that 60 per cent of respondents believed the United States should favour or strongly favour Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians.

The figure was even higher - 67 per cent - among so-called “opinion elite”, a designation based on a respondent’s engagement with foreign policy issues, educa-

tion and income. Both surveys were released on November 10.

The ADL survey, conducted by Martilla Strategies, polled 1 754 adults in mid-October and has a margin of error of plus-minus- 2,8 per cent. The Israel Project survey was performed by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and polled 800 registered voters over four days ending November 2. Its margin of error is plus-minus 3,5 per cent. (JTA)



OPINION AND ANALYSIS – FORUM FOR DIVERSE VIEWS

# Open microphones and sealed minds

FOR A brief moment last week, the world got to peek behind the diplomatic curtains and catch a glimpse of what the American and French presidents really think of Israel’s prime minister.

It was not a pretty sight. In remarks unintentionally overheard by a gaggle of journalists at the G20 summit in Cannes, Nicolas Sarkozy insulted Benjamin Netanyahu, telling Barack Obama: “I can’t stand to see him anymore, he’s a liar.”

And just how did Obama respond to this slur against the leader of America’s closest friend and ally in the Middle East? By agreeing with Sarkozy, of course. “You’re fed up with him, but I have to deal with him every day,” Obama moaned.

The conversation was mistakenly transmitted to members of the press after the microphones in the presidential meeting room had been turned on inadvertently. Mon dieu!

This bad-mannered blunder made international headlines and proved to be a major embarrassment to both Obama and Sarkozy.

It is not every day that we get to hear what politicians really think without handlers, spinmeisters and advisers crafting their choice of words.

Interestingly, White House spokesman, Jay Carney pointedly did not deny the remarks attributed to Obama, in effect signalling that the accounts in the press were accurate.

Recognising the damage that had been done, Sarkozy moved quickly to mitigate the impact of the affair. Over the weekend, he reportedly sent a personal letter to Netanyahu in which he took a firm stand on Iran’s nuclear ambitions and signed it in his own hand with the words, “with friendship”.

And according to a report in the French newspaper Le Figaro, Sarkozy has tentatively agreed to pay a special visit to the Jewish State in January. Like a child caught with his hand in the cookie jar, the French leader is now trying to “make nice”.

But these gestures will not obscure the unvarnished truth: the open microphone revealed some rather sealed minds.

At its root, Sarkozy and Obama’s hostility to Netanyahu has little to do with the latter’s veracity or genuineness, and everything to do with his entirely justifiable scepticism regarding the peace process.

By refusing to capitulate to pressure to make still more concessions to the Palestinians, Netanyahu has run afoul of the French and American presidents, who



**FUNDAMENTALLY FREUND**  
MICHAEL FREUND

apparently have trouble accepting the fact that Israel has the right to pursue its own interests as it best understands them.

It does not seem to matter to them one whit that Netanyahu has offered to relaunch direct bilateral talks without preconditions, and that it is Palestinian Chairman Mahmoud Abbas who refuses to return to the negotiating table or even to recognise Israel as a Jewish state.

The mere fact that Netanyahu does not agree to return to the pre-1967 borders with minor adjustments, is enough to set them off.

Sarkozy and Obama are so fixated on appeasing the Palestinians, and so close-minded about what they see as the need to establish a Palestinian state, that they find dealing with Netanyahu to be a burden.

Rather than expressing a measure of support for the leader of a fellow democracy, the French and American presidents decided to turn policy disagreements into personal attacks.

They would much rather have a more pliable Israeli counterpart, one willing to toss aside Israel’s vital security needs as well as its historical, moral and religious rights, for the sake of international acclaim and applause.

But their candour reveals far more about them than it does regarding the Israeli premier. It shows, particularly in Obama’s case, that for all the public posturing and talk about standing with Israel, the president is no close friend of the Jewish State.

Obama and Sarkozy are both increasingly unpopular at home and face uncertain prospects at the ballot box next year. When they began their terms of office, they generated high hopes, most of which have disintegrated into disappointment.

Given their unbridled cynicism and contemptuous treatment of a close ally, this should come as no surprise. After all, people know a phony when they see one. Even when the microphones are turned off.

• *The writer is chairman of Shavei Israel (www.shavei.org), which assists lost tribes and hidden Jewish communities to return to the Jewish people.*

## AROUND THE WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

### CONVICTIONS AGAINST PEER PROTESTERS THROWN OUT

AUCKLAND - A group of anti-Israeli activists who protested against Israeli tennis star Shahar Peer during a tournament in New Zealand, had their convictions quashed.

At a High Court hearing on November 11, Justice Paul Heath threw out the charges against six activists who had been found guilty in Auckland District Court of disorderly behaviour. The activists used megaphones outside the ASB Tennis Classic in 2010 to protest the Israeli government’s treatment of

Palestinians.

John Minto, the protest leader, told Fairfax newspapers in New Zealand that the decision was a victory for democracy and the right to dissent.

"We have a democracy here, and dissent and the right to public protest is what keeps democracy going," he said.

Play had to be suspended as officials debated whether to continue Peer's match due to the small but noisy demonstration outside the tennis complex. (JTA)

### ORTHODOX RABBI OFFICIATES AT SAME SEX-WEDDING IN DC

WASHINGTON - An Orthodox rabbi, has officiated at a same-sex wedding. Steve Greenberg, who is openly gay, married Yoni Bock and Ron Kaplan at the 6th & I Synagogue in Washington last week.

The ceremony was held under a chupah and included the breaking of a glass and the exchanging of rings. The ketubah, or marriage contract, was replaced with a Shtar Shetufim, or partnership contract.

"We were encouraged by the legislation

of same-sex marriage in our home ‘state’ of Washington, DC," Bock and Kaplan wrote in a guide to the ceremony. "At the same time, both of us wanted a ceremony that would be meaningful halachically and create a set of Jewish legal obligations between us."

It is believed to be the first time that an ordained Orthodox rabbi has officiated at a same-sex marriage in the United States. (JTA)

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**Artisan Contemporary Gallery, Morningside, Durban:** “Memories”, curated by Sue Greenberg celebrating 29 gallery years, until December 24, (031) 312-4364.

**Everard Read and Circa Gallery, Rosebank:** Kerri Evans’ “Paint” in Everard Read; Paula Louw’s “redeconstructivist”, in Circa; until December 4, (011) 788-4805.

**Foxwood House Theatre, Houghton:** On November 18, “The Strange Case of the Headmaster’s Wife”; “An Evening with Michael de Pinna”, November 26, (011) 486-0935.

**Goodman Gallery:** In Parkwood, William Kentridge’s “Other Faces” ends December 23, (011) 788-1113. In Woodstock, David Goldblatt’s “Portraits”, ends December 10, (021) 462-7579.

**Joburg Theatre, Braamfontein:** In the Nelson Mandela, “Cinderella”, until December 30. In the Fringe, Ribnick’s “Monkey Nuts” until December 4. In the People’s Theatre, Girard and Smith’s “Beauty and the Beast”, until December 24, (011)877-6800.

**Market Theatre, Newtown:** In the Laager, Higginson’s “Girl in the Yellow Dress” until December 18. In the Main Theatre, Nik Rabinowitz in “You Can’t Be Serious”, until November 19. In the Barney Simon, Grootboom’s “Rhetorical”, until November 20; “Smiles and Cries” by Siyabonga Radebe, opens November 23, (011) 832-1641.

**Montecasino, Fourways:** In the Studio, “My Mother’s Italian, My Father’s Jewish and I’m in Therapy” with Michael Richard until January 8. In the Pieter Toerien, “Menopause the Musical,” until January 8; “Beautiful Creatures” opens November 30, (011) 511-1988.

**National Children’s Theatre, Parktown:** Joyce Levinsohn and Francois Theron direct Disney’s “Aladdin”, until December 23, (011) 484-1584.

**Old Mutual Theatre on the Square, Sandton:** Mark Sampson’s “Africa Clockwise” until November 19. “Deeply Fried”, with Daniel Friedman, opens November 21 for two weeks. Friday lunchtime concerts on November 18 features Madrigal Ensemble; on November 25, Trio Venato. (011) 883-8606.

**SA Print Gallery, Woodstock:** “Alice Goldin: Cape Woodcuts” until December 8, (021) 462-6851.

**Victory Theatre, Orange Grove:** “Relive the 50s: Kwela Bafana”, directed by Phyllis Klotz, Smal Ndaba and Themba Mkhize, performed by the Sibikwa Players, until December 10, (011) 728-9603.

TAPESTRY

ART, BOOKS, DANCE, FILM, THEATRE

No safety net, but it’s oodles of fun

ROBYN SASSEN

COMIC DANIEL Friedman has constructed his identity to spoof the healthy names of bands like Freshlyground. Mooting himself Deeply Fried Man, he quips: “I would be lying if I said I had any kind of philanthropic intent in my work. Like anything deeply fried, my work is tasty but not necessarily good for you.”

Last year, armed only with his guitar and his sense of humour, this 30-year-old journalism graduate took the leap to become a funny guy, fulltime. “It’s nerve-wracking: there’s no safety net salary; but it’s worth it.”

Since then, he’s won the Parker’s Comedy Showdown, and the Newcomer Award at the inaugural Comics Choice Awards. He’s performed at some of South Africa’s biggest comedy events, including the Heavyweight Comedy Jam and the Jozi Comedy Fest, and he opened Trevor Noah’s one-man show, Scratch That, last October.

His current show, Deeply Fried, debuted this year at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival, winning an Ovation Award. “Last year was my honeymoon period in the industry. I was overwhelmed by camaraderie.



Daniel Friedman, with his good and bad alter egos. (PHOTOGRAPH BY LINGO RODRIGUEZ)

“In truth, there is lots of politics. There are also nightmare shows in bars. Working in this capacity taught me how to think on my feet. It also taught me self-indulgent, precious stuff seldom gets audiences.” Friedman has an ongoing love affair with folk music, but has learnt to diversify.

The show he brings to Sandton this week, is “50 per cent new”. In Grahamstown, it polarised audiences. “Some were deeply offended. Others thought it hilarious. Some of my frames of reference relate to the controversial animated American series South Park. But this does not mean that if you’re not a South Park fan, you won’t get what I’m doing.”

This polarisation’s ironic: the apple doesn’t fall far, for this son of political analyst Steven Friedman. “I am similar to my dad,” he laughs, before explaining his challenges in choosing to be professionally funny.

“My family’s intellectually intimidating. My mom’s a lawyer and published novelist. I have a brother who’s an advocate and another studying

to be a bio-medical engineer. Amidst all this, there is me!

“I was never pressurised to have a career in a particular mould. But, for the first time, my family saw me winning awards. Now, they can no longer say ‘stop doing this, there is no pay off!’”

Responsible, with Gareth Woods, for the Idiot’s Guide to Singing the National Anthem, a popular youtube insert inspired by Just Jinger’s Ard Matthews’ foxing of Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika, this August, Friedman is serious about his funny career. “Thanks to heroes of mine, like the originator of alternative comedy in South Africa, John Vlismas, and one of South Africa’s originals, Mel Miller, the industry flourishes, and for the first time ever, South Africa’s comedy isn’t cringeworthy; it’s genuinely funny. It no longer provokes ‘sympathy laughter’, but the real thing.”

• “Deeply Fried” is at Old Mutual Theatre on the Square, Sandton, November 21-December 3, (011) 883-8606.

Young Vásquez a pleasant podium revelation

**Concert:** Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra (Linder)

**Conductor:** Christian Vásquez

**Soloist:** Peter Bruns (‘cello)

**Programme:** Music by Elgar, Lalo and Prokofiev

REVIEWED BY PAUL BOEKKOOI

ON NOVEMBER 10 the JPO reached their last symphony concert of 2011 with an unexpected triumph. No one exactly knew how the 27-year-old Venezuelan conductor, Christian Vásquez, who made his debut a week earlier, would get along with a new orchestra.

Although his previous concert still had a couple of hesitant or unsettled moments - definitely not in new music from Argentina and Mexico! - this varied programme of works by English, French and Russian composers brought with it a wealth of stimulating observations. Aably abetted by his admirably disciplined forces, Vásquez banished any vestige of stale convention.

In Elgar’s Serenade in F minor the JPO string contingent was strengthened by 20 or so extra players from their Academy orchestra. The vernal freshness of this enchanting music came over with vivid presence.

Without a hint of over-expressiveness, Vásquez naturally conveyed the tenderness and delicacy of the inspiration. Apart from the fact that the Larghetto was most affection-

ately phrased and played, he also counterbalanced the winsome Allegretto finale so that it didn’t feel like a mere post-script.

Peter Bruns (pictured) the ‘cello soloist from Germany, gave a lively, bravura performance of Lalo’s Concerto in D minor. It opens with a flourish of melodrama.

Vásquez set the scene boldly after which Bruns entered with a firm, full timbre, dominant vibrato and a similar sense of drama. The line was romantically strong and throughout the movement the orchestra maintained its concentration against which Bruns wove his spell.

The interpretation was full of life, the constant surge of the soloist no less impressive than the invigorating rhythmic bite of the orchestra. Lalo’s tuttis were never muddled and the ‘cello’s focus was clean and truthful.

It was in both the interpretation and execution of Prokofiev’s Symphony No 5 in B flat major, Opus 100, that the greatest playing of the evening was experienced. At times Vásquez elicited an almost chamber-like sound. This did not prevent him from drawing



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY  
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from the JPO warm, passionate readings: a remarkable combination.

The tense promise of the opening Andante rapidly blossomed into a powerful, vibrant and well-shaped discourse. The climactic moments were seldom overblown, although loud (which in a less dry acoustic than the Linder’s wouldn’t matter). This paid great dividends on orchestral detail and clarity.

Vásquez attained an extraordinary balance in Prokofiev’s sometimes almost schizophrenic writing.

More than in most performances, this one made one think of the third movement’s Adagio as being a string threnody. It was superbly

underpinned by darker wind murmurings, while the tangibly hushed close led naturally to the mellower opening of the essentially upbeat finale with its throbbing horns and instant echoes of Romeo and Juliet.

By the time you read this, Vásquez will be in the middle of a two-week season with the Israel Philharmonic. Perhaps we should watch out what the Israeli press will reveal about his concerts in Tel Aviv.



FELDMAN ON FILM

Peter Feldman

PICK OF THE WEEK

Devil’s Double

**Cast:** Dominic Cooper; Ludivine Sagnier; Raad Rawi; Mem Ferda; Dar Salim  
**Director:** Lee Tamahori

“Devil’s Double” is a slick, Hollywood take on the depraved life of Uday Hussein, the sadistic psychopath son of deposed tyrant, Saddam Hussein.

But it also embraces the life of Latif Yahia, an Iraqi army lieutenant, who was ordered to become the “fiday” - or body double - to this notorious Black Prince, and the film is based on his book.

Against a backdrop of violence, abuse, degradation and decadence, director Lee Tamahori has fashioned a stylish film that concentrates on

Yahia and how he gets absorbed into the highest echelons of the “royal family”.

His life changes completely and he is cut off from his family and friends as he becomes “twinning” with this reckless, sadistic party boy with his insatiable hunger for sex and brutality.

Yahia is the split image of Uday. He learns to walk, talk and act like his boss and, with a few adjustments like a set of false dentures and a new hairstyle, he cannot be told apart.

Yahia is forced to watch as Uday’s life spirals into drug-addled fury where fast cars, easy women and impulsive violence dominate his existence.

He knows that the wrong move could cost him his life, but he finds solace with the seductive Sarrab (Ludivine Sagnier), Uday’s mistress, who is haunted by her own dark secrets.

As war looms with Kuwait and Uday’s depraved gangster regime threatens to destroy them all, Latif realises that escape from the devil’s den will only come at the highest price.

Tamahori’s production is not given any intellectual depth, nor is it particularly intricate, and the cruelty it depicts soon becomes repetitive and desensitising. But its indelible images will

remain long after the film has dimmed from the screen.

The film’s saving grace is the remarkable British actor Dominic Cooper, whose career-defining performance of playing both Uday, often as a cartoonish character, and Yahia, as a good man trapped in a vice of unadulterated evil, is Oscar material.

History purists will baulk at the liberties the filmmakers have taken with the narrative, especially noticeable is the murder of Hanna Jajo, Saddam’s most trusted food-taster and procurer of women.

The film does show the political consequences of Uday’s misdeeds and how the people’s grievances are kept in line.

Since Uday’s death alongside brother Qusay during the United States’ invasion of Iraq in 2003, stories of Uday’s antics took on a global dimension.

The publication seven years later of Yahia’s memoir (also titled “The Devil’s Double”) went to extraordinary lengths to flesh out Uday’s villainy while attributing his behaviour to a delusional power trip - something the film fails to reveal.



TAPESTRY

ART, BOOKS, DANCE, FILM, THEATRE

Searing prose, matching insight with shimmering beauty

The Cat's Table by Michael Ondaatje (Random House Struik, R215)

REVIEWED BY GWEN PODBREY

IN THE early 1950s, the narrator of this novel - then aged 11 - is sent from his native Ceylon by passenger liner to boarding school in England. He is to travel alone, and will be met by his mother after disembarking. Thus Michael (who may or may not be Ondaatje himself), “naked in innocence”, begins a three-week journey on the Oronsay which will become not only a microcosm of his state of childhood, but also the portal through which he exits that state forever.

Within a day of the ship's departure, Michael finds two lads his own age, Ramadhin and Cassius, also travelling alone, who become his inseparable companions. Together, the three youngsters - free of parental supervision - explore every nook and cranny of the ship.

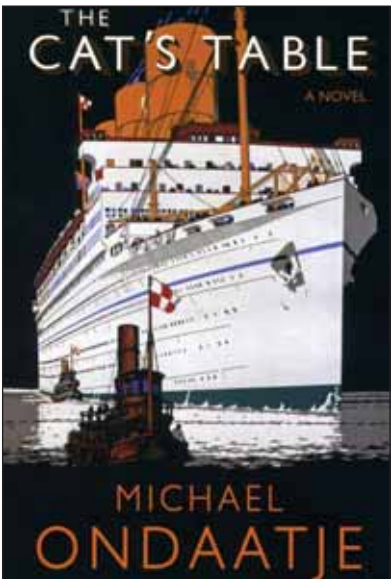
Almost frenzied with unrestrained energy, they hide in forbidden areas, filch dainties from the First Class tea tables, annoy the crew and gain an unfettered preview of the world beyond boyhood.

However, if they are wild and brazen, they are also bound together by their own insecurities; and, still more, by what they learn from observing, and eavesdropping on, their fellow passengers, particularly in the dining room, where they are seated at the “cat's table”: the one at which unattached or awkward individuals are lumped together to take their meals.

These fellow diners - all adults - come from vastly different social strata, with widely divergent credentials, but their wounds are the same. Alienated, misfits or simply malcontents, they come with shattered pieces of their lives packed into their luggage.

There is Max Mazappa, for instance, a hard-drinking, half-Syrian jazz musician who has many a lurid tale to tell the three boys about music and women.

“Today I realise that Max Mazappa loved the details of structure and melody, for not all his Stations of the Cross had to do with the failures of love... He had so



many songs and lives under his belt that truth and fiction merged too closely for us to distinguish one from the other... There was something extraterrestrial and indelible about the verse Mr Mazappa sang: ‘Every month, the changing of the moon / I say, every month, the changing of the moon, / The blood comes rushing from the bitch's womb.’”

Then there is Michael's older cousin, Emily. Admired for her looks, but lacking the discernment or confidence to control their effect on others, she and Michael tacitly acknowledge each other's defencelessness.

And there is the Baron, an aristocrat who enlists Michael in burglarising the cabins of wealthy passengers. The experience will lay the foundation for the youngster's later skill in dissembling, both as a novelist and in private life.

“In retrospect, I see that what the Baron gave me was another self, something as small as a pencil sharpener. It was a little escape into being somebody else...”

There is also a prisoner, accused of murder and en route to trial in England, who spends the days confined to a cell in the belowdecks, but is brought up, manacled, very late at night - once the top deck is deserted - for exercise.

This, then, is another type of outcast, the boys learn: one whose chains are tangible, but whose condition of captivity is shared by many around them.

It is also shared by them themselves, something Michael - narrating the novel from the distance of some 40 years - now realises. Their bonds of friendship, forged at sea, produce lasting ties - either directly, as in Michael's later (failed) marriage to Ramadhin's sister, Massi, or indirectly, as in his visit to an exhibition of paintings by Cassius, in whom he realises that the images and revelations of that long-ago sea voyage have remained as firmly entrenched as in himself.

Ondaatje's prose, as always, is searing, matching insight with shimmering beauty. Apart from the set-pieces which have become one of his trademarks, there are passages which bring the sights, sounds and smells of a voyage from Asia through the Mediterranean to vivid life (including an unforgettable description of passing through the canal at El Suweis).

His tone is sorrowful, rewinding skeins of memory to insights first gleaned as an impressionable little boy on the Oronsay, incubated in the passions of early manhood and finally lodged as bitter certainties in the repository of middle age.

Loss and loneliness, predating on remembered youth and its naivety, have caused him to embark on a different kind of voyage in later years.

“Proust has this line: ‘We think we no longer love our dead, but... suddenly we catch sight again of an old glove and burst into tears,’” he writes.

“I once had a friend whose heart ‘moved’ after a traumatic incident that he refused to recognise. It was only a few years later, while he was being checked out by his doctor for some minor ailment, that this physical shift was discovered. And I wondered then, when he told me this, how many of us have a moved heart that shies away to a different angle, a millimetre or even less from the place where it first existed, some repositioning unknown to us...”

There are minor irritations in the contrivances of the plot, as well as some overly purple, near-precious passages, but these are quickly forgiven. Ondaatje is one of the world's great writers, telling a great story which pervades the reader's soul, expands its bandwidth, catches alight and remains burning long after the last page.

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LETTERS

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<b>Guidelines for letters:</b> Letters up to 400 words will get preference. Please provide your full first name and surname, place of residence, and a daytime contact telephone or cell number. We do not publish letters under noms de plume. Letters should preferably be e-mailed. Letters may be edited or shortened.	<b>Disclaimer:</b> The letters page is intended to provide 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
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WHY PUT PEOPLE ON A GUILT TRIP AD INFINITUM?

I READ with irritation Prof Deborah Posel’s comments, 17 years after apartheid, that Jews should acknowledge, publicly and symbolical-ly, that they too were beneficiaries of apartheid.

Let’s go the whole hog and call on coloureds, Indians, Zulu-supporters of Inkatha, Xhosa supporters of Matanzima, Tswana-supporters of Mangope, and all other homeland beneficiar-ies, to go on their knees and seek forgiveness for benefiting as members of the racial hierarchy.

What do these UCT academics think they

ONE ‘DISEASE’ INDEED NEEDS URGENT ATTENTION

ONE CANNOT help but agree with the editor, that the “letters page” of the SA Jewish Report, is not the place for a medical disserta-tion regarding certain disease processes. Any pertinent information required, pertaining to medical maladies, can be obtained from the appropriate medical practitioner, or perhaps, a little too easily, from the font of medical expertise on the Internet.

Having said this, there is indeed one dis-ease that requires to be urgently overcome, and that is the “disease of non-communica-tion, and non-recognition” that exists be-tween Orthodox and Reform Jewry.

This is a disease that is not only destructive at a personal level, but is also harmful to the

RUSSELL’S COFFIN MUST HAVE BURNT TO CINDER

IS IT possible to arrange for someone to replace the coffin of Bertrand Russell? The perversion of his principles by the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, must have had him spinning in his grave at such a speed that the ensuing friction caused the wood of the coffin to be burnt to cinder.

And to compound the shame of the Jews of South Africa (and the world), Nathan Geffen strides bravely forward (Doron Isaacs, where art thou?) to castigate Israel and the Jews

COMMUNITY SHOULD’VE HAD COUNTER-TRIBUNAL

I AM heartened by the stand taken by Jewish students and other members of our commu-nity at the Russell Tribunal. I just have one problem: Why do we always only react?

I don’t really expect the “Krengels Ltd” to do anything, but there is supposedly new leadership at the helm.

What we should have done was have our own tribunal at the same time. We should have invited people such as Dershowitz, Goldstone, Beck and one or two pro-Israel actors/actresses and we would have stolen

PAULA SLIER GETS ROSENBERG THUMBS DOWN

I WAS absolutely appalled, early Monday evening, to see (journalist) Paula Slier’s interview with Uri Avnery - “activist” - on Russia Today, broadcast from Tel Aviv. In the background and also in close-up, they showed our brave young soldiers training to guard our borders and trying to keep Arab terror-ists from blowing us up, etc.

How dare she! Doesn’t she realise she is endangering the lives of these kids?

When she was lecturing in Johannesburg some years ago, I approached her and gave her the name of my daughter and cousins in Beersheva. I asked her to please say some-thing nice about Israel for a change.

I told her to go down south and visit Ben-Gurion University, where amazing work is being done to encourage the Bedouin Arabs in surrounding villages to attend school, by giving them scholarships, instead of some of

WHAT A WAY TO PROVE YOU’RE A SUPER-LIBERAL!

JARED JOEL writes of “The baffling enigma of the self hating Jew” (SAJR November 11).

My opinion is that Jews who criticise other Jews (in public) are not self-hating but have overzealous consciences and what better a way to prove that one is super-liberal than by criticising one’s own group? Imagine his peers’ comments: “Now there’s a true liberal, he even criticises his own group.”

There are a myriad potential targets for liberals with overactive consciences, but none of the other efforts will accord them (the liberals) the same exposure as when they condemn their own group.

As an example of unjust regimes, there was the Soviet Union till 1990 (Ronald Reagan was a lone voice); the North African dictators have been around for over 30 years - it takes about 10 years to realise a regime is a dicta-

have to gain by putting people on a guilt-trip ad infinitum?

As a social scientist I dare Posel to do an audit of what Jews are doing to contribute to building and developing South Africa. I await her results. It is time to move on and that is what I as a black person desire.

**Rhoda Kadalie**  
**Executive Director, Impumelelo Social**  
**Innovations Centre**  
**Cape Town**

endeavours of communication that will hope-fully strengthen and maintain the mutual validity of all the different groups within the Jewish people.

The variations in the manifestations and propagation of the Jewish ethos, traditions and practices, must not be allowed to distract from the continued survival of the “Chosen People”.

The “health” of Judaism must be main-tained at all costs, by all sectors of the Jewish nation.

**Dr A M Levin**  
**Bryanston**  
**Sandton**

with his half truths and downright inconsis-tencies, probably because he feels we have forgotten him and he feels terribly neglected.

In any case, he succeeded since I’ve been forced to take notice of him and his half-baked peregrinations of his mind. What boggles the mind is that Geffen wasn’t invited to deliver his dissertation to the Russell Tribunal.

**Jack Miller**  
**Gresswold, Johannesburg**

the limelight.

Or is it beyond the Jewish civil service to do anything proactive? I know someone will shout: “Who will pay?” But that is a minor problem. We just have to get rid of the sur-plus employees at “The Jewish Civil Service” to fund such an event.

**Chaim Myerson**  
**Parklands, Cape Town**

Some comments have been removed. -Editor

them selling drugs. Some of the women with no formal education are taught to do bead-work and embroidery to sell.

Does Slier know about the electric car sta-tions set up around the country? Or the non-chemical water purification systems? Or that Israel has the highest survival rate for cancer victims in the world? Does she care?

Avnery ended the interview with com-ments on Israel being an “apartheid’ state. Do they not read information refuting this and proving that this is not so?

Paula, why don’t you go and live in Syria, or North Africa, where I’m sure they will wel-come you with open arms.

I will not be watching Russian Today any-more.

**Shelly Rosenberg**  
**Parkwood, Johannesburg**

torship, so where have the human rights activists been for the last 20 years?

Where are those activists regarding Burma, Syria and closer to home, Zim-babwe?

Religion has a role to play in determining whether one will be passive or over active. Liberal leaning people generally don’t adhere to the rituals of religion. Adherents to the ritual of religion generally are conser-vation and don’t have the inclination to self-criticism.

Let those Jewish critics have no illusion - to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his followers: Born a Jew, always a Jew.

**John Brenner**  
**Cyrildene**  
**Johannesburg**

LOOKING FOR APARTHEID IN MIDEAST? LOOK IN THE RIGHT PLACES

ONCE AND for all we can say enough with lies, we all know that apartheid is alive and kicking in the Middle East! However, perhaps all of us, including the kangaroos, are look-ing in the wrong direction.

Surely part of this apartheid is against the Palestinians. There are laws that forbid Palestinians from voting and working and buying houses. Where? Not where you were looking! Not in the territories but in Le-banon, in Egypt, in Syria and for sure in the Gulf, where they are second grade human beings and just a notch over slaves.

And why is that? Surprise - that “gift” is the curse of the UN! It is the UN that declared that every Egyptian or Lebanese or Iraqi or Jordanian, who worked in Israel for only two years, is now a Palestinian refugee forever, him and his family, denying them the right to unite with their original nation and be free citizens and forced them to live on charity as refugees instead.

And by the way, the amount of charity they receive is per person so much more than that of any hungry person in Africa. Checked!

And is the “Pe-la-Satan” not an apartheid pre-state in the making? By from staying there - just because they are Jews! Just imag-

MODERN ISRAEL IS NOT ‘A LIGHT UNTO THE NATIONS’

I HAVE the answer for Jared Joel, because I, too, resent the attitudes of many Jews who are driven by their own narrow, political stance in their distasteful attitude to Israel’s existence.

It is Israel itself which is feeding the grow-ing odium that has become the norm in today’s anti-Israel world. It is the arrest of a Jewish woman who went to pray at the Kotel which demonises modern Israel. It is the sickening sight of Jewish men stoning young women and their children on their way to school which damages Israel.

It is the continuing debate on “who is a Jew” that is a repugnant element in the psy-che of modern Israel. It is a bungling Mossad stalking a human being in full view of the world’s television screens, while sow-ing anger and disbelief among the (coun-try’s) few remaining friends through the ille-gal and arrogant use of their passports that condemns Israel.

It is (Benjamin) Netanyahu calling for Palestinians to take note of the last 44 years of history, while he, together with Jews like Joel, studiously ignore the reality of the past 1 800 years, that drives growing disillusion-ment, not only in the non-Jewish world, but, sadly, increasingly so among long-term pro-

CRITICISM OF ISRAEL DOESN’T MAKE ONE ‘A SELF-HATING JEW’

I REFER to Jared Joel’s letter, “The baffling enigma of the self-hating Jew”.

Joel starts his letter by asking rhetorical questions: “Why do certain Jewish individu-als see fit to side with the enemies of Israel and the Jewish people? Why do some Jews criticise Israel constantly while turning a blind eye to the myriad evils perpetrated by Palestinians and Arab nations against Jews, non-Arab minorities, non-Muslims, and even their own people?”

He does not really want answers to these questions as he has formed his own response with no research and no insight. To his credit he admits that his opinions are a theory with no basis in fact and he has not taken the time to investigate the reasons why some Jews have dissenting views on Israel, and could have propinquity with Arabs and other Islamic agencies.

I take exception with Joel’s reasoning that if a Jew criticises the politics of Israel, this Jew is de facto a self-hating Jew. A very evocative nomenclature - and I am not sure I know what it means. If medical practitioners disagree with the politics of healthcare, are they self-hating doctors? The logic of this argument is spurious and obfuscating.

It is unhelpful, and arrogant, to dismiss those with opposing views as possessing some dysfunctional psychological pathology.

FOR THE RECORD

COLLISION BETWEEN 2 CARS CAUSED NATANEL’S DEATH

DETAILS OF the accident that caused Natanel Feigenbaum’s death in 2009, as related in our story on Ohr Natanel last week, were incorrect.

ine how easy it was if “Palestine” was not actively promoting Judenrein! If this is not apartheid, what is?

The same separation and religious intoler-ance is the reason that the Christian majority of Bethlehem, is there no more.

What was first, the chicken or the egg? Long ago all the roads were open, withou road blocks, no barriers. That is how it all started. There was good economic revival and people from Jericho visited Jerusalem and vice versa. I remember. I was there.

The need for protection came like it did at the airports, like in our own garden walls, when the security situation deteriorated to a stage that it (this protection) was absolutely necessary. And it saves lives. Checked.

They are the living example of apartheid which promotes murder on gender prefer-ence issues, honour killings of young women, a society which raises its kids for the sole purpose of killing others. Checked.

The truth must be said, admitted, correct-ed, and after that, perhaps, there will be a place for reconciliation.

**Naomi Dinur**  
**Senderwood, Johannesburg**

Zionist Jews like me.

I am not a recipient of benefits from Saudi Arabia, nor am I ingratiated with Islamists, nor a believer in political correctness, nor an attention seeker. I am totally committed to the right of the Jewish people to their homeland.

But the modern Israel that I bought into was supposed to be a moral light unto the nations. What is unacceptable is what it is becoming, while it is fawned upon and viciously defended by Jews like Joel.

Jews like him drive Jews like me to despair of Jews like him and their vision of Israel. Their “my Israel, wrong or wrong” attitude is the reason why Israel’s moral standing has sunk to a new low.

The glory days of Entebbe, Eichmann and the Munich revenge are gone now and there was some morality there. Israel must now define the borders and end the occupation. Let the Palestinians persist in their stupidi-ty.

Israel can rather rain down fire and brim-stone from within its own, defined territory. There would be some morality there.

**Bernard Duchen**  
**Highlands North, Johannesburg**

Jewish academic history has always encouraged debate, open discussion and robust argument. Why dispense with this now? Joel, not equipped with facts and evi-dence, takes the easy route: personal insult and unfounded psychological diagnoses.

He underestimates the Jewish community by referring to them as a “soft target”. Jews are a resilient and formidable force and have weathered storms much greater than a few dissenting voices.

Within every community there will be those who oppose the status quo, and they provide an opportunity and purpose. They are there to keep us on our toes, to encourage us to be up-to-date with our knowledge and facts, so our argument will be valuable and relevant.

They are our shadow, reminding us of the significance to our commitment and always pointing to the light of reason and inspiration.

Take these dissenters very seriously indeed. Only then, when we meet them on the battlefield, can we be equipped with the appropriate armour: A sharp wit, an informed intellect and a convincing argu-ment, dismiss them as histrionic and avari-cious, at your own peril.

**Gary T Boswell**  
**Orange Grove**  
**Johannesburg**



COMMUNITY COLUMNS



IN GOOD ORDER

Stan Klaff  
Grand President

A column of the Hebrew Order of David International

OVER THE past month, I was privileged to officiate at the annual installation of officers of two Lodges in South Africa, one in East London and the other in Durban. The members of these Lodges do sterling work in their communities and the flag of the Hebrew Order of David International flutters vigorously in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape.

In addition to overseeing the annual change in leadership, I presented the award known as the “Order of Merit” to three senior and devoted members in those Lodges. Dr Roovie Buchalter and Josh Baskir of the Rev Chaim Katz Lodge in East London and Barry Alice of Lodge Jaffa, are outstanding members of the Order and have been integral to our growth and success in South Africa. They are worthy recipients of this prestigious award.

Lodge Jaffa in particular continues to increase its membership by the addition of several young and able men who are already making their mark.

I am constantly reminded of the impact that the Hebrew Order of David International has made in South Africa. Almost daily men and women whom I meet, tell me of their connection to the Order and what it meant to them when they were young and saw their fathers and uncles going “off to Lodge”.

Mostly they fondly remember how their families interacted through the membership of the Lodge in their town somewhere in South Africa. In its heyday, the Order boasted Lodges in almost every town from the Cape to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Now the concentration of Jews is centred in Johannesburg/Sandton, Durban/Umhlanga and Cape Town and the opportunities to open new Lodges in those areas to serve the communities, has never been more relevant.

The executive of the Order is focused on developing the Order here in South Africa and internationally. In the United States and United Kingdom, the Order

Buoyant at home and growing around the world

has grown considerably with many new Lodges planned. The network of the Hebrew Order of David is extremely active and the work done by Lodges is an example to many other organisations.

The ideals and concepts of the Order are universal and members have the opportunity to connect with like-minded men in the quest to assist those less fortunate than ourselves. The dictum of the Hebrew Order of David International is “Love Thy Neighbour as Thyself - ve'avavta lere'acha kamocho”.

The body of work carried out by the members is impressive. Lodges work mainly within their local communities and through the international network support projects around the world. The Order seeks to create an environment in which the development of individual flair, creativity, talent and personal responsibility is encouraged.

The spirit of brotherhood recognises the need for self-help as well as the need for helping others and so the Order offers many opportunities of members to network and build personal relationships around the world.

For the Order to work as a cohesive group, members share common goals and to collectively work towards those goals. Members have a high level of commitment and understanding that what they can do together as an organisation is better than what they do on their own.

The Order seeks to create an environment in which the development of individual flair, creativity, talent and personal responsibility is encouraged.

• The Order is holding an information session for interested Jewish men on Tuesday November 22, at 19:30 for 20:00, at the HOD Centre in Oaklands, Johannesburg. Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, the “Travelling Rabbi”, will present some of his work in the communities in Africa and senior members of the Order will be on hand to talk about the Hebrew Order of David International and the proposed opening of a new Lodge in the Johannesburg/Sandton area. To attend, please contact the HOD office at (011) 640-3017 or e-mail info@hodavid.org.

This column is paid for by the HOD



ABOVE BOARD

Mary Kluk,  
National Chairman

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

ON SUNDAY morning, SABC2's Issues of Faith programme screened a compelling new documentary on our “Travelling Rabbi”, Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft.

Entitled “Shalom, the Beloved Country”, this showed various aspects of Rabbi Moshe's duties, including conducting services, visiting abandoned synagogues, seeing to the maintenance of Jewish cemeteries and providing a direct connection with Jews who still remain on the platteland.

It further showed his interaction with members of other faiths and communities, where he acts as the public face of South African Jewry in areas where there is a very limited Jewish presence.

While the dominant trend in areas outside of the main urban centres shows a steady decline in Jewish numbers, there are noteworthy exceptions. In particular, the Southern Cape region has recorded growth in Jewish residents over the past decade.

This led three years ago to the establishment of the Garden Route Jewish Association (GRJA), a body representing Jews living today in the area broadly encompassing a triangle stretching from Tzitzikama through Plettenberg Bay-Knysna in the east to Mossel Bay in the west and Oudtshoorn to the north.

Its president is Myron Rabinowitz, who is also president of the George Hebrew Congregation and beyond that has been much involved in local government affairs as a long-serving ANC councillor.

On November 27, along with Rabbi Silberhaft, I will be attending the official launch of the GRJA. I look forward to participating in this latest affirmation of our

Fitting tribute to our ‘Travelling Rabbi’

community's commitment to maintaining their Jewish heritage, wherever their members might find themselves.

The GRJA has also become an affiliate of the SAJBD, thereby making the southern Cape a constituent part of the formal Jewish establishment. This year - 2011 - marks Rabbi Silberhaft's 18th in his position of spiritual leader to the SA country communities within the SAJBD's Country Communities Department. He has also since joining the Board acted as CEO to the African Jewish Congress, thereby extending his activities into the neighbouring southern African countries whose small Jewish communities likewise require his services.

Eighteen, as we know, is the numerical value of “Chai”, the Hebrew word for life, and through his work, he has indeed played a crucial part in keeping Yiddishkeit alive in some of the most far-flung localities in the subcontinent.

Over the course of the next year Rabbi Moshe's years with the Board, launched under the brand name “My18years”, will be marked by a series of countrywide events celebrating his association with various Jewish communities.

The Board's Country Communities Department itself is chaired by Justice Ralph Zulman, a former national vice-chairman of the Board.

The SAJBD's Country Communities Department itself has been operating for some 60 years. Through its activities, we have been able to maintain a continual connection with fellow Jews in small town and rural South Africa, assisting them in maintaining Jewish life in their localities and making them feel that they are regarded as a valued component of the greater Jewish population.

This column is paid for by the SAJBD

INVITATION TO ATTEND AN INFORMATION SESSION



on the  
**HEBREW ORDER OF DAVID  
INTERNATIONAL**  
at the  
**HOD Centre in Orchards, Johannesburg**  
on **Tuesday November 22, 2011.**  
At **19:30 for 20:00**

During its long history in South Africa almost every family has enjoyed an association with the Hebrew Order of David International. Someone in your extended family will have been a member of the Order, a father, uncle, cousin or even a friend...

We would like to interest you in our work and inform you of the benefits of belonging to an international fraternity. The Order has expanded into the US, UK and Israel and is opening new Lodges in those regions. You can become part of an exciting international organisation with interesting networking opportunities. In addition you can join others in improving the lives of those less fortunate than ourselves.

Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, the “Travelling Rabbi”, will be our guest speaker and will talk about his work in the community and the relevance of the Hebrew Order of David International.



Pictured are Michael Krasner; Con Travis; Marc Goldberg (Deputy Grand President); Stan Klaff (Grand President); and Avron Krasner (Grand Treasurer).

Below: Jewish Family Services, Atlanta van donated by Lodge.



The Grand President, Stan Klaff, and senior members of the Order, will present information and answer questions relating to its work.



Rev Chaim Katz, Lodge President David Toyk hands a cheque to Tape Aids for the Blind.



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Not only did Micael single-handedly manage to collect clothes from his classmates, but, in the process, he spread the word of the vital work performed by the organisation within the Jewish community. He even made sure that some items from home were included in the six bags he managed to collect and we could not wish for a better ambassador!





# Jewish Travel

Visiting places of Jewish interest

## Welcome to the Land of the Pampas

ROBYN SASSEN

YOU MIGHT think Argentina, and picture Madonna as Evita Perón, in the eponymous Webber and Rice rock opera made into a Hollywood film in 1996. You might think of it as the place where Nazi Adolf Eichmann hid, until he was caught in 1960.

The word “Argentina”, derived from “argentums”, meaning silver, might conjure up for you the sultry tango, which developed in suburban Buenos Aires at the turn of the 19th century. Either way, it might surprise you to know that Argentine Jewry is considerably older and larger, but not all that different to the community in South Africa.

The history of Argentine Jewry goes back to the Spanish Inquisition, when Jews fleeing persecution landed up in South America and quietly assimilated, between the 16th and 19th centuries.

It was only after Argentina gained independence in 1810 that the Jewish community began to develop. From then, Jews gravitated towards the country, in response to its open-door immigration policy. These days, Argentine Jewry represents two per cent of the population, which numbers some 250 000, of which 80 per cent is Ashkenazi. It's South America's largest Jewish community.

The first Jewish wedding in Buenos Aires was held in 1868; the first synagogue was inaugurated in 1875. Jews began buying land in Argentina, and established a farming colony, Moiseville.

Argentine Jews prospered, but not without the threat of anti-Semitism, from 1919. Despite this, Jews became involved in most sectors of Argentine society. There were restrictions against their participation in government; those who didn't farm became artisans and shopkeepers.

It was a time for the blossoming of cultural and religious organisations, including the establishment of a Yiddish newspaper (still one of the four active Yiddish presses worldwide).

An anachronistic figure for Argentine Jewry was career soldier and three-time president Juan Perón. His rise to power in 1946 was of concern to many Jews. Though, as Minister of War, he signed Argentina's declaration of war against the Axis Powers, he had initially expressed sympathy for their values.

It was also believed that Perón allowed Argentina to become a haven for Nazi fugitives, the most notorious of whom, Adolf Eichmann, was abducted by Israeli and Argentine agents in Buenos Aires in 1960 and taken to Israel where he was found guilty at his trial in Jerusalem, the following April, and duly executed.

The current Argentine Consul General Carlos Rubio Reyna, explains that Argentina had not provided refuge to Eichmann and his ilk. “On arrival in Argentina he made use of a forged passport issued by the Red Cross to Ricardo Klement.

“In Argentina he had no protection; he kept an ultra-low profile, working in me-

nial jobs, until he was employed by Mercedes Benz. When we realised who he was, my country was satisfied he faced justice in Israel.”

History concurs: Perón was sympathetic toward Jewish rights, establishing diplomatic ties with Israel in 1949.

In 1983, Raúl Alfonsín became president and was instrumental in ratifying laws against racism in general and anti-Semitism in particular. Six years later, Carlos Saul Menem replaced him. His Arab origin and support for Perón initially worried the Jews, but he proved a friend, offering to help mediate the Israeli-Arab peace process. He also ordered the release of files relating to Argentina's role as a haven for Nazi war criminals.

Despite Menem's sympathetic policies and democracy, Argentine Jews were targets of two terrorist attacks: the Israeli Embassy was bombed in March 1992, killing 29; in July 1994, AMIA, the Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires was bombed, killing 85 and partially destroying community archives. It was established that the latter was carried out by a Hezbollah suicide bomber.

These incidents, and the economic crisis in Argentina at the end of the 20th century, encouraged aliyah in this strongly Zionist community as it encouraged the merging of Jewish institutions. Things are bleak for middle class Argentine Jewry; the community is affected by attrition in the young and indigence in the old.

In spite of its problems, Argentina has 50 synagogues, most being Orthodox. Conservative Judaism plays a secondary role.

There are over 70 Jewish educational institutions in Argentina. Jewish theatre proliferates through the country, using Yiddish, Spanish and Hebrew as medium.

Chabad in Argentina has 11 branches. Recently, Chabad of Tucumán opened a medical centre and mikvah, for those without medical insurance. Rabbi Daniel Levy, Chabad director in the vicinity, explained that in researching the project, he discovered that 92 per cent of Jews in the area could not afford medical treatment.

“We had to do something”, he cited the Lubavitcher Rebbe: “When two people meet, the reason is to be able to help a third.”

This emulates values central to a community with a fertile history, currently challenged from within and without.



The entrance to Argentina's “Jewish Cow Town” Moiseville.



The mountains of northern Argentina.

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### Tips for when you visit Argentina:

- If you're holidaying in Argentina, and hold a SA passport, you do not need a visa.
- Before visiting Argentina, you may need to be inoculated against typhoid and yellow fever, depending on your itinerary.
- Given that Argentina is in the southern hemisphere, the seasons are distributed through the year like those in South Africa.
- There are 40 spoken languages in Argentina; they're dominated by Spanish and include around 200 000 Yiddish speakers. English is mandatory in Argentine high school.
- The Argentinian peso (ARS) is the unit of money. 1 ARS will cost you R1,87.
- There are many accessible ATMs throughout urban Argentina, but be warned that a maximum of the equivalent of 300 US dollars may be withdrawn each day.
- Traffic in Argentina is on the right hand side.
- Electricity in Argentina is at 220 volts, alternating at 50 cycles per second. Standard plugs in Argentina are V-shaped flat prongs.
- Tap water in Argentina is safe to drink.
- Johannesburg is five hours ahead of Argentina.







Jewish Report

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# Has Benayoun, alas, passed his sell-by date?

JACK MILNER

ISRAELI SOCCER captain Yossi Benayoun has done his country proud over the years. He has played for three of the top English Premier League clubs: Liverpool, Chelsea and Arsenal. However, he is now 31 years old and Allon Sinai of the Jerusalem Post believes he may, alas, have passed his sell-by date.

Says Sinai: Criticising Yossi Benayoun is considered somewhat sacrilegious here in Israel. However, I can't help but feel that this time he has got it wrong.

"There is little doubt that the 31-year-old midfielder is among Israel's greatest ever soccer players. Such is Benayoun's talent that sports fans in Israel have been tracking his progress since his early teens. Unlike so many others, he has not only lived up to the exceptionally high expectations, but actually exceeded them.

"He even gave his hometown of Dimona another claim to fame besides its neighbouring nuclear reactor and high unemployment rate.

"The only thing that seemed to match his performances on the field was his judgement off it, but if the early signs are anything to go by, he may well live to regret his choice to join Arsenal on a one-year loan deal from Chelsea hours before the August transfer window closed."

Benayoun was one of five players Arsenal brought aboard in the aftermath of the 8-2

thrashing by Manchester United on August 28. But while the likes of Per Mertesacker and Mikel Arteta have become key members of the team, the Israel captain has had to remain content with a substitute's role.

Benayoun spent two seasons at West Ham United and shortly after almost agreeing to a long-term contract extension in the summer of 2007, he jumped at an offer to join Liverpool.

He took a pay-cut from what West Ham was offering, and despite their reluctance, the Hammers eventually released him in a £5 million deal. Despite having to get used to not being the focal point of his team for the first time in his career, Benayoun became an important player at Liverpool, making 48 appearances - including 27 in the starting line-up - and scoring 11 goals in his first season at the club.

Benayoun even managed to establish himself as a regular starter in the second half of his second season in Merseyside, an especially difficult task under fickle manager Rafa Benitez.

However, his relationship with Benitez soured during the 2009/10 campaign, with Benayoun claiming the Spaniard "never treated me with the respect I deserved".

That led to his departure for Chelsea in July of last year, which seemed at the time as yet another amazing step up in his remarkable career. But as things currently stand, that transfer could end up being looked upon

as the beginning of the end for him.

Benayoun sightings have been few and far between since, with him playing a peripheral role for the Blues even before an Achilles injury suffered in October, sidelined him for six months. He ended up making only seven league appearances for Chelsea, starting in just one match.

Matters got even worse when Andre Villas-Boas replaced Carlo Ancelotti as manager. It quickly became apparent that the young Portuguese was not a big fan of the Israeli, leaving Benayoun to look elsewhere for playing time.

Series A club Roma as well as Liverpool, Tottenham and Newcastle reportedly all showed interest, but Benayoun eventually elected to go to Arsenal. The only reason Benayoun decided to leave Chelsea was due to a lack of minutes, but he achieved nothing by going to the Gunners.

Apparently, a phone call from Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger was what eventually convinced him to move to North London.

Maybe Wenger promised him plenty of action, but assuming he didn't, Benayoun may have overestimated his abilities by exchanging a Chelsea shirt for an Arsenal one instead of moving to a smaller club.

It is an extraordinary feat to be part of three massive clubs of the likes of Liverpool, Chelsea and Arsenal. But sadly, Benayoun has done little playing for the last two, wasting the final years of his prime before the inevitable



**Yossi Benayoun has moved to Arsenal, but is still not spending too much time on the field for the Gunners.**

decline.

Benayoun has started just three matches for Arsenal so far, two of them in the lowly regarded Carling Cup, which is proof enough of his importance, or lack of it, to Wenger's squad.

He has made three appearances as a substitute in Arsenal's seven league matches since he joined, and that is with the team still missing midfielders Jack Wilshere and Abou Diaby.

Nothing can detract from Benayoun's astonishing rags-to-riches story, but the decision to go to Arsenal may have cost him his last chance to shine at top level.

# Major coup for soccer in Sandton

JACK MILNER

SANDTON FOOTBALL Club (SFC) has pulled off a major coup, which the committee believe will take soccer to a different level in the region.

SFC has formed an association with the University of Pretoria (Tuks) High Performance Centre. This association, will not only add value to the club, but more importantly offer players of all age groups (under-six to under-18), fantastic opportunities not only from a football perspective, but also from a life-skills development point of view.

Costa Papadimos, one of the committee members of Sandton who has been involved in football for many years both as a player and also as an administrator, is extremely excited with the relationship with Tuks and the HPC, as he believes they have without doubt one of the top development structures in South Africa, vouched for by their record.

"Although our intention is to turn SFC into the centre of excellence for football in the region, our philosophy will be to cater for every child wishing to play the game," said Papadimos.

"We will have three academy age groups: under-14, -16 and -18, for those players who have the talent and aspirations to one day play at the highest level. We will have trials for these three age groups and only the very best will be selected.

"Our philosophy will always be never to turn away any child. Therefore, should, for example, an under-14 boy wish to play the game purely for the love of it, but is not good enough for the academy side, he will then play in the normal under-14 team. On the other hand, should an exceptional under-13 player try out for the under-14 academy team and is good enough, that is the team he will play for."

Steve Coetsee, a renowned development coach and academy director at Tuks, will oversee the successful implementation of the programme and its ongoing success. Coetsee



**University of Pretoria's High Performance Centre.**

says Tuks are also extremely excited with this initiative. "We believe that not only can we offer talented players great opportunities in furthering their football career path but we can also assist in furthering their education.

"For the average club player, who can never make it to the highest level, our aim is to make them the best that they can be and instil in them a love and passion for the game."

Sandton Football club play out of George Park in Parkmore, which has the added advantage of being centrally situated and accessible from many directions. Should you be interested in finding out more, they are having an open day on Sunday November 27, from 12:00 onward.

The open day will have on offer: Coaching sessions (under-six to under-18); matches (under-six to under-18); talks on the way forward from the experts; former soccer stars will be present. Prizes include Jumping castles and slippery slide, etc.

There is no charge for the open day. However, there will be food stores where you can buy refreshments. The day is open to the whole family, so bring your siblings and parents along. Also remember to bring your playing kit along, as you will be playing a lot of soccer.

• Should you wish to attend the open day or require any additional information, e-mail [sandtonsportsclub@gmail.com](mailto:sandtonsportsclub@gmail.com) or Dewalt on (011) 783-0935 or 071-686-6208.

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