Friday 3 May 2013 / 23 Iyar 5773
Volume 17 – Number 15

Blues giant Patlansky's new CD 'Wooden Thoughts' (page 12)

south african Jewish Report
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Doctors stand firm on Karabus issue

Prof Alan Alperstein:
"This crisis has made the medical fraternity stand together."

Dr Lawrence Gobetz:
"I don't want anything to do with such a country."

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Lag B'Omer spirit burns bright at Great Park

Photo by Ilan Ossendryver.

Old, young, big, small, they came in droves last Sunday evening to celebrate Lag B'Omer, the 33rd day of the Omer – counted since the second night of Pesach – in the 'forest' adjoining the Great Park Shul, Oaklands. Traditionally celebrated with a bonfire, the festival's significance is debated: some say it's the day when a plague afflicting Rabbi Akiva's students abated in 132 CE. Others believe on this day Jews enjoyed military victory under rebel leader Simon Bar Kochba. Yet others see the bonfires as representing the Torah's light. It's also a day in which restrictions of the Omer are lifted and the community is free to party.

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Chief Rabbi Goldstein makes prestigious Algemeiner J100 list

He is placed alongside Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (former) Chief Rabbi of the UK, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel and Rabbi Yona Metzger, the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel.

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Not likely a moderate Chief Rabbi can transform the Israeli rabbinate

"Maybe it matters who the chief rabbi is for formal ceremonies, but it doesn't really matter for how conversion and kashrut happen," Rabbi Gilad Kariv, CEO of Israel's Reform Movement said. "The processes within the rabbinic establishment are so extreme that who the chief rabbi is doesn't matter."

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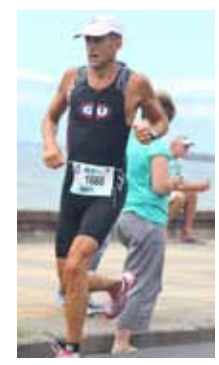
Brides now! We launch our bridal competition

With a closing date in November 2013, the Jewish Report's Bride competition is officially launched.

5



JACK MILNER: SA triathletes in top form, but no Maccabiah

The SA Ironman Triathlon was held in Port Elizabeth; and a number of Jewish participants made their presence felt. Sadly, none of these runners will be participating in the Maccabi Games in Israel later this year. It appears the cost has become far too much for most of these triathletes who could attend the World Championships.

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Delectable cheese cake and other fine Shavuot recipes by our community's rebbetzens

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Shabbat Times

Parshat Behar/Bechukotai
May 3/ 23 Iyar
May 4/ 24 Iyar

17:19	18:08	Johannesburg
17:46	18:38	Cape Town
17:02	17:52	Durban
17:22	18:11	Bloemfontein
17:17	18:09	Port Elizabeth
17:09	18:01	East London

Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!

Rabbi Matthew Liebenberg
Claremont Wynberg Hebrew Congregation

"Chazak, chazak, v'nitchazeik! Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!"

With these famous words we conclude the public reading of the book of Vayikrah this Shabbat, as we do each book of the Torah. Why was this declaration chosen to end each book and why is it said at the end and not at the beginning? After all, in the words of our sages, "all beginnings are difficult".

I would like to suggest a source for this custom from the book of Joshua, where, at the outset of the narrative, G-d calls upon Moses' successor no less than three times to be "strong and of good courage".

Rashi explains that the first time refers to courage and strength in the area of derech eretz, living as a human being in society with others. The second time refers to courage and strength in the study of Torah and the third time refers to courage and strength in waging war, for Joshua was required to conquer the Land of Canaan.

Two of these three statements of encouragement correspond to two of the four areas about which our sages declared require constant strengthening (chizuk), namely Torah study, good deeds, prayer and derech eretz.

Why these four in particular? The Maharal explains: "Any matter that has opposition to it requires strengthening. Torah study must be strengthened for man is a creature of flesh and blood and is made of physical matter [whereas the Torah is spiritual] and thus a person needs great resources to overcome his physical nature.

Good deeds must be strengthened because the evil inclination of a person attempts to convince him they are not necessary. Prayer needs to be strengthened because there are many accusatory forces that declare that a person is not deserving of what he is asking for in his prayers.

Thus, a person needs great fortitude to request something that he does not really deserve. There is also an opponent to derech eretz, for derech eretz is behaviour that one's intellect demands and therefore a person needs great strength to ensure that his intellect overpowers his natural instincts.

His natural instincts tell him to behave in a way that is purely physical without any recourse to the intellect.

Our grip on these sublime concepts remains tenuous at best and that is why we require constant revision, strengthening and courage to retain them. This is especially true of the words of Torah about which the Talmud proclaims: "They are as difficult to acquire as gold and as easy to lose as glass."

When we reach the end of a book of the Torah we may think we have mastered it, we may believe we have understood it, but the truth is we have only just begun to fathom its depth and in a moment it could fall from our hand and shatter like fine glass.

That is why we ask Hashem at the very moment of completion to strengthen us, give us the fortitude to remember what we have studied, analyse further that which we already know and forge our way into new territory. Let us strengthen our resolve to study the Torah and keep it firmly in our grasp.

Wainer, Malala tell it to the JWBS like it is

The Jewish Women's Benevolent Society hosted an outstanding fundraising business breakfast at Investec in Sandton recently, with guest speakers, Marc Wainer, CEO of Redefine Properties and Justice Malala, political commentator, providing much to think about.

The Benevolent said in a media release that Wainer gave an entertaining and informative account of his rise through the ranks from fishmonger to property mogul, while Malala, "saying it like it is", gave a candid account of recent occurrences in the new South Africa.

The Benevolent came into existence in 1893, from efforts of a few women who realised there was considerable poverty and distress in the community, and wanted to help. Now, 120 years later, it has the same goals.

The Benevolent is run by women volunteers who, in groups, conceptualise fundraising ideas so the huge funds that are necessary to keep the Benevolent alive, are raised. The social services that it provides are manifold:

Its clothing depot provides the people whom it supports, with new or nearly new clothing and household items. Learners are given new school uniforms.

The Benevolent's Befrienders Club visits lonely and isolated men and women, with telephone contact in between. Befrienders are well-skilled at listening and hearing using patience and compassion.

The occupational therapy centre offers its workers the opportunity to create beautiful crafts which are sold to raise funds for the Benevolent under the supervision and assistance of a qualified occupational therapist.

The 55 Club is a social club run twice weekly where members enjoy a hot three-course meal followed by entertainment. Transport is provided where needed.

The Benevolent's gift shop women make beautiful arrangements for all occasions.

FOR THE RECORD

In last week's Community Voice, Victor Gordon's comments were made in his personal capacity, and not as director of Tararam.

Also, Claudia Braude's comment should have read: "Short on accurate historical memory, ethical vision and self-reflection and -criticism, local Jewry (left, right; secular, religious; leadership, community) is faced with identical challenges as citizens everywhere. We read too little and consume too much. Having failed to constructively engage the apartheid past, others commandeer the high moral ground to now question Israel's right to exist.

"Never heeding Reb Yechiel Weinberg's affirmation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, liberal values and tolerance are trampled underfoot. Oy!" A gremlin crept into the copy and slightly altered the meaning which appeared in the paper.

Chief Rabbi Goldstein makes prestigious Algemeiner J100 list

ROBYN SASSEN

In celebration of the 40th anniversary of the New York-based Algemeiner newspaper - originally founded in 1972 as a Yiddish medium newspaper and today considered the fastest growing English newspaper in America, the editors have unveiled the inaugural list of the Algemeiner Jewish 100 - the top 100 individuals who have positively influenced Jewish life this past year. South Africa's Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein (pictured) features on this list in the category of religious leaders.

"Despite the artificial, superficial and sensational nature of any list, we sought to transform the information deluge of our times by using the list to shine a spotlight on those gems within our midst, those people who are making a real difference in other's lives," they said in a statement.

"Jewish sages, in particular, did not create such lists. Indeed, some actually dismissed the categorisation of lists. It begs the uneasy question of how one can even attempt to measure the value of person. Isn't everyone a hero in some way? On what grounds can we presume to judge who is more valuable than the next?

"With the J100 list we tried to create something more meaningful, a list aligned with our core mission: the 100 people who have the most positive impact on Jewish life, men and women, Jew or non-Jew, who have lifted the quality of Jewish life in the past year...

"Without these J100 - either the individuals or the organisations they represent - Jewish life would not be at the calibre it is today."

Photo courtesy Algemeiner

Algemeiner Editor-in-Chief Dovid Efune; Holocaust survivor and human rights activist Elie Wiesel; film producer Harvey Weinstein; and Algemeiner publisher Simon Jacobson at the Algemeiner's recent 40th anniversary gala, and the inaugural announcement of the J100 list.

Rabbi Goldstein, chosen, according to a letter from the Algemeiner, for his "impactful work on behalf of the Jewish people", joins rank with some of the world's most momentous contemporary movers and shakers, from Barack Obama and Benjamin Netanyahu to film director Steven Spielberg, Man Booker Prize-winning British author Howard Jacobson and song writer Leonard Cohen, to Holocaust survivor and human rights activist Elie Wiesel, the Anti-Defamation League's Abraham Foxman and Pulitzer Prize winning author Herman Wouk.

He is placed in the category of religion, alongside Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of the UK, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel and Rabbi Yona Metzger, the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel.

"From the initial buzz and enthusiasm this list is generating, we anticipate that our annual J100 list will become a global staple helping reflect on the people and trends shaping the Jewish future," the editors of Algemeiner add.

"The evening was electric," said Algemeiner Editor-in-Chief Dovid Efune, after a gala event celebrating the J100, last week.

"I was deeply moved by the confluence of notable and powerful storytellers coming together at our 40th Gala... all courageous voices dedicated to helping people look at the world in a new way," added Algemeiner's Publisher Simon Jacobson.

Although he was not able to attend the gala event personally, Chief Rabbi Goldstein commented: "I would like to thank the leadership of the Algemeiner Journal for the honour of being included on the list of such illustrious personalities. Their decision to do so reflects the high regard world Jewry has for the South African Jewish community."

Jewish Report

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Medical fraternity stands firm on Karabus issue

ROBYN SASSEN

Now nine months into his Abu Dhabi ordeal, Professor Cyril Karabus, 78, remains in the UAE due to the slow turning of bureaucratic legal cogs, it seems. He was arrested on August 18 last year, while transiting through Dubai on his way home from his son's wedding in Canada. Ten years earlier, he was tried and found guilty of manslaughter and fraud in absentia and without his knowledge, after a three-year-old terminal leukaemia patient he had cared for, had passed away.

A despondent legal counsel for Karabus, Michael Bagraim, earlier this week said from Cape Town that it could still "take weeks" before Karabus came home. "It is just administrative. He has not yet been returned his passport (which he had been promised he could pick up). While there is still one appeal outstanding, he has been cleared for travel."

Karabus has endured incarceration and house arrest. Eventually exonerated of all charges, he's been on a break-neck emotional rollercoaster fuelled by numerous court postponements, and now is in the ignoble situation of still having to wait.

"Prof Karabus is extremely withdrawn at the moment," said Bagraim. It is ascertained that as soon as the documents are produced, Karabus will be flown directly to Cape Town to be reunited with his family and community.

Some 30 local doctors have aligned themselves in one way or another with the plight of Karabus. Upcoming in early May are two important international medical conferences - the Africa Health Conference and Exhibition in Johannesburg which is sponsored by Informa Life Sciences, a Dubai-based commercial company, and the HPV meeting in Dubai, a significant focus on research into the prevention of cervical cancer.

The opportunities for networking and sharing significant developments in the medical field at such events are invaluable, but doctors have been forced to consider the morality of their participation in view of Karabus' treatment.

The South African Jewish Report asked several doctors who were now no longer participating in the conference, their feelings on the situation – see below.

Community Voices

Karabus case yet again

Professor Alan Alperstein, president of the Menopause Society, Cape Town: "It was amazing that the HPCSA issued a statement supporting Karabus. They are usually reticent in their support of local doctors.

"Matters were exacerbated for me when Life Healthcare Group Holdings advertised support for the Africa Health Conference. My role was to urge Life Healthcare to withdraw their support, resulting in the whole gynae programme disappearing from the conference.

"This crisis has brought the Jewish community together. It has made the medical fraternity stand together. Many doctors have asked my opinion on what they should do; I've told them to listen to their conscience, but also to understand the context."

Dr Lawrence Gobetz, infertility specialist, Vitalab, Johannesburg: "My withdrawal from the African Health Conference is to drive a point home: we as doctors are not criminals should a patient, while being treated for a terminal illness, pass away.

"How can any free-thinking country have that approach to medical care? Then all doctors are criminals! None of us has ever not been associated with a death of one of our patients, due not to negligence, but who have succumbed to a disease which unfortunately not even with drugs do we have control over. I don't want anything to do with such a country or anyone associated with it."

Professor Franco Guidozzi, academic head, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Wits University: "The HPCSA's statement was the catalyst for my withdrawal from the conference. Preceding this was SAMA and WMA's denouncement of the treatment of Karabus.

"I believe that (in withdrawing from this conference) we have made the right decision and hold thumbs it will make a difference. Will it have implications for the future? Will we be blacklisted? Will we be legally punished? I don't know.

"There was a verbal contract to be at this conference which we have broken, but it has been a professional collaboration and one in which we have enjoyed the support of primary medical associations."

Dr Judith Carter, senior specialist obstetrician and gynaecologist, Johannesburg: "Prof Karabus' situation did not even occur to me when I was first invited, but fortunately I spoke to colleagues first and realised the implications of accepting the invite.

"We have to show solidarity within the medical fraternity, to show our dismay at the situation and demand a resolution."

Dr Eugen Adelsmayr, Medical University of Vienna (and a previous victim of Abu Dhabi's draconian law, as he articulates in his book LowDown Dubai): (extracted from comments on the Free Prof Karabus facebook page): "With a healthy distrust I have been following today's euphoric news about the Prof's imminent return.

"Sounded familiar, had heard it before!... But, did prosecution drop their appeal? Did Cassation Court reject the appeal? Did anybody see a court order to release the passport?… Euphoria is appropriate when the Prof touches down on SA soil; not one second earlier! Prof Karabus' case among others, showed the need for an international network of healthcare professionals, patients and anybody who is interested, to articulate and share medico-legal problems and dilemmas arising from patient care."

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Lag B'Omer Parade shows Jewish unity and pride

RABBI PINI PINK
YOUTH DIRECTOR,
CHABAD HOUSE

Drivers on Sandton's Rivonia Road were in for a pleasant surprise this past Sunday, as more than 5 000 people joined the Lag B'Omer Jewish Unity Parade, including participants from many Jewish day schools and shuls.

"It amazes me to see so many Jewish people united and marching for the sake of unity," said Lieutenant Aiden Myers of the JMPD.

"Lag B'Omer is traditionally a day of unity and celebration," said Rabbi Pini Pink who organised the event together with his wife Rochie. "The parade offers the community an avenue to show our togetherness, and put our Jewish pride on display."

Parades take place all over the world on the festival of Lag B'Omer, marking the cessation of a terrible plague that befell the students of the famed Rabbi Akiva many centuries ago. It is a day of festivity and unity for this great event as well as honouring the memory of the sage, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, whose anniversary of passing is also commemorated on that date.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe established the concept of parades for children to demonstrate their Jewish pride decades ago, and these parades are run in Johannesburg by Chabad House, directed by Rabbi David Masinter and Rabbi Michael Katz.

This year's Parade kicked off with a rally at the Mushroom Farm Park in Sandton, with greetings from Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein and Chabad's head shliach, Rabbi Mendel Lipskar. Child representatives from all participating schools, led the crowd with words of Torah and prayer and everyone enjoyed an exhilarating African acrobat show.

The Parade followed the rally, with children from King David Linksfield and Victory Park, Torah Academy, Yeshiva College and Eden, as well as a host of other school representatives, each marching in their uniquely coloured Parade T-shirts, along with mounted police, the SA Police Marching Band and the Parktown High School Band.

Floats from Torah Academy Nursery, Primary, Girls' High and Boys' High, highlighted the procession, along with a float by Chabad of Savoy and Kidz Alive, the Chabad of Sandton party bus, the Chabad Bikers and members from each of Johannesburg's dozens of Chabad Houses.

A funfair and carnival, which followed the parade, took place under glorious African skies, and left everyone with a beautiful day to remember.

"There was an unbelievable communal spirit. It was just a beautiful vibe, unforgettable," said a mother going by the name of Sarah, who pointed out just how happy her own children were. "Just seeing all those smiles, was so heart-warming."

Photos: Mendi Katz

What a Lag B'Omer Parade it was! Led by the JMPD and played along by the SA Police Marching Band and the Parktown High School Band, more than 5 000 Johannesburg Jews marched for unity last Sunday. The parade ended with a carnival at Mushroom Park in Sandton, shown below.

Read the South African Jewish Report online
www.sajewishreport.co.za

The Jewish World

in 7 seconds

Arutz Sheva, West Bank, Israel:
www.israelnationalnews.com
'IDF Takes Out Senior Rocket Terrorist in Gaza'
The Israel Air Forces killed Haitham Ziyad Ibrahim al-Mishal, 25, a terrorist in Gaza earlier this week. The Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service, identified him as a terrorist affiliated with the Salafim-Jahadim terrorist group, behind a rocket attack on Eilat two weeks ago.

Jewish Telegraphic Agency, international:
www.jta.org
'Sharansky's Kotel Plan Loses Support From Both Sides'
Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, Natan Sharansky's proposal to reduce tensions at the Western Wall, which was made public a few weeks ago, has lost support from both Orthodox and non-Orthodox leaders. The plan was meant as a compromise between haredi Orthodox leaders, and religious pluralism activists who wanted the site opened to egalitarian prayer.

The Jewish Telegraph, Manchester, UK:
www.jewishtelegraph.com
'Hotel Cancels J-Soc Booking'
St Andrews University J-Soc, was due to hold its black tie Matzah Ball at the prestigious St Andrews Golf Hotel. Almost 100 students were expected, funds were earmarked for charities including JNF and Friends of the IDF. Following pressure from the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign, hotel manager Niall Thompson earlier this week cancelled the booking.

The Jewish Week, New York, USA:
www.thejewishweek.com
'Governor's Trade Mission Brings Four Israeli Startups To Maryland'
Four Israeli hi-tech companies will be opening offices in Maryland after the state's governor, Martin O'Malley, wooed them during an eight-day economic trade mission to Israel and Jordan. The companies are Shekel Scales in Kibbutz Beit Keshet in the Lower Galilee, and three Tel Aviv-based companies: Askimo, Roboteam and Hybrid Security.

The Jewish Journal, Los Angeles, USA:
www.jewishjournal.com
'Pope Accepts Peres' Invitation To Israel'
Israeli Pres Shimon Peres invited Pope Francis on Tuesday to visit Israel, at his first meeting with the new pontiff who appealed for peace in the Middle East in his Easter address last month. The pope accepted the invitation "with willingness and joy", a Vatican spokesman said, but there was no indication when a trip would be made.

Ha'aretz, Israel:
www.haaretz.com
'IDF Calls Up Thousands of Reservists for Battle Drill on Lebanon Front'
Thousands of Israel Defence Forces reservists were given emergency special orders this week to report for duty, as part of a surprise simulation drill on the Lebanese front. The anticipated four-day long drill, involves call-up and battle preparation within 48 hours, and will include the use of live fire in practice. It concludes with summaries and debriefings within the reservists' division.

World Jewish Daily, international:
www.worldjewishdaily.com
'Israel To Receive Fifth Nuclear Submarine From Germany'
The INS Rahav is expected to arrive in Israel in 2014. According to foreign reports, Dolphin-class submarines provide Israel with second-strike capability in event of a nuclear conflict. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Iran had yet to cross the red line, but it was approaching it systematically.

Making Israeli kids' cancer more bearable

SHIRA DRUION

The dreaded potential killer disease, cancer has ravaged millions of lives in the last decades, and it is Jewish organisations like the Israeli-based Chayeinu which help to alleviate the burden placed on the hundreds of victims and their families, by providing the love and support they need to face the harrowing journey.

Every year, The Hope Tour team, spearheaded by Rabbi Yaakov Pinsky and Meirav Shenker, bring a group of cancer patients to South Africa, some of whom are in remission, but many of whom are undergoing chemotherapy.

The Hope Tour group on an outing to Montecasino bird park in Johannesburg, where the children watched a bird show and enjoyed a uniquely African experience.

The trip aims to uplift the children with 10 days of pure exhilaration, helping them to realise their wildest African dreams. The packed itinerary includes an authentic African safari in Zabula; yacht rides in Cape Town, helicopter rides, and the big treat of racing around in Ferraris, Lamborghinis and Aston Martins.

This year one of the highlights was a dinner and private concert by renowned Israeli singer, Gad Elbaz.

Every night, the group is hosted by philanthropic families who not only open their homes, but also their hearts by providing evenings of laughter, live music and gifts, engaging with the 20 (South African and Israeli) children and their 14 caregivers with a generosity of spirit that is synonymous with the South African Jewish community.

"Unfortunately, one of the boys (Kobi) fell critically ill at the end of the trip and is currently in hospital," said Shenker, organiser of the trip.

"Our community has been exceptional on every level, but particularly the Mizrachi community, who has taken care of every one of Kobi and his family's needs. This has shown me and hundreds of others the power of Jewish unity."

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E-mail address _____
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south african Jewish Report

Freedom - a tender plant

There has been much talk about freedom these past few days, with Freedom Day last Saturday marking April 27 in 1994 - when South Africa held its first democratic elections. Even 19 years later, it is incredible how we achieved a "peaceful" transition from the virtual police state of apartheid, to democracy with the world's most liberal Constitution.

On a more personal level, we've also been talking about the freedom of Prof Cyril Karabus, who the UAE has held under house arrest for nine months in a gross travesty of justice. At our going to press, he had been finally cleared to leave the country, but was waiting for his passport to be returned - which was happening slowly due to "administrative" procedures - or perhaps sheer malice.

For goodness sake, can't someone in the UAE government call the relevant department and instruct them to give the man his passport? This innocent man, still deprived of his freedom, has been made to suffer enough.

For all South Africans, Freedom Day recalls the long, ultimately successful struggle for liberation of the ANC, PAC and other movements; for Jewish South Africans, it also reminds us of another Struggle in the Jewish world - for peace between Israel and Palestinians; for freedom from this interminable conflict, with no end in sight.

Both Struggles marked a critical milestone in 1948 - for South Africans, the Nationalist government came to power and the formal establishment of the apartheid system took off full steam; for Israelis and Palestinians, the State of Israel achieved independence and formal recognition from the United Nations.

On Freedom Day there were discussions in the media about how it was made possible for the transition from white minority rule to democracy to happen (relatively) peacefully, without the bloodbath many feared.

The white regime was powerful militarily and its security apparatus had tight control over the society; bringing it down risked that it would retaliate brutally. White South Africans feared what would happen after they relinquished power. Would the black majority turn on them and enact a revengeful bloodbath?

It did not happen. Somehow, the ANC had throughout the Struggle, largely stuck to its basic platform that its fight was against racism, not against whites. That made it possible for whites to enter a genuine rapprochement. It was ultimately about trust.

Undoubtedly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is very different. However, so many warnings are made these days to Israel to learn lessons from South Africa and not become an "apartheid society". But Palestinians could learn some things from the ANC.

Says Gideon Levy, the controversial leftist commentator in an article in Haaretz: "Like Israel, Palestinians must also learn the lessons of South Africa."

One of them is to allay the fears of Jewish Israelis of a bloodbath - as the ANC allayed fears of South African whites and made the "peaceful" transition possible. Levy then argues in a direction unacceptable for most Israelis and Jews, leading to the end of Zionism and the Jewish State, using the South African scenario more directly.

If the Palestinians got the independence they are demanding, would this mean that Israelis lost theirs?

Of course, in the South African context, 19 years after democracy, our freedom is complicated by other factors we didn't quite expect. As generally happens when a government has so much power - the ANC has almost a two thirds majority in parliament - it begins to assume it has a sovereign right to govern and to decide for the country what is best.

By stealth, freedom begins to be whittled away, through various pieces of legislation - like the recently approved Secrecy Bill.

This week's distasteful public display of an extremely frail-looking and unresponsive Nelson Mandela by the ANC for purportedly petty political gains, ironically showed the country and the world what the current government does not have - anyone of the stature and greatness of Mandela. Sadly, no one around even closely approaches it.

Freedom ultimately is a tender plant which has to be nurtured and watered always with care.

Not likely that a moderate Chief Rabbi can transform the Israeli rabbinate

BEN SALES
TEL AVIV

To get married in Israel, Dima Motel had to bring his family photo album and two of his ancestors' birth certificates to a rabbinical court.

Then an investigator quizzed his mother in Yiddish. Israel's Chief Rabbinate often asks Russian immigrants like Motel to prove that they're Jewish, sometimes requiring documentary evidence that can be hard to obtain.

Those who won't submit to the process or who can't firmly establish their Jewish bona fides, can't get legally married in the country.

"I felt like it was an invasion of my privacy," said 27-year-old Motel, who was declared Jewish after three hours of questioning. "It's called an investigation of Judaism. It seemed like I was accused, but I didn't do anything wrong."

Israelis who chafe at procedures like these have rallied around a new source of hope: David Stav, a Modern Orthodox rabbi (pictured) in the running to be Israel's next Ashkenazi chief rabbi.

Stav has cultivated an image as the liberals' solution to a rabbinate dominated by the haredi Orthodox, and he is waging a public campaign in advance of the chief rabbi elections that has won him a strong base of popular support.

"The Chief Rabbinate has arrived at a point where we have to decide whether it will have completed its historical duty or will change itself to the point where it will become a kind of institution that can confront the current challenges of Israeli society," Stav told JTA.

But even if Stav prevails in the June elections, in which some 150 rabbis and public representatives vote for a chief rabbi, he will have little power to institute reforms - let alone instigate the sweeping changes many Israelis want.

The rabbinate controls marriage, divorce and conversion for all Israeli Jews, secular or religious. Changes to the way it handles these matters cannot be made unilaterally, even by a trailblazing, reform-minded chief rabbi.

Such a chief would be hemmed in by a sprawling bureaucracy, a potentially resistant Sephardic counterpart, and conservative-minded haredi opponents who can be expected to stridently oppose any perceived liberalisation in religious standards.

Perhaps mindful of these limitations, Stav has called for a set of changes that focus more on streamlining the rabbinate's services rather than reforming them.

He proposes eliminating a rule that requires couples to be married by their hometown rabbi, which would allow Israeli couples to go shopping around for the rabbi who best suits their needs even as it maintains the rabbinate's Orthodox monopoly over marriage.

Stav also says he would cut down on the number of women refused a writ of divorce, or get, from their husbands by encouraging the signing of a prenuptial agreement that includes severe financial penalties if the husband demurs. And he wants to transform the rabbinate into an aid for people like Motel, rather than an inquisitor, by hiring investigators to help establish Jewishness.

Yet chief rabbis - whose role includes a demanding schedule of ceremonial functions - cannot institute such changes on their own. Altering the hometown rabbi rule and hiring investigators, both require the assent of the deputy minister of religious services, Eli Ben Dahan, a Moroccan-born rabbi and member of the Jewish Home party.

Ben Dahan has personally expressed support for a Modern Orthodox and Zionist candidate for chief rabbi, but his party has not endorsed Stav and it's unclear whether he'd agree to free up money for investigators.

More substantive reforms would require the approval of both chief rabbis, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, as well as the approval of the Chief Rabbinical Council, a 17-member voting body that controls rabbinate policy. The council, a mix of appointed and elected members, is dominated by conservative elements.

"We need a radical revolution, and Rabbi Stav won't bring that," said Rabbi Gilad Kariv, CEO of Israel's Reform Movement. He said Stav would "just give a cellophane cover to a ruined candy.

"Maybe it matters who the chief rabbi is for formal ceremonies, but it doesn't really matter for how conversion and kashrut happen," Kariv said. "The processes within the rabbinic establishment are so extreme that who the chief rabbi is doesn't matter."

Even if a reform-minded chief rabbi manages to get elected and push through some reforms, he could be thwarted when it comes to enforcement. Implementation depends on local rabbis and judges in rabbinical courts who are appointed and removed only by an appointment committee, also dominated by conservative elements.

Stav said he's confident he'd be able to get the rabbis to cooperate. "If they don't co-operate," he said, "there will be problems."

Stav's primary competitors for the position of chief rabbi will be several haredi rabbis seen as moderates acceptable to both Israel's haredi and centrist Orthodox communities.

Among them are Eliezer Igra, a former Israeli combat soldier and religious judge; David Lau, chief rabbi of Modiin, a booming central Israeli city; and Yaakov Shapira, who heads the Merkaz Harav yeshiva in Jerusalem.

The past few Israeli chief rabbis, both Ashkenazi and Sephardic, have been haredi - a testament to the growing numbers and clout of the haredi community in Israel. Pending the likely passage of an amendment allowing chief rabbis to run for a second term, current Sephardic Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar is the leading candidate in the Sephardic race.

The vote is limited to 150 people: a delegation made up of 70 rabbis, mostly from Israel's biggest cities and towns, and 80 "public representatives" - mayors, Knesset members chosen by committee, and heads of local religious councils.

Stav's supporters say that even if significant change doesn't happen right away, having a chief rabbi with a moderate, open image will help advance religious pluralism.

"Change happens slowly," said Dov Lipman, a Knesset member from the centrist Yesh Atid party, which has endorsed Stav's candidacy.

"There's not going to be an overnight overhaul. But as a first step let's have a rabbi who's openly Zionist. Even that symbolic change is very significant."

But other advocates for religious pluralism feel that the rabbinate is too broken for any chief to make a difference and that the only solution is the most radical one: abolish the rabbinate entirely and separate church and state in Israel.

"The system has become bankrupt," said Uri Regev, a Reform rabbi and president of Hiddush, an Israeli nonprofit that promotes religious pluralism and opposes Orthodox control over religious issues in Israel.

"The Chief Rabbinate has become a threat to the State of Israel and to the Jewish people. It should be abolished." (JTA)

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Shavuot Recipe Supplement sponsored by Freshfellas

All about the festival and rituals of Shavuot

Shavuot commemorates the anniversary of the day G-d gave the Torah to the entire nation of Israel assembled at Mount Sinai.

It's a custom to have at least one milchik meal during this festival. The woman of the home spends time planning these meals from amazing mains to delicious deserts. The Jewish Report has asked some of the rebbetzens in the community to send their favourite recipes to us to share with the Jewish Report readers.

The holiday is one of the Shalosh Regalim, the three Biblical pilgrimage festivals. It marks the conclusion of the Counting of the Omer.

The date of Shavuot is directly linked to that of Passover. The Torah mandates the seven-week Counting of the Omer, beginning on the second day of Passover and immediately followed by Shavuot.

This counting of days and weeks is understood to express anticipation and desire for the Giving of the Torah. On Passover, the People of Israel were freed from their enslavement to Pharaoh; on Shavuot they were given the Torah and became a nation committed to serving G-d.

Shavuot is celebrated in Israel for one day and in the Diaspora for two days.

It is also connected to the season of the grain harvest in Israel. In ancient times, the grain harvest lasted seven weeks and was a season of gladness. It began with the harvesting of the barley during Passover and ended with the harvesting of the wheat at Shavuot.

Shavuot is unlike other Jewish holidays in that it has no prescribed mitzvoth other than the traditional festival observances of abstention from work, special prayer services and holiday meals.

Dairy foods such as cheesecake, are traditionally consumed on the Shavuot holiday.

In keeping with the observance of other Yomtovs, there is both a night meal and a day meal on Shavuot. Meat is usually served at night and dairy is served either for the day meal or for a morning kiddush.

Counting of the Omer is a verbal counting of each of the 49 days between the Jewish holidays of Passover and Shavuot as stated in the Bible.

Shavuot is celebrated with an all-night study session called tikkun leil Shavuot. It is also common to eat cheesecake and other dairy foods, since the Torah is likened to milk and honey.

Creamy garlic pasta and chicken sesame

SHARNEE TREGER

Creamy garlic pasta

2 tsp olive oil Freshfellas
4 cloves garlic, minced Freshfellas
2 tbsp butter
¼ tsp salt
½ tsp pepper
3 cups chicken stock (parev)
½ lb spaghetti or angel hair pasta Freshfellas
1 cup grated parmesan cheese
¾ cup heavy cream
2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley Freshfellas

Method:

1 In a pot, bring the olive oil to medium-low heat.
2 Add the garlic and stir, allowing it to cook for 1 - 2 minutes.
3 Mix in the butter until melted.
4 Add the salt, pepper and chicken stock.
5 Raise the heat to high and let it come to a boil.
6 Once it is at a rolling boil, add the pasta and cook for as long as the box's directions indicate.
7 Reduce the stove to medium heat and mix in the parmesan until completely melted.
8 Turn off the heat and stir in the cream and parsley. Serve immediately.

Chicken sesame

2 chickens
Clove of garlic Freshfellas
4 tbs sugar
Half a cup of honey Freshfellas
1/4 cup soya Freshfellas
Sesame seeds Freshfellas

Method:

1 Pour half a cup of water in roasting dish.
2 Put chicken in.
3 Mix ingredients, pour over.
4 Bake covered for an hour and uncovered for half an hour.

Choc chip cookies

TOVA GOLDSTEIN

My favourite recipe has nothing to do with Shavuot, but is the best recipe to make with your kids and we make different varieties depending on the chag. We put green colouring in the dough, with colourful sprinkles instead of choc chips and the Har Sinai cookies were delicious.

Method:

1 Mix 75g marge and 125g sugar till creamy.
2 Add 1 egg and 1 tsp vanilla essence and mix.
3 Mix in 175g flour.
4 And lots of chocolate chips.
5 Make little balls, flatten slightly.
6 Bake for 15 mins at 180 degrees.

Smoked salmon chowder

Chana Meira Katz

This delicious chowder is the perfect comfort food on a cold Shavuot night. Serve with Ciabbata or garlic bread.

2 tbs butter
1 tbs olive oil Freshfellas
1 small bunch leeks, white part only Freshfellas
1 onion chopped into small pieces Freshfellas
2 cloves garlic chopped Freshfellas
½ cup chopped celery Freshfellas
3 carrots chopped Freshfellas
½ cup all-purpose flour
6 cups parev chicken stock or veg stock
4 potatoes cut into cubes Freshfellas
1 tsp dill Freshfellas
1 tsp tarragon Freshfellas
1 tsp thyme Freshfellas
1 tsp paprika
1 - 2 packs salmon off-cuts cut into small pieces
¼ cup white wine
1 tbs lemon juice Freshfellas
Dash of hot sauce
Dash of fresh ground black pepper Freshfellas
1 cup half and half

Method:

1. In a large pot, melt butter, olive oil, garlic and celery. Cook for 8 - 10 minutes until the onions are transparent. Sprinkle the flour over the mixture and stir well to make a dry roux. Gradually add the stock and stir until slightly thickened. Stir in potatoes, carrots and all the herbs. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes.
2. Stir in the salmon, wine, lemon juice, hot sauce, and the salt and pepper. Simmer over a low heat for another 40 minutes.
3. In a separate frying pan, fry the leeks for a few minutes until soft but not brown. (Adding the leeks at the end is what gives the soup a gourmet touch. However, if you have a life and don't want to spend all day with your soup, you can add the leeks in the beginning with the onions.)
4. Mix in the leeks and the cream into the soup and heat just before serving. Do not let the chowder boil after adding the cream.

Please invite me for supper, this soup is my favourite!

Shavuot Recipe Supplement sponsored by KosherWorld

All ingredients are available from KosherWorld

Easy and yum tuna pasta

JULIE WIDMONTE

1 pkt penne pasta
1 tin tomato and onion mix
3/4 bottle All Joy tomato pasta sauce (extra garlic and onion)
2 tins tuna
250 ml cream
250g cottage cheese
1/4 cup grated cheese

Method:
1. Boil pasta.
2. Mix all other ingredients together.
3. Mix sauce into ready pasta.
4. Place in a pyrex dish.
5. Grate extra cheese on top.
6. Bake at 180 degrees C.

Brownies

NECHAMA KRAINES
(From Sara Finkel Classic Kosher Cooking)

Mix together well:

8 eggs
2 cup oil
4 cup sugar
2 tsp vanilla

Add until just mixed:

2 $^{1}/_{2}$ cups flour
2 cup cocoa

Method:
1. Divide into two lined baking pans (American 9"x13") or oblong pans (22,86 x 33,02 cm).
2. Bake for 30 minutes in 180 degree oven.
3. The brownie should be soft when it comes out of the oven as it hardens as it cools.
4. It is important not to over-mix the brownies or over-bake them (or they will be hard and dry).

Enjoy!

Cheese cake

AVIVA FOX

4 tins (250g each) smooth cream cheese
1,5 cups sugar
4 eggs
4tbs Maizena
250ml cream

Method:

Base:
1. 1 packet tea biscuits crushed in mixer and about 1 inch of tub margerine.
2. Melt marg and add to biscuits.
3. Make a pastry base in pyrex (2l size 28x18x4).
4. Place in freezer while preparing filling (for few mins).

Filling:
1. Mix cheese and sugar, add Maizena.
2. Beat eggs lightly and add cheese mixture.
3. Add cream, pour on top of biscuit base.
4. Bake at 150 degrees for 30 mins.
5. Switch off oven and leave till cool.
6. Can sprinkle a little cinnamon on top.

Tuna lasagne

SHELLEY BOOKATZ

1 onion, red pepper, punnet of mushrooms.
1 can of italian sliced tomatoes.
2 cans of tuna
4 tbs tomato sauce
2 boxes of lasagne sheets

Method:
1. Fry onion, red pepper and punnet of (sliced) mushrooms.
2. Add can of Italian sliced tomato, tuna and tomato sauce.
3. Add salt to taste.

White sauce:

Butter/margerine
Flour
Milk
Grated cheese

Method:
1. Melt butter on the stove. While mixing, add flour until it is thick enough to make a ball.
2. Continue stirring while you thin it out with milk until it has the consistency of a thickish salad dressing.

Layer your lasagne:
1. Lasagne - tuna - sauce - lasagne - tuna – sauce.
2. Sprinkle grated cheese thickly.
3. Cook it for 1 hour at 180 uncovered.

Option:
You can mix the tuna mixture with boiled pasta, grate cheese on top and cook it instead of layering it.

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Overnight brisket

MARICE GERSON

Large brisket or top rib roast
2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper
1 tbsp paprika
1/2 tsp basil
2 tbsp. Worcestershire or soya sauce
4 cloves garlic
3 onions cut into chunks
3 stalks celery
4 carrots
3/4 cup wine
1/4 cup water

Method:

1. Rub roast on all sides with seasonings and Worcestshire sauce. Put into roasting pan. Slice garlic thick, cut the onions and the other vegetables. Add all to roasting pan. Add wine and water.
2. Cover tightly and put in a 175 -200 degrees oven (very slow) and cook overnight for 7 - 8 hours.
3. Uncover and cool - slice and reheat in the gravy.

Freezes well.

Whole roast chicken with vegetables

GINA GOLDSTEIN
(From Sharon Glass,
Simply Delicious pg 101)
Serves 4 - 6

I like this recipe because it a whole meal in one dish. It's great for Yomtov lunch because it can be warmed with the gravy. Serve with a large fresh salad. Enjoy and Good Yomtov to all!

One whole chicken, split down the breast bone.
2 teaspoons salt
2 teaspoons seasoning salt (roast or BBQ salt)
2 teaspoons herbamare
Freshly ground black pepper
Use a large dish because the vegetables will go around the chicken and they need space.

Method:

1. Preheat oven to 200 degrees.
2. Rub the seasoning salts inside and outside the chicken.
3. Roast for 30 minutes, skin side down, with no liquid and no vegetables.

250g baby peeled carrots
3 large potatoes quartered
250g sliced zucchini/baby marrows
250g pumpkin cut into chunks
250g white mushrooms
100g fresh baby corn
2 onions quartered
Sprigs of fresh herbs
2 cups boiling water

Method:

1. Precook the potatoes in a microwave 4 minutes on high.
2. Turn chicken over to skin side up.
3. Place all the vegetables around the chicken.
4. Season the veggies with coarse salt and herbamare.
5. Roast for 30 minutes.
6. Place sprigs of fresh herbs around the chicken.
7. Add the boiling water and continue roasting - 30 minutes more.
8. Keep basting the chicken and vegetables with juices to enhance flavour. The chicken needs 90 minutes to be perfectly cooked.
9. Roast another 30 minutes if you like it well done.

Sticky and sweet ribs

Prepare these the day before and leave to marinate overnight.
2.5 kg beef short ribs, trimmed and washed
2 Tbsp fresh lime juice
¼ cup treacle sugar
½ cup fresh lemon juice
5 tsp mustard powder
5 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce
1½ Tbsp paprika
2½ cups chutney

Method

1. Place the ribs in an ovenproof dish.
2. Whisk all the remaining ingredients together and pour over the ribs. Cover and marinate in the fridge overnight.
3. When ready to cook, preheat the oven to 190 degrees.
4. Cook the ribs, covered, in the marinade for 1 hour.
5. Reduce the temperature to 180 °C and roast, uncovered, for a further 1–1½ hours until tender. If you prefer, you can barbecue the ribs after the first roasting.

Serves 4–6
Recipe extracted from "Savour" by Marc Hirschowitz, Karen Alsfine & Estelle Sacharowitz (Struik Lifestyle). Meat supplied by Trevors Quality Kosher Meats.

Labneh cheese

DINA ZEKRY

1 litre plain yogurt
1 teaspoon salt
1 large square cheesecloth or a muslin cloth

Method:

1. Rinse the cloth and line a colander with it, ensure that excess cloth hangs over the edges.
2. Add the salt to the yogurt and mix, pour into the cheesecloth.
3. Pull corners up and tie tightly with string, leaving a length of string to tie up so the bag will hang and drip into a bowl.
4. Let this hang in a cool place for 15 hours.
5. Remove from the cloth.
6. Store covered in the fridge.

You can mix in fresh herbs and drizzle with olive oil.

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Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

The aftermath of the Boston Marathon explosions.

Boston bombers' mother told older son to go to 'Palestine'

BOSTON - The mother of the alleged Boston Marathon bombers spoke with her older son about going to "Palestine".

Zubeidat Tsarnaeva, in a telephone conversation from Russia with her older son Tamerlan, suggested that he go to Palestine during a discussion about jihad, The Associated Press reported. Russian security services intercepted the phone conversation, according to AP.

Russian officials told the FBI in early 2011 that they believed Tamerlan, 26, and his mother were religious extremists. Following what the AP called a "limited inquiry", the FBI closed the case in June 2011. Tamerlan travelled to Russia in 2011, spending six months there.

Zubeidat Tsarnaeva denied that her sons, Tamerlan and Dzhohkar Tsarnaev, 19, had anything to do with the Boston bombings. She says her sons are being framed by US security officials.

Police say the brothers, ethnic Chechens from Russia who had lived in the United States for about a decade, carried out the Boston Marathon bombings on April 15, which killed three people and wounded more than 260. The brothers later killed a university police officer at MIT.

Tamerlan was killed in a shootout with police and Dzhohkar was apprehended by police. He was questioned for two days before he got a lawyer and refused to continue providing information.

Investigators and lawmakers briefed by the FBI have said the Tsarnaev brothers were motivated by anger over the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Zubeidat Tsarnaeva was added to a federal terrorism database about 18 months ago, AP reported. (JTA)

IDF intelligence: Assad used lethal sarin gas against rebels

JERUSALEM - The regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has used lethal chemical weapons, mostly sarin gas, against armed rebels several times in the past few weeks, and is continuing to do so, the head of the Israel Defence Forces Military Intelligence Research Branch, Brig Gen Itay Baron, said on Monday.

Baron said that photographs showing victims with foam coming out of their mouths and contracted pupils were signs that deadly gas had been used.

Speaking at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, Baron confirmed that "to the best of its [the IDF's] knowledge," weapons of mass destruction had definitely been used by the Syrian regime, a development which the United States and others say they are still trying to determine.

In his briefing, Baron said the lack of an "appropriate international response" to the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons was "very worrying" and in fact was leading Syrian Assad and his forces to believe that there were no consequences to their use of WMDs.

"It could signal to them that their use of chemical weapons is legitimate," Baron said. (Israel Hayom/Exclusive to JNS.org)

Italian Jewish leaders object to honorary citizenship for Abbas

ROME - Italian Jewish community leaders have expressed ire after the mayor of Naples granted honorary citizenship to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

Mayor Luigi de Magistris named Abbas an honorary citizen at a ceremony in Naples last Saturday.

Last December, when the city authorities said they were intending to offer honorary citizenship to Abbas, Naples Chief Rabbi Scialom Bahbout vigorously protested plans to grant him the honour.

''The same recognition should also be guaranteed to Israeli president and Nobel Peace Prize winner Shimon Peres," he wrote in an open letter to the Il Mattino newspaper.

The ANSA news agency reported that Abbas said at Saturday's ceremony that he was "honoured to be Neapolitan".

"We know that Italy is pushing the peace process and the United States is determined. Israel should take this inviting opportunity," Abbas said, according to ANSA. "There may not be similar opportunities in the future. We are working for this. For a real peace so that Israel can live in security too."

Peres visited Italy as from Monday. During his stay he met with Pope Francis at the Vatican and received the Medal of Honour for Peace and the key to the city of Assisi. (JTA)

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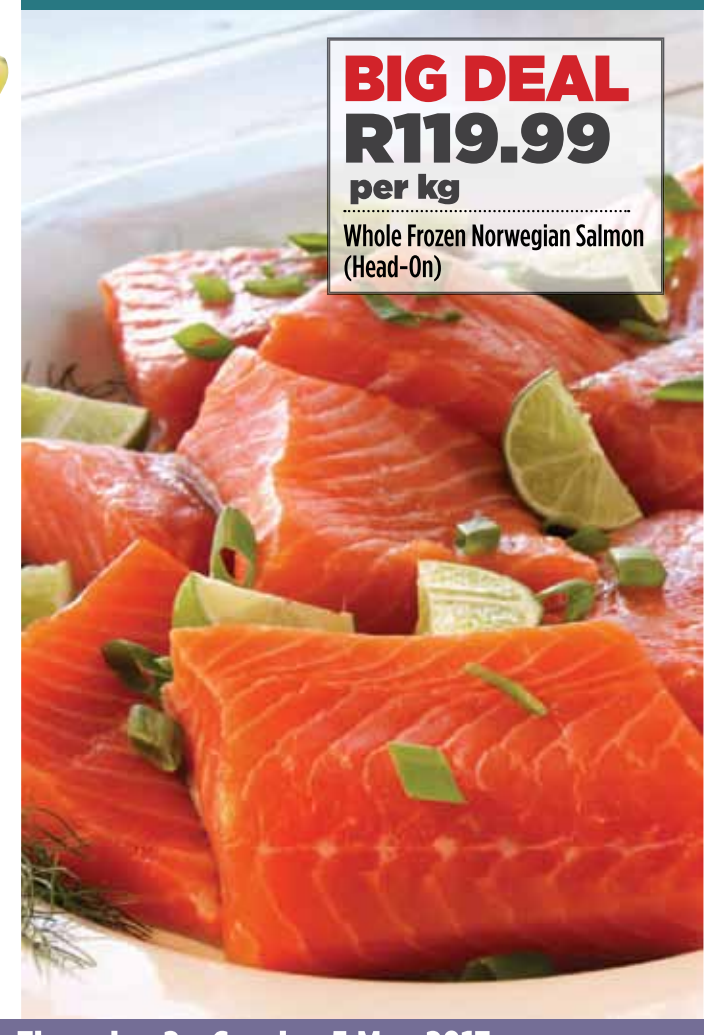
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Dukas' Jewish character stuck between a rock and a hard place

ROBYN SASSEN

Portraying a Cape Town Jew caught in the cross-currents of cultural priorities, under the shadowy threat of anti-Semitism, and torn by fears for his children's future, is something actor David Dukas (pictured, inset) faced, when he got the role of Brian Cohen, in Mike van Graan's "Brothers in Blood" currently at Artscape.

"I love my character," he told the SA Jewish Report. "and I feel incredibly sorry for him through the life-changing decisions he faces. He really wanted things to be different.

"He doesn't feel comfortable with things like community policing. He's not a religious man, neither is he a bigot; he wanted his children to go to school with Christians and Muslims, but given the situation in the play, he's stuck between a rock and a hard place.

"He tries to be non-judgemental, but things are very in-his-face; he must cope, or pack for Perth. And it might really not be better there..."

Dukas, better known locally in TV soaps as Danny Keene in Isidingo, Johnny Cloete in Egoli, and Antonio Fabrizio in Sewende Laan, to name but a few, has earned his reputation in film since 1993. This graduate of the then Pretoria Technikon, chose to return to the stage for the role of Brian Cohen.

Now in its fourth season since debuting in 2010, Brothers in Blood explores xenophobia in a religious setting. Cast in the late 1990s against the background of Pagad (People Against Gangsterism and Drugs) violence, it aims to touch cultural and religious nerves.

Photo by Bronwyn Lloyd

David Dennis in the role of the play's Muslim protagonist, Abubaker Abrahams.

"I'm very selective in the roles I audition for. I choose the character that most talks to me: it's like the soul choosing its body. And with auditioning, it's also a bit like the lotto!

"Quite a few people auditioned for the role, so I was very happy to be selected. In preparing for any role, you begin with physical presence: how does he move? How does he stand? How does he speak?

The character must be painted with bold strokes. And then in fine-tuning it, something changes with emotional and mental gear shifts and the character develops from being a caricature and into a real person. It's about finding a marriage between technical attributes and the truth.

"You imagine yourself in his shoes. And my goodness! In his shoes, I would be so freaked. I'm not Jewish but I understand his dilemma well.

"I had a short time to slip into Brian's shoes - maybe 40 to 50 hours - it was pressure, but this was not an issue: the role is not prescriptively written.

The play is constructed to be more about the situation; the actors must connect the dots. I like this. It leaves room to explore and grow and decide on things. And Greg is an excellent director."

- *Brothers in Blood and Van Graan's new play, Rainbow Scars, directed by Lara Bye, alternate at Artscape Arena, Cape Town until May 11. Bookings: (021) 421-7695. Both plays travel to the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown this year.*

From two left feet to a salsa addict

ROBYN SASSEN

"Four years ago, my wife Gill and I used to go to barmitzvahs and weddings in separate cars. The prospect of dancing was so awful to me, I would go home when the music started," says bassoonist Paul Rodgers, 60, just home from a salsa congress in Eilat.

"There've been times at four in the morning, recently that I've had a frantic call from my adult children asking me where the hell I am. I was on the dance floor," he grins sheepishly. Even his resumé confirms he's "crazy about salsa". So, what happened?

Gill Rodgers taught ballet at home and at King David Victory Park for years. When she opted to include teaching English to foreign students, their home dance studio stood empty, often. Paul decided to do something about it. He contracted a salsa teacher; in 18 months, he was dancing.

Salsa, with its eight step format that has numerous derivations, has changed his life. "It's changed my appreciation of music," he refers to his day jobs. He is currently the managing director of the Johannesburg Festival Orchestra, and its principal bassoonist. "When we play dance music, I perform with greater empathy."

Photo: supplied

Paul Rodgers dancing the salsa at the rooftop at Arts on Main in central Johannesburg.

Rodgers has a long-standing bad knee. "There was a chance a few years ago I would land up in a wheelchair. But between salsa and biokinetics, I'm not."

The choice was easy: "Tango was like playing chess with your feet, for me. There are several salsa schools in Johannesburg," Rodgers names suburban restaurants that double as dance schools.

"There are also different styles and approaches. In Johannesburg, we dance Cuban and LA salsa, but in Israel the salsa world is quite different.

"It's chauvinist. And at the congress, there were two extremes. There were dancers from Cuba, Colombia, Morocco, France and America, who were superb. Few spoke English, but when you can dance like that, who needs language?

"Eighty per cent of the dancers were, however, Israeli. The Eilat salsa congress is in its 11th year, but the local dancers are quite average. With an attendance of about 4 000, five per cent of which are international, this was disappointing."

The bastard child of street Salsa, which mixes Spanish troubadour and African drumbeat, and Afro-Cuban dances like the rhumba in the 1920s, salsa was first named as such in New York in 1933, like the spice: the word was a protest against blandly spiced foods.

It was internationalised in 1974. Derivations of everything from cha-cha-cha to mambo became part of it. Dances like the Dominican merengue, Angola's kizomba and Caribbean-rooted zouk - deemed by dance historians as the 21st century's dance - have taken off with abandon, alongside salsa.

"Most of my dance partners," continues Rodgers "are other than white. In salsa, religious, educational, social, age-related barriers all fall away." Of course, reality TV has played a role in this shift in dance styles of choice; the popularity has its own momentum.

Salsa congresses are on every weekend of the year globally: Cape Town's first is October 31 - November 3. See *http://justdancingsalsa.com/tag/cape-town-salsa-congress-2013/.*

In new CD Patlansky digs into blues essence

Wooden Thoughts by Dan Patlansky (R120; also available on iTunes)

REVIEWED BY DON ALBERT

While I find it hard to say Dan Patlansky is the best blues player in South Africa, only because I haven't heard Tim Parr and Larry Amos in years, and they helped to pioneer blues in the country, what I will say about Patlansky is he's soaked in the blues, and is certainly the best I've heard in the past few years.

His new CD "Wooden Thoughts", really displays his blues chops, plus his authentic approach to the various genres. He has a voice that contains a sandpaper edge to it, plus he adjusts his powerful guitar playing to the style of Southern and swamp blues on "Miss Oowee" and "Preachin' The Blues" to the rockabilly blues sound of "Wagon Wheel".

Things change on "Hallelujah" and it sounds like he's using a bottle neck to obtain a scratchy sound, as well as a steel guitar ring, but when he states the melody on the bottom strings, he claws at your heart.

"Kashmir" is an instrumental with the sound of the Middle East, and is almost Hebraic at times. It's like he's playing an oud, then bass and guitar puncture the air over the playing of a tabla.

Bell-like guitar tinkles introduces "The Weight" which has Patlansky's gritty vocal telling the story saying "put the load right on me". It also has an interesting short coda starting with two notes which he builds on before an abrupt end.

The 11 tracks all have something to say and allow the listener to learn about the diversity of the blues.

T-Bone Walker said: "You've got to live the blues"; Benny Green had this to say: "The blues, the most convenient harmonic progression ever discovered... the most hackneyed, overplayed obvious musical effect in the world, and yet in some curious way at times the most compelling".

Whatever is said, Dan Patlansky has dug deep into the essence of the music with sincerity, which makes it indeed compelling.

Disclaimer
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.

Guidelines for letters
Letters up to 400 words get preference. Provide your full name, place of residence, and daytime contact phone number. We do not publish letters under noms de plume. Letters should preferably be e-mailed. Letters may be edited or shortened. *The Editor, PO Box 84650, Greenside, 2034 email: sharon@sajewishreport.co.za*

SA JEWISH MEDIA NEEDS ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO FULFIL ITS ROLE

The way I was quoted in last week's Jewish Report's 'Community Voices' 100 word vox pop section, canvassing opinions on challenges facing South African Jewry, diverged from my e-mailed response in ways that changed my meaning and rendered my response incoherent.

I understand that the divergence was a result of the fact that your paper, like papers everywhere, is produced under immense pressure. The fact that mistakes happen at Jewish Report because staff are forced to multitask to meet publishing deadlines, adds grist to the mill of my view that SA Jewry is faced, broadly, with un-unique challenges.

In this instance, the problems faced by an under-resourced media operating under constant financial pressure.

My carefully worded response was intended to convey my view that, across the political spectrum, SA Jewry as a whole (not "some" of SA Jewry) has failed to constructively engage the apartheid past.

During the apartheid years, Jews on the left were marginalised from the community, described as "individuals" rather than part of "the community". Papering over the cracks in "the -rainbow nation-hope" that all would somehow be forgiven and forgotten, two post-apartheid decades later the historical faribel continues to fester.

With a difference: the sustained dynamic has been projected onto Israel/Palestine. Short on accurate historical memory, history is neatly flipped on its head: Israel is the new apartheid; Jews are the new whites.

Also continuous is the absence of rational discourse, with few across the communal and political spectrum doing much more, at best, than paying lip-service to the liberal values of tolerance and dialogue. This is a dangerous moment.

A local website is running a name-and-shame campaign to out anti-Zionist Jews, seeking, for who knows what purpose, their home addresses rather than dialogue.

Wits and Rhodes universities are the stage to hound as racists Israeli-born pianists and supporters of the right of the State of Israel to exist.

SA Jewry, like citizens everywhere, needs a responsible, well-resourced media that rigorously represents the comprehensive range of concerns and interests.

I challenge Jewish Report's board of directors to provide sufficient financial support for it to play the requisite lead role; ChaiFm to represent the full spectrum of South African Jewish views, as required by its licencing provisions; and MyShtetl to share with us what it's hoping to achieve with its current stunts. Marketing tricks or social mayhem?

Claudia Braude
Johannesburg

SUCH A G-D I PERSONALLY DO NOT NEED NOR WANT

I would like to respond to Michael Golding's letter in the JR of April 26. I didn't "question" the existence of G-d; I categorically deny "His" existence. I have no doubt that the unbearable atrocities and suffering during the Holocaust could never have been part of a G-d's plan.

The Holocaust is the biggest tragedy in our history but by no means the only one. It started with the famine in our Land followed by enslavement in Egypt, 40 years wandering in the desert, we were conquered several times, both temples were destroyed, we lost 80 per cent of our people (the 10 tribes).

We were exiled and dispersed almost all over the world. We suffered the Spanish inquisition because we wanted to keep our loyalty to "our" G-d. I don't know how many were burnt alive. This was our biggest tragedy until the Holocaust.

Then the pogroms and ultimately the Holocaust and it is not over yet. My opinion is clear: To believe in a G-d after such a history is not logical nor reasonable. I personally don't need nor want such a G-d. Life is developing at an unprecedented extreme fast pace. I am afraid that religious Jews in particular, just cannot cope.

Yossi Bogacz
Highlands North, Johannesburg

My twopence worth of advice to Allan Horwitz

I would like to respond to Allan Horwitz, BDS spokesman, whose letter appeared in the Jewish Report of April 26.

You and your "useful idiots" and delusionists are always giving the Israelis your pompous and irrational advice, so I am sure you will not mind if I give you some advice from me.

When you and your fellow spear carriers for the Palestinians call on them to make the same "sacrifices" for peace you expect from the Israelis and unequivocally in plain, clear language request them to conform to the same standards you require from the Israelis, you will earn some respect and credibility from the South African community.

Isaac Lew, Johannesburg

NAIVE TO BELIEVE ARABS WILL CHANGE THEIR ANTI-ISRAEL STANCE

When a Jew and his group have the temerity requesting that the Jewish community in South Africa should stop funding Israel, then we must stand back in horror.

Just who are such upstarts, claiming the right to coerce us into acting thus? Are these fools so naive as to expect the Arab faction to thereby abandon their sworn quest to destroy our homeland and our people? Are they so blind, by so one-sided an ambition?

Israel is Israel is Israel! The absolute majority of us Yidden, will never countenance such a decision!

Is the Stop the JNF group so stupid as to imagine that the complacent Arab attitude will change from their sworn policy of over a 100 years? This will not come to pass.

To me as a Jew, any other Jew who stands against Israel, or opposes its policies, is a traitor to Jewish history.

If you love your Arab brothers so much, go and live in their societies. Or, why do we not just hand Israel over to our enemies?

A heritage developed over 4 000 years and the sacrifice of millions of our brethren for our cause, appears to mean nothing to people of this ilk.

Maurice Skikne
Johannesburg

KD boys off to a dream football trip to Europe

Front: Musa Mphomane; Dean Nathan; Kgotoso Mabuza; Quintin Molepo; Judd Sundelson; Elan Novick; and Sam Herring. Back: Herold Matodzi (coach and Kamille Kum.

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Elan Novick and Dean Nathan of King David Linksfield and Sam Herring and Judd Sundelson of King David Victory Park, have been selected as part of the under-11 Wanderers Warriors soccer team, leaving on a dream trip to Germany and Austria from May 9 to 20.

The team is made up of elite players from Johannesburg and Alexandra township north of the city, who have been carefully chosen and extensively trained for what promises to be a highly challenging adventure.

The team will spend time receiving instruction from Bayern Munich's academy coaches at the Bayern headquarters in Munich and will play a fixture against Bayern's under-11 academy team.

The team will also play in a local tournament in Munich against some of Munich's best junior teams.

The team will play a friendly game against Portuguese giants, Porto and finally will travel to the resort of Kitzbuhel in Austria to play in one of Europe's most prestigious junior football tournaments, the Cordial Cup.

Entrants to the Cordial cup are only accepted from professional academy teams or teams which win designated qualifying tournaments held around Europe. The Wanderers team managed to secure a rare wild card entry into the tournament and are the first team from Africa to play at the Cordial Cup.

Head coach of the Wanderers, Harold Matodzi, said: "We aspire to give our junior players an exceptional youth soccer experience and to do this it is important they are exposed to the world's finest academies and get to taste competition against the world's best young players.

"The King David boys are an integral part of our squad and we are hoping that they can help do us and the continent proud."

Learning all about worms – early and others

TARYN FISHER

In celebration of Earth Day, pictured are Samuel Fisher (6) from King David Victory Park , who with Miss Earth Tamerin Jardine, get their hands dirty at the school's worm farm.

It was explained to Samuel who discovered a worm in his grandmother's garden, that worms provide oxygen and fertiliser for plants and that these little miracle workers should be left safely alone in the garden to continue their good work.

He then asked his mother to purchase a worm farm for his school in order to teach other children about this amazing natural phenomenon.

Miss Earth spent time with the kids from the school, talking them through the wonders of earth worms and other beneficial tips regarding the preservation of their environment.

TA tots have a glorious Lag B'Omer celebration with a fire engine

Alex Alexander; Dav Warhaftig; Aaron Avtzon; Platoon Commander John van Heerden; with Shamaya Saban; and firefighter Malusi Dlomo. On the engine are Yitzchak Youngworth and Yair Gerber.

SUZANNE BELLING

Lag B'Omer was celebrated in style by children from Torah Academy Nursery School, who awaited the arrival of a real fire engine on the sports field of the school.

The fire engine was late as the firefighters had to attend to a real fire in Glenhazel, which also delayed the demonstration by community educator Rhulani Ramaloko.

In the meantime, the little ones busied themselves with a bonfire lit by the groundsmen, face painting by the teachers and enjoyed hot dog treats for snacks.

But it was worth waiting for - the tots were allowed to play with the hose, try on helmets and climb on the fire engine from the Northview Fire Station.

Community Columns

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Walking the talk

Above Board
Mary Kluk
National Chairman

This week, by a strange coincidence, the three largest branches of the SAJBD have been participating in the planning of forthcoming civil society initiatives involving walking for peace and human rights.

The first of these, the annual Gandhi Walk, will take place in Johannesburg on May 19. Now in its 28th year, the event honours Mahatma Gandhi, who developed his famous philosophy of satyagraha (passive resistance against injustice) during his years in South Africa, particularly in Johannesburg.

For the first time, the Board is encouraging the Jewish community to participate in what is truly an inspiring, community-building initiative that brings together South Africans of all colours and creeds.

This follows our very successful Jewish-Hindu evening at the beginning of April, where members of the two communities came together to celebrate the close friendship and political partnership between Gandhi and the Jewish architect Herman Kallenbach.

The walk begins at Gandhi Hall, 29 Impala Crescent, Ext 5, Lenasia.

A month later in Durban, a symbolic walk will take place from Ushaka to the Durban Holocaust Centre, to raise awareness of refugees in Africa. The event will take place on June 20 - World Refugee Day - and the Durban Holocaust Centre is partnering with the United Nations Human Rights Council committee on refugees and the Alliance Francais in organising it. The latter does outstanding work on behalf of the many French-speaking refugees now living in South Africa.

The third public walk will take place in Cape Town on December 16, Reconciliation Day. Like the Gandhi Walk, this has become an annual event, co-organised by the different faith communities in the city.

The Cape Council of the Board, as always, continues to be much involved in the planning process. Its representatives took part in the recent planning meeting, where it was decided that the theme of this year's march will be taking a stand against violence in society, whether it be domestic, gender or xenophobia-related.

In terms of its own mission statement, the SAJBD is "committed to a South Africa where everyone will enjoy freedom from the evils of prejudice, intolerance and discrimination". Involving itself in public demonstrations of the above nature is therefore intrinsic to our work, and I encourage as many people as possible to join us in taking part.

International events

Currently Wendy Kahn, our national director, is in the US, where she is meeting with a range of organisations with whom the Board has close working ties. Earlier this week, she addressed the Anti-Defamation League Centennial Conference on "Challenges for World Jewry Today". The Board works especially closely with the ADL, which continues to be a great resource for us.

Next week, along with Cape Chairman Li Boiskin, Cape Director David Jacobson and African Jewish Congress President Mervyn Smith, I will join Wendy in Budapest for the World Jewish Congress' annual assembly.

This is taking place in Hungary as a gesture of solidarity with the local Jewish community, which has of late experienced an alarming resurgence of right-wing anti-Semitism. I will be writing about the conference and its outcomes in a future column.

• *Listen to Steven Gruzd on Jewish Board Talk on 101.9 ChaiFM every Friday 12:00 - 13:00.*

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

World News in Brief

NYC synagogue bomber accomplice sentenced to prison

NEW YORK - An immigrant to the United States who plotted to blow up synagogues in New York City, has been sentenced to five years in jail.

Mohamed Mamdouh, a naturalised citizen from Morocco, who pleaded guilty last year to conspiring to commit terrorism and criminal weapons possession, was an accomplice to Algerian immigrant Ahmed Ferhani, who last month was sentenced to 10 years in prison and is likely will be deported after his release.

Mamdouh was sentenced in New York State Supreme Court on April 26.

Ferhani and Mamdouh were arrested after they bought three firearms and what they believed was a live grenade from an undercover police detective. They reportedly had planned to disguise themselves as hasidic Jews in order to get into the synagogues.

They are the first people to be convicted under a state antiterrorism law passed following the September 11, 2001, attacks. (JTA)

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- JWBS Johannesburg, urgently requires secondhand clothing, kitchenware, household goods, books and bric-a-brac for its secondhand shop. Contact (011) 485-5232.
- Celebrating a bar-/batmitzvah? Why not give a donation to WIZO's bar-/batmitzvah project in Israel? You get a beautiful certificate to give to the bar-/batmitzvah child here. Certificates are available from WIZO tel (011) 645-2548.
- Second Innings runs a series courses and activities including scrabble, bridge, discussion groups, play reading groups, women's and men's reading groups, symphony concert rehearsals, bowls, pilates, Yogic Pranayama, walking and aerobics, Golden Oldies Cine Club, weekly workshops (by arrangement) on "falls education for the elder adult", and organises regular activities. Contact Grecia Gabriel (011) 532-9718.
- Benarc Gift Shop has gift presentations for all occasions, made to order. Call (011) 485-5232, JWBS. All kosher under the Beth Din. Proceeds to support the less fortunate in our community.
- Elise WIZO Gift Shop has an exciting range of gifts available. Contact (011) 640-2760 or call in at Genesis, bottom level of the Genesis Shopping Centre, 3 Bradfield Drive, Fairmount.
- Chabad House hosts a series of events throughout the year. Chai Seniors - Holistic & Kabbalistic Nourishment". Daily programmes: Men's Kolel Mon-Fri at Chabad House Library, 09:00 -11:00, followed by lunch. Ladies Kolel Tuesdays & Thursdays. Special programmes: Mondays: Brain Worx with occupational therapist, Cynthia Liptz for brain exercises, 09:00 – 13:00. Both men and women welcome. Tuesdays: Guest lectures. For info contact Rabbi Ari Kievman (011) 440-6600 or e-mail rak@chabad.org.za
- Orchid WIZO Florist, for chuppahs in shuls or gardens; canopy, drapes and floral arrangements our specialty. Daily deliveries of floral and fruit arrangements as well. Contact: (011) 728-4513, after hours: (011) 728-2769.
- Bnoth Zion Association WIZO is collecting anything of value for its store. Contact (021) 464-6729 or Linda Saban 072-245-3225 or Cherna Kredo 084-589-8588.
- Johannesburg Children's Home is appealing for shoes and takkies for children and teenagers. Contact Edna or Hylton Segal (011) 970-4266.
- Selwyn Segal Gift Centre has a wonderful selection of well priced gifts for all occasions. Visit on Monday to Thursday from 8.30 to 4.00 and Friday till 2.00 Phone 011 6406413 or 0116405171 Web site: www.selwynsegalgifts.co.za
- Join WIZO every Thursday for a "Lunch & Learn" shiur with Rabbi Michael Katz, 13:00 - 14:00 at Beyachad. Information: Joyce, (011) 640-2416.
- Stellenbosch Hebrew Congregation has a Friday evening service every week in shul, starting at 18:45. Contact (021) 886-5257.
- The Yiddish Academy offers weekly basic, intermediate and advanced classes on Monday evenings at 19:30, Tuesday mornings at 10:30 and Thursday evenings at 19:30 at the RCHCC, Glenhove Road, Houghton. Conversational groups. Details: e-mail yiddishacademy@gmail.com or call Hazel Cohen on (011) 728-8088.

What's On

Today, Friday (May 3)

- UZLC hosts Jack Mink, who will talk on "The Upbeat Bing Crosby with Family and Friends". Venue: Our Parents Home Time: 12:45 – 14:00. Contact: Gloria, 072-127-9421 or (011) 485 4851.
- United Sisterhood has its monthly book sale at the Benmore Gardens Shopping Centre. Unwanted books and donations of magazines are gladly accepted. Contact: (011) 646-2409, fax (011) 646-4654.

Saturday (May 4)

- Beit Emanuel in Parktown, is hosting a weekly series of talks in its adult education programme, in its boardroom every Saturday morning after the Shabbat morning service and before the Talmud study session. Time: 11:15 to 12:15 and Talmud study at 12:15. No cost. Today, Dr Paul Davis will talk on "Ethical Challenges to Undeclared Wars" - a personal response to apartheid.

Sunday (May 5)

- Chevrah Kadisha's Community Social Services hosts a "Single Mother's Monthly Support Group", inviting single moms for a chat, a cup of tea, support, information and much needed time out. Entertainment provided for kids. Time: 10:00 -11:30. Guest speaker: Educational psychologist Dvori Blumenau on "Helping Children Deal with their Feelings". Venue: Beit Chesed, Sandringham Gardens. Zoe, (011) 532-9654.
- RCHCC screens the award-winning documentary, "Waste Land". Venue: Clive M Beck Auditorium. Time: 19:30. Donation: R70.00. Booking: Hazel or René (011) 728-8088/8378.
- Second Innings hosts Ria Milburn, the first female field guide in SA, who will talk on "The Place of the White Sand". Venue: Gerald Horwitz Lounge. Time: 10:00 for 10:30. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors. Contact: Grecia Gabriel, (011) 532-9718.

Monday (May 6)

- UJW adult education division hosts Robyn Sassen, arts editor of the Jewish Report on "The Horror! The Horror", how artists have made sense of the madness of the world. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton, Johannesburg. Time: 09:30. Donation: R30. Contact: (011) 648-1053.
- Jewish Learning Institute (JLI) at the Great-Park Synagogue presents "Curious Tales of the Talmud: Finding Yourself in the Legends of Our Sages", a new six-session course starting today. The course will explore the mystical dimension of the Talmud called the Aggadah. Each session is independent. Time: 19:30 - 21:00. Cost: for all six sessions is R250, (or R50 per session). First session free. Contact Rabbi Shmuel Simpson at shmuelsimpson@gmail.com or 079-106-4777, or visit www.greatpark.co.za.

Wednesday (May 8)

- JWBS hosts its 41st Annual Golf Day. Format will be a shotgun start. Monies raised will go towards assisting the destitute in our community. Venue: Killarney Country Club. Tee-off Time: 12:00. Cost per player: R850.Cost per 4-ball: R3 400. Information: Tel, (011) 485-5232, fax : (011) 485-5232.
- UJW CT adult education division hosts Joey Burke who will talk on " Chanting for Profit", examining the Exciting World of Auctioning in South Africa. Venue: Stonehaven. Time: 10:00 for 10:30. Cost: R20. Enquiries: (021) 434-9555 (mornings only).
- UJW adult education division hosts Wendy Goldblatt who at her home will show and talk about the paintings of her late husband Sydney Goldblatt. Time: 09:30. Donation: R30. Contact: (011) 648-1053.
- Chevrah Kadisha's Social Services in partnership with CAJE present "Enrich your Life!" a series by three clinical psychologists, Brenda Lasersohn, Leonard Carr and Trevor Friedman on "Love at Second Sight: Is Happily Ever After Achievable in Real Life? Cost: R30. Light refreshments will be served. Venue: Sydenham Shul Hall. Time: 19:45. Information/ bookings: Sharon (011) 532-9616 / e-mail: sharonp@jhbchev.co.za
- WIZO Forum hosts its "Yom Yerushalayim Celebration". Venue: Oxford Shul foyer. Great entertainment. Rabbi Michael Katz, Israeli breakfast, Market in the garden. Time: 09:30. Cost R80. Contact: Sandy, (011) 645-2515.

Thursday (May 9)

- WIZO Tzabar hosts Nicole Landau who will be speaking about "Shavuot, More Than Cheese Cake". Time: 10:00. Cost: R50. Delicious dairy and cheeses will be served. RSVP for catering purposes to Ayala: (011) 882-9875 or 082 412 2269.

Saturday (May 11)

- Beit Emanuel in Parktown, is hosting a weekly series of talks in its adult education programme, in its boardroom every Saturday morning after the Shabbat morning service and before the Talmud study session. Times: From 11:15 to 12:15 and Talmud study at 12:15. No cost. Today, Prof Merle Williams will talk on "Tensions Within Jewish Tradition and Values: Isaac Bashevis Singer's Story, 'The Spinoza of Market Street'."

Sandton Sun Maroela Room
THURSDAY 13 JUNE 2013
TO BOOK OR FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
Christy Hughes at MSCSPORTS
christy@mscsports.co.za or 011 646 7340
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SA triathletes in top form, but for them no Maccabiah

ROCKING THE BOAT
Jack Milner

It is interesting to note that in an era in which we seem to have a dearth of top Jewish sportsmen, how many Jews are doing particularly well in triathlon.

The South African Ironman Triathlon was held in Port Elizabeth last weekend and a number of Jewish participants made their presence felt.

One triathlete who seems to get better all the time, is Mark Sack. He lined up in the 40 to 44 age group, which comprised 370 athletes and he took the title for the second time in three years.

Not only did he lead the field home, but he won in a record time of nine hours and 18 minutes, which gave him 29th position overall and made him the seventh South African to finish.

This year the event took place in almost perfect conditions. It started at Hobie Beach with a 3,8km sea swim where the athletes encountered gentle swells. This was followed by a 180km bicycle ride and then the standard 42,2km marathon run.

There was some scintillating racing among the professionals with Switzerland's Ronnie Schildknecht taking the title in a time of eight hours 11 minutes and 24 seconds, just ahead of Frenchman Cyril Viennot, who finished runner-up for the second consecutive year. Bas Diederen of The Netherlands finished third. It was Schildknecht's eighth Ironman title.

The women's race went down to the wire with America's Jessie Donavan winning in a time of 9:10:06 ahead of Jodie Swallow of Great Britain, who in January had won the SA 70.3 Ironman title for the third successive year to go with her world long distance championship title.

Israel's only entrant in Port Elizabeth was women's professional Nina Pekerman who finished eighth in a time of nine hours 59 minutes.

Of the 1 786 athletes who registered for the event, 1 622 started and 1 542 completed the distance within the 17 hour cut-off time.

Sack completed his swim in a time of 58 minutes 55 seconds, cycled the 180km in 4:59:0 and then set about catching the nine runners in his age group who were ahead of him. He finally caught the last of them just 2km from the finishing line.

The final runner he snared was in fact last year's winner. Sack completed his run in a brilliant time of three hours and 13 minutes.

The 41-year-old has had a wonderful year, winning the SA 70.3 Ironman age-group title in East London in January and the SA long distance title in February, both in record times.

Excellent sub four-hour marathon times were also recorded by 40-year-old Benjy Porter (3hrs 52mins) in the 40 - 44 age group in what was his Ironman debut. Clive Sack, brother of Mark, was in the same age group and completed the race in an overall time of 10 hours and 35 minutes (3hrs 58min marathon) while property man Herschel Jawitz competed in the 45 to 49 age group and ran his marathon in three hours and 55 minutes.

In the same age group Jason Lemmer, in his first Ironman, completed the course in 13 hours eight minutes.

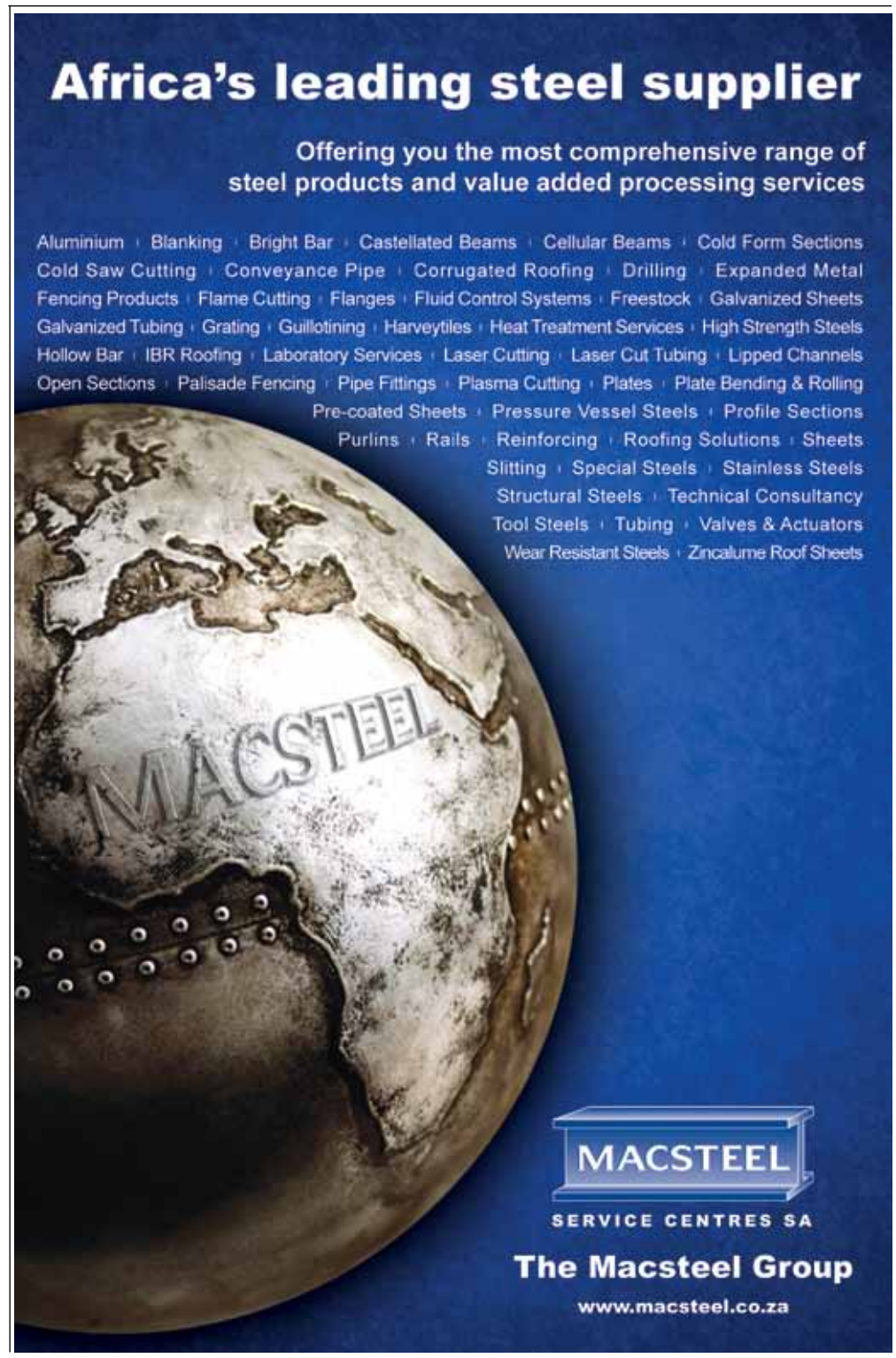
The rose among the thorns was 40-year-old Jodie Zulberg who finished strongly to ensure a fourth place in her age group, in an overall time 10 hours 51 minutes, with a run time of 4hrs 5mins. That saw her end the race as the sixth-placed South African amateur and the eighth SA woman overall.

She will now prepare for the world 70.3 championships that take place in Las Vegas in September, having qualified at the East London 70.3 Ironman event in January.

Others who participated and successfully completed the distance, include Ian Schwabsky (age group 30 to 34), his brother Deon (25 to 29), Jonathan Hurvitz, Jedd Myer and Rabbi Dovi Goldstein, all in the 30 to 34 age group. Others who did well were Eric Meyers in the 50 to 54 age group and Ryan Kowalsky in the 40 to 44 age group.

Rabbi Goldstein of Ohr Somayach Savoy, started exercising for health reasons, found a balance to his training, took on the challenge and pacing his race carefully, completed the distance in 15hrs 13mins.

Sadly I understand that none of these runners will be participating in the Maccabi Games in Israel later this year. It appears that the cost has become far too much for most of these triathletes who could attend the World Championships for almost one third of the cost of a trip to the Maccabiah.

And after all, which event holds the bigger prestige? This is a question to debate.

Mark Sack, winner of the 40 to 44 age group, in action at the South African Ironman Triathlon in Port Elizabeth.