



Yom Ha'atzmaut
pulls in the
crowds in
Johannesburg.
See page 2

South African Jewish Report

www.sajr.co.za



Photo: Magen David Adom Israel

Israeli rescue teams immediately heeded the call for assistance after the devastating earthquake in Nepal last weekend. Approximately 2 000 Israelis were in that country when the 7,8-magnitude quake hit. Several Israeli missions landed in Nepal early in the week to provide medical care, assist search efforts and distribute humanitarian aid. An IDF delegation arrived on Monday evening to set up a field hospital. Pictured is another group of aid workers at Ben-Gurion Airport, ready to receive the 220 Israelis arriving from Nepal. At our going to press, the death toll already stood at 4 600, but is expected to rise to well over 10 000. Nepal is a popular destination for young Israelis who have just completed their army service and also for Israelis looking for surrogate mothers, or as it is called, “gestational carriers”. A number of Israeli NGOs work in Nepal in various fields, such as agriculture. By Tuesday only a handful of Israelis remained unaccounted for. Many visitors to the country are still trapped on Mount Everest, waiting to be airlifted. See page 6.

Spat erupts over Blade visit

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Bilateral trade between SA-Israel in SA's favour

Business between SA and Israel is booming with bilateral trade of R21 billion in 2014, and South Africa is the major beneficiary.

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Crossing the boundaries of holiness



Parshat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim

Rabbi Ilan Raanan
Yeshiva College Shul

Geographic boundaries have been redrawn on the “muddy” (or rather “bloody”!) grounds of the lands of the “Arab Winter” and parts of Central Africa. Not even the Mediterranean Sea is enough of a boundary to keep desperate migrants from looking for a better life (or rather a life!) in Europe.

The murky waters are not merely geographic. Are we looking at saviours or extortionists who cram hundreds into barely seaworthy vessels? Are we witness to the “average” terrorists fighting for national goals and religious values or deranged religious fanatics?

The question of boundaries doesn’t only arise (in these instances thankfully) far away. It nags us in the closest way: am I my child’s parent or friend?

In the second part of the double portion

we read, Kedoshim, we are instructed to “be holy”. Our Sages explain: “Sanctify yourself with that which is permitted.” An insight by Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein obm, the rosh yeshiva of Har Etzion who passed away last week, into the perplexing death of the saintly sons of Aharon the High Priest at the beginning of the first part of our double portion, Acharei Mot, provides a profound insight into the words of our Sages and perhaps an orientation to the questions posed.

The verse that describes their death according to most commentators simply provides the timeframe of their death “when they came close to G-d”. However, the verse could also be understood as “because they came close to G-d”.

While the former interpretation leaves us guessing what their guilt was, the latter is perplexing: Surely closeness to G-d should give life not death!?

The narrative of this episode comes at the end of those portions of the Book of Leviticus, the “Doctrine of Priests”, that provide boundaries as to what priests may not do. After the

initial portions detail the numerous types of offerings to G-d priests would officiate at, the “Doctrine” goes on to detail limitations. Aharon’s sons crossed a boundary. Caught up in the spirit of the moment they came too close!

In a narrow sense the “Doctrine of Priests” explains the duties of Aharon’s descendants. However, in the broader context of our calling, as G-d’s Chosen People, to become an international, illuminating beacon as a “Kingdom of Priests”, the latter half of the Book of Leviticus instructs us how to build a model moral society for all to emulate.

Holiness is central to this as it is all about “sanctifying that which is permitted” - where “that which is permitted” provides the parameters of holy life, both in terms of scope and extent. In terms of scope there is no area of our lives that should remain mundane.

Everything permitted needs to be sanctified. However, there are also boundaries to what extent they should be sanctified. While Aharon’s sons exemplified the former, they crossed a boundary in terms of the latter.

The calling for mankind to sanctify life starts with respecting boundaries. There are geographic boundaries and ethical boundaries. There are boundaries established by religious expectations and appropriate roles within relationships.

In order to create genuine sanctity, these boundaries have to be balanced and carefully thought out, both in terms of scope and extent. From headline news to the way we interact with those near and dear, there is much to learn from the tragic death of Aharon’s sons, “because they came close to G-d” and crossed boundaries.

Shabbat Times		
Friday 1 May / 12 Iyar		
Friday 2nd May / 13 Iyar		
Parshat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim		
17:20	18:09	Johannesburg
17:48	18:39	Cape Town
17:03	17:54	Durban
17:24	18:14	Bloemfontein
17:19	18:11	Port Elizabeth
17:11	18:02	East London

Yom Ha’atzmaut pulls in the crowds



BENJI SHULMAN

The day after the Jews had mourned Yom Hazikaron, Remembrance Day for the Fallen Soldiers of Israel and Victims of Terrorism, the excitement of Yom Ha’atzmaut began with the anticipation of the party of the year at the Yeshiva College campus in Johannesburg. The main focus was to bring families together with a meaningful celebration.

The turnout - some 4 000 - was excellent, with queues stretching all the way up the road outside the school.

Despite weather concerns, the day was perfect for an outdoor concert. Revelers were treated to a full music and stage production which SAZF Executive Director Isla Feldman and her staff have become such experts at organising.

On this year’s line-up was Israeli folk singer Yoni Kellerman followed by the ever popular Gad Elbaz, who took the audience through an array of songs, both secular and religious, as well as Zionist classics like Hava Nagila.

There was also an intense focus on children who were given Israeli flags and members of the youth movements roamed the crowds advertising their respective programmes.

Those looking for fun, could enjoy an obstacle course, parachute bungee jumping, bouncing elastics, a jumping castle, a carousel and even a fully-equipped mini ambulance.

Being a Jewish event, food was in abundance with pizza, chocolates, candy-floss, chips, burgers and even free soup. The energy was high - whether it was those swaying to the tunes of the performers on stage, or just the convivial meeting of friends over a hotdog, or the rushing to and from different rides. The whole family was able to enjoy the spectacle and CSO was there to keep a watch out for the safety of the revellers.

Once again the South African Jewish community showed its love for Israel and the centrality that the Jewish state holds in our lives was in evidence.

Seminary for Jewish girls to be launched in Johannesburg

SUZANNE BELLING

Filling a void in the South African Jewish community is a soon-to-be launched seminary for Jewish girls in Johannesburg, the brainchild of Mashi Rose (pictured), who has achieved great success as a rebbetzen (Waverley Shul), an educator and a graphologist.

“We have always had inquiries from Australia, the US and the UK,” said Rebbetzen Rose who revealed that there is a growing demand for Jewish seminaries for women worldwide and they are even springing up in countries like Italy and Prague. “I think it is more important for a woman to go to a seminary than for a boy to go to yeshiva because the woman is the foundation of the home.”

Rebbetzen Rose has harnessed a wealth of talent to bring her dream to fruition: a programme that “will engrave in the students’ hearts the knowledge that they are Bnot Yisrael and give

them an appreciation of holiness, greatness and purity associated with this role.

“We will offer a programme of intellectual excellence based in Torah, with superior teachers in an environment where girls are cared for on an individual basis. We are committed to creating a stimulating programme that will inspire and nurture a process of self-development with Yiddish-Chassidishe values,” she said in an interview with Jewish Report. The approach is based on principles and values from the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson, obm, and will include the development of study skills and broadening personal horizons.

Premises have not been acquired as yet, but Rebbetzen Rose is hoping to find something in the Norwood area and intends to open the seminary in September (to accommodate overseas



girls or January for South Africans). The course is a year long. In addition to lessons, accommodation, meals and a dormitory counsellor, the seminary will provide a taste of South Africa, with regular visits to Cape Town, Durban and organised safaris, including trips up Table Mountain and to Namaqualand to see

the wild flowers.

The rebbetzen herself was born in Bank, a small West Rand town, and met her husband Rabbi Aharon Rose in Crown Heights when she was at a seminary and he was in yeshiva. Rabbi Rose will also play an integral role in the seminary.

Mashi Rose will also offer graphology as a sideline as she herself is well-known graphologist, having studied the subject and been involved in forensic evaluations, analysing handwriting for banks, private companies and

the Beth Din.

The Roses have three children - Levi Yitzchok, Elka Leah Medalie and Menachem, who is studying at the Yeshivah Gedolah in Melbourne.

The team of the seminary has been hand-picked from educators in Johannesburg and includes Rabbi Mendel and Mashi Lipskar, Rabbi Dov Ber and Dini Groner, Rabbi Yossi and Rivky Chaikin, Rabbi Yossi and Rochel Goldman, Rabbi Levi and Shterni Wineberg, Etti Klein, Rabbi Yosef and Sara Chana Kesselman, Mandy Bloch, Rabbi Reuven and Rishie Finkelstein, Rabbi Yehuda and Estee Stern, Rabbi Nataniel and Efrat Schochet, Temmi Hadar, Sara Bronstein, Rabbi Berel Rodal, Aidel Kazilsky, members of the Ash family, Chaya Chait, Yaffa Lieberow, Chanah Rose, Rochie Pink and many more.

• *For further information about the seminary, call Mashi Rose on 083 234 9893 or email her on info@girlsseminjoburg.co.za*

Spat erupts over Blade visit

ANT KATZ

Israel’s refusal last week to issue a visa to Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande (pictured) to visit Palestine has set in motion a growing fracas between South Africa and Israel, pro-Palestinian groups and local Zionists, and even among SA Jewry itself.

Nzimande was invited to visit Palestine by Palestinian Higher Education Minister Khawla Shaksheer between April 25 and April 29 as a follow-up visit to promote collaboration in research between the University of Johannesburg and educational institutions in Palestine.

The national offices of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (Board) and the SA Zionist Federation (Fed) issued a joint statement on Tuesday castigating Israel for withholding the visa.

The statement issued by the Board and Fed noted “with concern the denial by the Israeli authorities of a visa for Dr Blade E Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education, to visit Ramallah for an official engagement”. The statement went on to say that it was “most regrettable, as the SAJBD and SAZF have long argued that regular interaction between Israel and SA... are to the benefit of both South Africa and Israel and foster greater understanding between the two countries”.

This is probably the most public spat between the Israeli Embassy and the communal organisations since the abortive visit of Tzipi Livni in 2010.

And the top two Jewish communal organisations didn’t stop at castigating Israel. Using strong terms not usually associated with the Board and Fed, they flay the SA



government as well.

“It is most unfortunate that, in recent times, South Africa has imposed restrictions on the free movement of officials between this country and Israel,” they say. (The full statement can be found on www.sajr.co.za)

There appears to be a level of splitting in the ranks, however, as the chairman of the Fed’s Cape Council, Ben Levitas, wrote an op-ed piece on Politicsweb.com on Sunday, entitled: “Why Israel was right to refuse Blade Nzimande an entry visa”.

Israel acted with good reason to refuse Nzimande entry, wrote Levitas, as Nzimande had “actively activated and propagated the severing of links between the University of Johannesburg and the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Nelson Mandela accepted an honorary doctorate from this Israeli uni-

versity, specifically for the ground-breaking work that BGU was doing to uplift Africa.” (Levitas’ full op-ed can also be found on www.sajr.co.za)

The deputy head of mission at the Israeli embassy in Pretoria, Michael Freeman, would not comment on the issue saying it was a “government to government” matter.

And, while neither the South African government nor the ruling ANC have spoken out publicly on the matter, everyone else has. The SA arm of the US-based NGO Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (Israel) - BDS-SA, insisted at a media briefing on Monday that the International Relations and Co-operation Department should expel Israeli Ambassador Arthur Lenk within 10 days.

The ultimatum - which seemed to be aimed more at the ANC and the government to

come out in support of BDS-SA than at the embassy - basically said that if South Africa did not kick out the ambassador, BDS-SA and their allies would march on the Pretoria embassy and kick out the ambassador themselves.

Israel’s refusal to issue Nzimande a visa, said BDS-SA, was an insult to the SA government.

Hiding behind what they referred to as “a grouping of tripartite alliance members, civil society groups, student, youth organisations, and academics,” BDS-SA insisted that Israel grant Nzimande and three other officials visas to visit Palestine.

“Let us be very clear, Minister Blade Nzimande’s support for the Palestinian struggle and boycott of Israel is not a personal position but representative of the resolutions of the various organisations that he is a leader of - mainly the SACP and ANC,” said the group.

Nzimande is a political heavyweight and deeply entrenched in President Jacob Zuma’s inner circle. He was also, while wearing his cap as the SACP national chairman, instrumental in ensuring that the Dalai Lama not be given a visa to come to South Africa to celebrate Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu’s 80th birthday, widely believed to have been a political move to appease China.

That exclusion caused a rift between Tutu and the ANC that endures to this day.

According to Jewish Report sources, Nzimande will still visit Ramallah, and will likely go through Jordan and just walk across the border.

More on this developing story on www.sajr.co.za

The Jewish World

in seven seconds

Anti-Semitism: Amnesty International criticised

LONDON - Amnesty International is facing criticism for refusing to tackle anti-Semitism in the UK, after a motion calling on it to do so was voted down at its annual international conference. -Jewish Chronicle

Indian talent brings Israeli song to fore

MUMBAI - Reportedly the most beautiful rendition of Hava Nagila, was performed on the popular Indian talent show Music Mojo by a band called Amrutam Gamaya. The song, which means “Let Us Rejoice,” is a popular tune to sing at celebrations. - The Jewish Standard

Decision to remove kosher symbols

SYDNEY - A number of companies have decided to remove symbols from their packaging certifying their products as kosher. Victorian kashrut certification authority Kasher Australia’s Yankel Wajsbort, says the decisions followed concerns over halaal certification. - Australian Jewish News

Leading Italian Rabbi Elio Toaff died aged 99

ROME - Rome’s Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff, who fought the Nazis and strengthened relations between the Italian Jewish community and Catholic Church after centuries of mistrust, has died at the age of 99. - Jewish Chronicle

Diaspora Journalism Awards

JERUSALEM - The winners of the 2015 “B’nai B’rith World Centre Award for Journalism Recognising Excellence in Diaspora Reportage”, were Sam Sokol, Jewish World correspondent for the Jerusalem Post, and Nadav Eyal, Channel 10’s chief international correspondent. – Times of Israel

Concern over Oz minister’s Iranian trip

SYDNEY - Concern has been expressed over Foreign Minister Julie Bishop’s recent trip to Tehran. Following the visit, it was revealed that Bishop had agreed to share intelligence with Iranian authorities to help combat the Islamic State in Iraq. - Australian Jewish News

Centennial of ‘Theory of Relativity’

TORONTO - On May 12, the Canadian Friends of Hebrew University (CFHU) will celebrate the university’s 90th anniversary, as well as the centennial of the “Theory of Relativity”, posited by Albert Einstein, one of the institution’s founders. - Canadian Jewish News

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‘I love Hitler’, says Wits SRC president

ANT KATZ

Wits Student Representative Council (SRC) President, Mcebo Dlamini, has caused a furore after posting a Facebook comment last Saturday regarding the State of Israel and his admiration for Hitler.

“I love Adolf Hitler,” he wrote, and subsequently told campus newspaper Vuvuzela that he admired the German leader who sent millions to death camps “for his charisma and organisational skills”.

Dlamini is now facing a disciplinary enquiry by Wits, while Jewish student organisation SAUJS is calling for the “harshest action possible” against him. Also, Wits Vice-Chancellor Prof Adam Habib has strongly dissociated himself from Dlamini’s remarks, calling them “racist” and “offensive”.

After a Facebook commenter posted on Dlamini’s timeline: “Hitler new [sic] they (referring to the Jews) were up to no good”, Dlamini replied “I love Adolf HITLER”.

Dlamini restated his admiration of the Nazi leader on Sunday, telling Vuvuzela: “What I love about Hitler is his charisma

and his capabilities to organise people. We need more leaders of such calibre. I love Adolf Hitler,” Dlamini repeated.

“I have researched about president [sic] Adolf Hitler,” Dlamini said defending his knowledge of Hitler. He has read about Hitler and watched documentaries on him. Dlamini further defended his remarks saying that his love of Hitler had “nothing do to [sic] with white people”.

He says he finds it “very absurd that people expect me to regard their enemies as my enemies”. The same way I love Robert Mugabe, it has nothing to do with white people.”

The SRC president also insisted that he would “write what I like on my Facebook” and was not on the social media platform to “nurse Jewish people’s feelings. Who told them (Jews) they deserve special treatment?” he asked.

In the comment thread, Dlamini said his post had been reported to Facebook. He responded: “Shame nxaaaaa (expletive deleted) am not removing it... truth hurts... face it murderers.”

National chairman of SAUJS, Natan Pollack, told Jewish Report

on Tuesday that he was consulting with lawyers to decide on the students’ next move. But, he warned that SAUJS intended taking the “harshest action possible”.

Dlamini, said Pollack, “is not a guy we want on the SRC or in our society, he does not represent South Africans.”

Dlamini had a previous run-in with the Wits administration earlier this year and was suspended from his presidency for some time. Last month a complaint about the SRC was referred to a high-level enquiry by Habib - the report of which is expected to be released later this week.

Pollack says Dlamini is as bad a racist as South Africa had ever seen and that SAUJS was committed to ensuring Dlamini no longer leads the University.

Referring to another racist statement by Dlamini that “every white person has an element of Adolf Hitler”, SAUJS said in a statement that it was “an utter insult to our democratic rainbow nation”.

Vice-Chancellor Habib addressed a letter to “Colleagues, Students, Alumni and Members of the Wits University Community”

on Tuesday, saying that Dlamini’s “Facebook posts regarding Adolf Hitler and his subsequent comments to our student newspaper were forwarded to me over the weekend by a number of concerned staff, students and alumni.

“I have e-mailed the SRC President and asked him to account for his remarks, but have not yet received a response.”

Habib said he personally found Dlamini’s comments “utterly unacceptable and especially dangerous... and violates the fundamental values of Wits University.

“Disturbingly, they valorise a racist autocrat who was responsible for the murder of millions of people,” said Habib.

Habib has referred Dlamini for investigation to see whether disciplinary charges should be brought.

Habib ends his statement with the following words: “To all individuals to whom this incident may have caused offence, I want to apologise for the fact that someone who is deemed a leader in our community could have made such shocking and embarrassing statements. His behaviour in no way speaks to the values of Wits as an institution.”



When an Arab Spring turns into an Arab Winter

SUZANNE BELLING

“One day your enemy could be your partner and another day your partner could be your enemy,” said Brigadier-General (res) Udi Dekel (pictured) during his public address on Tuesday on “Israel in a changing Middle East environment”. It took place under the auspices of the Israel Centre in Johannesburg.

Dekel, a former head of the Strategic Planning Division in the Planning Directorate of the General Staff of the Israel Defence Forces and currently director of the Institute for National Security Studies in Israel was head of the negotiations unit with the Palestinians under Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. He said the Arab Spring, with its ambitions of establishing more

democratic governments in Arab countries, had degenerated into an Arab Winter; a military government took over in Egypt and political Islam took over in countries such as Libya and Tunisia.

Elsewhere the revolution had changed direction, with an underground “tectonic movement” emerging in the open with ISIS and Sunni/Shia conflict spearheaded by Saudi Arabia and Iran.

ISIS had a strategy to take over the entire Middle East and establish a big caliphate, taking Islam back to its golden age. It also exported terrorism, such as lone wolf attacks in several countries.

ISIS had no rules of the game, no international standards and no responsibility towards civilians, he said.

The international community had decided it was better not to get involved too directly in combating ISIS because the end-game rules were unknown.

“They also decided it was not so bad with bad guys killing other bad guys.”

The international strategy was to establish a coalition to dismantle ISIS using air attacks, but without boots on the ground.

The only country that understood that it could achieve greater influence through boots on the ground was Iran, through its various proxies and Iranian forces. Israel understood that there was a new Middle East with new rules. Events



in the region spilled over into Israel, but it was better for Israel to initiate than respond - protection, such as Iron Dome, was not enough.

For Israel under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the destination was still two states for two peoples, but this was difficult to achieve at present because Israel had no partner.

Every time Israel and the Palestinians had arrived at final negotiations over the past 15 years, “the Palestinians had decided either to reject the Israeli offers or to run away from the negotiating table”.

The Palestinians would prefer the international community to get Israel to accept the Palestinian rules of the game, he said.

If permanent status negotiations with the Palestinians were not on, other transitional initiatives could be considered by Israel, including going back to the 2004 Road Map, building Palestinian capacity, so that it would not end up a failed state, but have effective functions and be stable and accountable.

There were now also possible multilateral options, including the countries of the Arab world, which could support both Israel and the Palestinians. Creating such a coalition could help deal with the problems of the Middle East.

“Israel can take some steps to try to shape a two-state reality by moving forward unilaterally,” he said.

Referring to issues relating to the West Bank, he said: “We cannot solve the problem of individual terror, but we can solve the problem of terror organisations.”

The international attitude to settlements could change if Israel declared it would build only in the established settlement blocs and not in isolated settlements.

Five years ago Israel and Palestine were regarded as the most important issue, but today Israel was not the problem. Israel was creating connections with local communities in Syria.

“By doing such positive things we can build more partners for Israel, but this is a long story,” Dekel said.

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Gay Orthodox Jews - is it an earthquake in the making?



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

It might seem strange to link Nepal’s catastrophic earthquake this week to homosexuality and its place in Judaism. But a surprising revelation emerged from the tragedy which killed over 3 000 and left tens of thousands injured and homeless: Several dozen Israelis trapped in Nepal were there as part of the process of surrogate childbirth for homosexual couples.

Same-sex couples living in Israel who want to have a child through a surrogate mother, must go abroad to do it. Nepal is one of the places where this is possible.

The motivation for these couples wanting children is the desire to live a “normal” life. To some, this means belonging to a community which accepts who they are, and raising a family. Judaism - and other major religions - has not yet come to terms with the increasing legitimisation of homosexuality and same-sex marriages, which are now legal in many countries including South Africa.

The more liberal Jewish denominations accept gays and lesbians as full congregants and in some cases even rabbis. But in Orthodoxy the issue is highly contested. What should an Orthodox rabbi do when confronted with a gay congregant who wants to remain Orthodox and participate in Jewish community and ritual, in synagogue and elsewhere? Including possibly raising a family or becoming a rabbi.

In February 2005 the movie “Trembling before G-d” came to Johannesburg, telling the story of openly gay Orthodox Rabbi Steven Greenberg. Predictably, it caused confrontation. The Beth Din condemned it and Jewish schools and other institutions were forbidden to screen it.

Greenberg, who accompanied the film to South Africa, said: “In the past, if you were gay, you would either shut up or leave Orthodox Judaism.”

For the Beth Din, the issue was clear: There could be no compromise on the halachic view condemning homosexuality, and Greenberg’s claim to be an Orthodox rabbi was unacceptable. He was here “under false pretences”.

The Beth Din refused an invitation to

present its viewpoint at an interfaith panel discussion following the film’s screening. Its most senior official said: “That sort of debate is an ‘American’ thing. Our duty is to educate and teach, not to debate.”

Now, JTA reports, four prominent modern-Orthodox rabbis have done what Orthodox gays and lesbians say was inconceivable a few years ago: They spoke at a public conference at Columbia University two weeks ago on the treatment of gay, lesbian and transgender people in Orthodox communities, called “Faith, Desire and Psychotherapy”.

Speakers included Rabbi Shmuel Goldin, former president of the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America; Rabbi Mark Dratch, the RCA’s executive vice president; Rabbi Shaul Robinson, leader of the Modern-Orthodox Lincoln Square Synagogue in New York; and Rabbi Nathaniel Helfgot, a faculty member at Orthodox rabbinical school Yeshivat Chovevei Torah.

Others attended as observers, including Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, the former executive vice president of the Orthodox Union.

A few years ago Helfgot managed to get over 100 Orthodox rabbis to sign a declaration, calling for inclusion of gays as “full members” of the Orthodox community. The declaration said that although Jewish law forbade gay sex, it “does not prohibit orientations or feelings of same-sex attraction, and nothing in the Torah devalues the human beings who struggle with them”.

In response, some 200 Orthodox rabbis issued a rebuttal - the Torah Declaration - declaring homosexuality an unacceptable “lifestyle” and describing homosexual inclinations as “changeable” through conversion therapy. Mental health professionals at the conference labelled such therapy psychologically dangerous.

The gay issue will remain divisive in Orthodox Judaism, and more so as demands increase from gay Jews who want to remain Orthodox. Is there any room for compromise here, or is this a simple matter of unambiguous, unchangeable halacha, versus liberal modernity, with no possibility of a meeting point - as many respected Orthodox rabbis say?

Is the participation of the aforementioned rabbis in this conference the opening of a new door for Orthodoxy? What we can be sure of is that the matter will not easily be resolved without the ground shaking.

Community

Two auspicious milestones at Durban’s Beth Shalom

SYLVIA COLLINS
BETH SHALOM GENERAL MANAGER

Beth Shalom aged home in Durban recently celebrated two unforgettable occasions when the home’s oldest resident, Rose Simpson, made history as she turned 106 on April 13 and two days later Beth Shalom held its first bris!

Rose has seen many changes in her lifetime and is still sprightly and full of optimism. She celebrated her birthday quietly with the home’s other residents as well as visiting family members.

Myron Panovka played the piano during tea and a lovely afternoon was enjoyed by all.

Beth Shalom’s first bris for baby Davidson, the grandson of resident, Alec Vituli, was performed by Rabbi Anthony Gerson. This joyous occasion was well attended by family, residents, and committee members of Beth Shalom.

Recent renovations to Beth Shalom are almost complete; and the home is looking wonderful.

Beth Shalom’s committee, residents and staff



The youngest is introduced to the oldest. Baby Davidson meets Rose Simpson who recently celebrated her 106th birthday at Beth Shalom.

are grateful for the generosity of their sponsors who ensure the home is well maintained and remains warm and homely for the residents who love living there.



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In light of the Xenophobic tragedies, the South African Jewry have demonstrated compassion, generosity and care.

We thank you.



South African
Jewish Report
Hebrew dilemma runs deep

Last week, South Africa’s Jewish day schools put considerable effort into their celebrations and commemoration of Israel’s important milestones - Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha’atzmaut. Yet Hebrew, considered by many to be the bedrock of Zionist and Jewish identity, is no longer compulsory, nor a popular subject choice at most of these schools.

This year, a mere six pupils out of a total of 108 matriculants at Herzlia, which educates 90 per cent of Jewish children in Cape Town, are taking Hebrew. King David Linksfield has 68 taking Hebrew out of 161 matriculants; King David Victory Park has 22 out of a total of 62; while the more religious Yeshiva College has 22 out of 45.

The schools point out that they all have a portion of learners who are not pursuing a normal Independent Examination Board matric due to individual learning difficulties - so the percentages of capable learners choosing Hebrew is higher than the numbers quoted.

When I was a matriculant at King David Victory Park, only a handful of learners did not take Hebrew. Dropping the subject was not an option, unless you were a newcomer with no Hebrew background or had been diagnosed with learning challenges.

Today all the schools provide the option of dropping Hebrew either at the end of grade nine or grade 10.

This change occurred about eight years ago. At that point pupils had to choose either religious studies or Hebrew for matric. Then the Department of Education made religious studies optional and so the schools decided they could not enforce Hebrew.

Also, maths and life orientation were made compulsory and the schools decided it was not viable to make Hebrew compulsory as well, as that restricted pupils’ subject choices to five compulsory subjects: two South African languages, maths or maths literacy, life orientation and Hebrew.

Herzlia’s director of education, Geoff Cohen, has made a noble effort to revive Hebrew there. He raised R3,5 million two years ago from a UK-based donor to employ talented Hebrew educators like Ronnie Gotkin and build an attractive Hebrew lab to entice pupils to continue Hebrew. There have been no major changes in the numbers yet, but perhaps this initiative is still getting off the ground.

Some educators blame the falling numbers on the fact that, due to the astronomical cost, pupils no longer go on the three-month ulpan programme in grade 10, which had offered an intensive period of Hebrew study and a powerful “let’s love Israel campaign” for impressionable teenagers.

But most pupils are opting for other subjects not because the quality of Hebrew education has dropped. In fact the schools are using the latest teaching technologies and trying to recruit top Hebrew educators from around the world.

It is likely more about the competitive world young adults face today where they feel pressure to choose subjects they can completely excel in. Getting a distinction for Hebrew is very difficult if one is not a native speaker and university entrance and later the cutthroat job world mean choosing subjects that enhance one’s chances of later success.

Also, many parents feel their children already have to do Afrikaans, only spoken in South Africa, why master another language which has the same handicap. In fact, parents, often complain that South African Jewish day schools, unlike some of the other private schools, don’t offer options such as Mandarin or Spanish, far more important if one is looking to compete in a global job market.

For many Jewish educators, these dwindling statistics are quite depressing and may be a sign of declining observance, or worse yet greater assimilation. They feel that understanding Hebrew is the gateway to Jewish education and a meaningfully observant way of life.

It is essential to participate in prayer; it creates the option of aliyah for Diaspora Jews; it gives all Jews a common language and makes Judaism come alive.

Any authentic study of Tanach or Mishnah requires a grasp of the language. At Yeshiva College, managing director Rabbi Leron Bernstein says that most learners take Hebrew because Torah learning is a “raison d’être” of the school. Out of last year’s matric group of 33 Hebrew candidates, an astounding 31 got distinctions.

The rabbis say that the goal of Jewish day school is to create competent and proud Jewish individuals - the more complete your knowledge of the tenets of Judaism, the more proud you will be as a Jew.

When we raise young people who cannot open a bible or pray, we are not giving them a basic competency and so we cannot expect them to be proud.

Perhaps we are, as some rabbis believe, facing a dire situation with Jewish education and our schools need to take urgent action or rethink their policies.

But I can’t help thinking that if Hebrew was compulsory, we might lose a lot more young people to the benefits of Jewish education because they would choose other schools where they had more subject options.

Yes, they are not mastering the beloved language of our people but at least they are part of a community of Jews - building friendships which often last a lifetime and still gaining a sturdy knowledge of Jewish tradition and observance. It is not the ideal scenario but it is probably a manageable compromise.

– Vanessa Valkin, Editor



Israeli travellers, with their newborn babies from surrogate mothers in Nepal, disembark from an Israeli rescue plane after it landed at Ben-Gurion Airport.

Nepal quake: Israelis stick together, try to calm parents

**BEN SALES
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When the ground began to shake, Inbar Irron was among a dozen Israelis in Nepal who ran outside the building where they had been sitting – and straight into a cloud of dust. When their vision cleared, they saw a devastating scene: Much of the village of Manegau, where they had come to volunteer for four months, had crumbled to the ground. Miraculously, none of the villagers was hurt. But many of their homes had been reduced to rubble.

Irron’s group - sent by the Israeli NGO Tevel B’Tzedek, which organises volunteer trips to Nepal - was there to set up a youth group, provide leadership workshops to women in the village, bring Israeli agritech to its farms and computers to its schools.

Now that mission is on long-term hold. The volunteers and villagers have pitched plastic tents to weather the rainy nights, and hope their food stockpile will last until the road to Kathmandu reopens. The immediate task, Irron says, is to rebuild at least a few buildings and reassure the villagers.

“Right now we’re trying to maintain calm and high motivation,” he told JTA via a satellite phone.

Approximately 2 000 Israelis were in Nepal when a 7,8-magnitude earthquake struck last Saturday, killing more than 4 600 people - and growing - and destroying buildings and roads across the country. By Tuesday, only a handful of Israelis remained unaccounted for. But over the weekend, across Nepal, hundreds scrambled for shelter, helped each other, weathered strong aftershocks and waited for evacuation as they scrambled to contact worried parents.

On Tuesday, a flight from Nepal carrying some 220 Israelis landed in Tel Aviv. As Nepal has become a popular destination for Israelis seeking gestational carriers, all of the 26 Israeli babies born there to surrogate mothers were brought back to Israel along with their parents.

Israeli search-and-rescue teams retrieved Israelis from their refuge places and brought them to Kathmandu, where hundreds had taken shelter at the Israeli Embassy and Chabad House.

“Many of the people who were here on vacation are more traumatised and prefer to leave as fast as possible,” Nevo Shinaar, another Tevel B’Tzedek worker whose group took refuge in the embassy, wrote to JTA on the messaging application WhatsApp. “We’re talking, we’re embracing, we’re helping with all the bureaucracy.”

Nepal is a popular destination for young Israelis, many of whom vacation there for weeks or months following mandatory service in the Israel Defence Forces.

Several Israeli missions landed in Nepal early in the week to provide medical care, assist search efforts and distribute humanitarian aid. An IDF delegation arrived on Monday night to set up a field hospital, while staff from Magen David Adom, a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross, fanned out across Kathmandu’s hospitals to care for Israelis and treat the quake’s 11 000 injured. Dr Rafi Strugo, who is heading the MDA team,

called Kathmandu “an atmosphere of chaos”.

“In these missions, you need to understand, and it’s hard to understand, that you won’t be able to do everything and help everyone,” Strugo, who also treated injured in Nepal after the 2013 avalanche in Annapurna, told JTA via satellite phone on Monday night.

“The dimensions of the tragedy, the dimensions of the destruction, are so big that you can’t contain it all.”

As rescue efforts intensified on Monday and Tuesday, some Israelis remained stranded far from Kathmandu. As of Tuesday evening, nine Israelis were still unaccounted for. Raviv Torati, who was travelling in south Asia after his discharge from the IDF, was in a car on the way to a music festival when the quake hit, according to his mother, Orna. The car survived the tremors and reached the festival, which was cancelled, but Raviv was stuck there with a group of fellow travellers. Four days later they were sleeping in tents and living on food prepared for the festival while they waited for rescue.

“I want him to come home already,” Orna told JTA on Monday. “I worry so much that if he’ll go to India, there could be more earthquakes or weak roads and bridges. I’m worried he’ll be on the road and – G-d forbid, I don’t want to say. We’re helpless here.”

A group of 10 Israelis hiking in Langtang National Park, 65 kilometres from Kathmandu, found each other after the quake and worked together to survive. According to Elfie Sharabi, one of the hiker’s mothers, the group built a small shelter out of bamboo to use during the aftershocks and cleared out a large open space in case a helicopter needed to land to rescue them.

Her daughter, Shani, has a satellite phone, so parents across Israel and the world have been calling Sharabi in hopes of locating their children who went missing in Langtang. Together, Elfie and Shani Sharabi helped some 40 adult children in Langtang contact their parents.

But as her phone number spread across social media, Elfie Sharabi was deluged with messages from people with relatives across Nepal. On Monday afternoon, when she spoke to JTA, Sharabi was attempting to answer 175 WhatsApp messages and 250 e-mails.

“What’s good about it is because I have to communicate with so many other people, I don’t have time,” Sharabi told JTA. “I am usually a major worrier. I don’t have time to allow myself to start thinking. I spend so much time trying to calm other people and be positive, I guess it’s rubbing off on me, too.”

While many Israeli tourists who had travelled to Nepal in search of a relaxing vacation remained tense days after the earthquake, Shinaar said Nepal’s had remained calm and, even amid the death and destruction, are focusing on supporting each other. It’s an outlook that Shinaar and his fellow volunteers, who are in Nepal for a year, hope to adopt as they begin the work of rebuilding the country.

“It’s very shocking, but because we work here we approach it differently from most of the Israeli tourists,” Shinaar wrote to JTA. “These are our communities and our people who are suffering here. There’s a lot more work to do.” (JTA)

Business

by Vanessa Valkin

Visit to Israel provides new perspective for Khumalo

Andile Khumalo, chief investment officer of MSG Afrika, the media and communications group he co-owns with business partner Given Mkhari, has recently returned from a weeklong trip to Israel that opened his eyes to the country’s remarkable innovation as well as the complexities of the political situation.

He also says that members of the South African Jewish community have played a seminal role in his business career.

MSG Afrika today has interests in radio (Power FM & Capricorn FM), TV production (Quizzical Pictures), PR and event management (The Communications Firm), print (The Quarto Press), and outdoor (Continental Outdoor Media), and operates in more than 14 African countries.

Khumalo himself hosts a show on Power FM called Power Business, which covers international markets, entrepreneurship, self-development and investment and hosts CEOs of major companies making the news.

The trip to Israel last month which included 25 of South Africa’s most promising

entrepreneurs under the age of 40, was organised by the South Africa-Israel Forum and funded by entrepreneurs Jonathan Beare and Morris Kahn.

“I did the trip because I wanted to experience the ‘start up nation’, says Khumalo in an interview with Jewish Report. “My experience of the trip was very little to do with the politics, although we were there on the day of elections and we did go to the West Bank and through the checkpoints... if anything we received quite a balanced outlook on things.”

The presentations that he and his fellow travellers were exposed to, made him realise that although there are a lot of Israel critics in South Africa, when one is “on the ground” there, ones sees “the fear and intimidation on both sides”.

“The trip opened my eyes to how complex the situation over there is,” he remarks.

While in Israel, Khumalo attended an investor conference for start-up technology businesses who were pitching to venture capitalists. He was amazed at the

sophistication of the “tech start-up scene”, he remarked.

“It was unlike anything I had seen before;” Israeli technology funders are prepared to invest large amounts of money in a few different ventures because the returns on just one success will more than make up for losses on the less-than-lucky picks. The South African tech industry has not yet reached that level of maturity, he believes, and is more averse to risk.

Khumalo now intends to fund another young entrepreneur to go on the next SAIF tour to Israel.

Some of the major turning points in his own business career, says Khumalo, have been through connections in the South African Jewish community.

After finishing accounting articles at Deloitte, he worked at Investec for two years with the legendary Andy Leith and Stephen Koseff.

“It was the steepest learning curve of my life,” he recalls. A junior analyst in investment banking is usually pushed into the back office but that did not happen for him. “I was in at the furnace of the deal negotiations.”

At Investec, people invested in their jobs as if it was their own business, and were well rewarded for this.

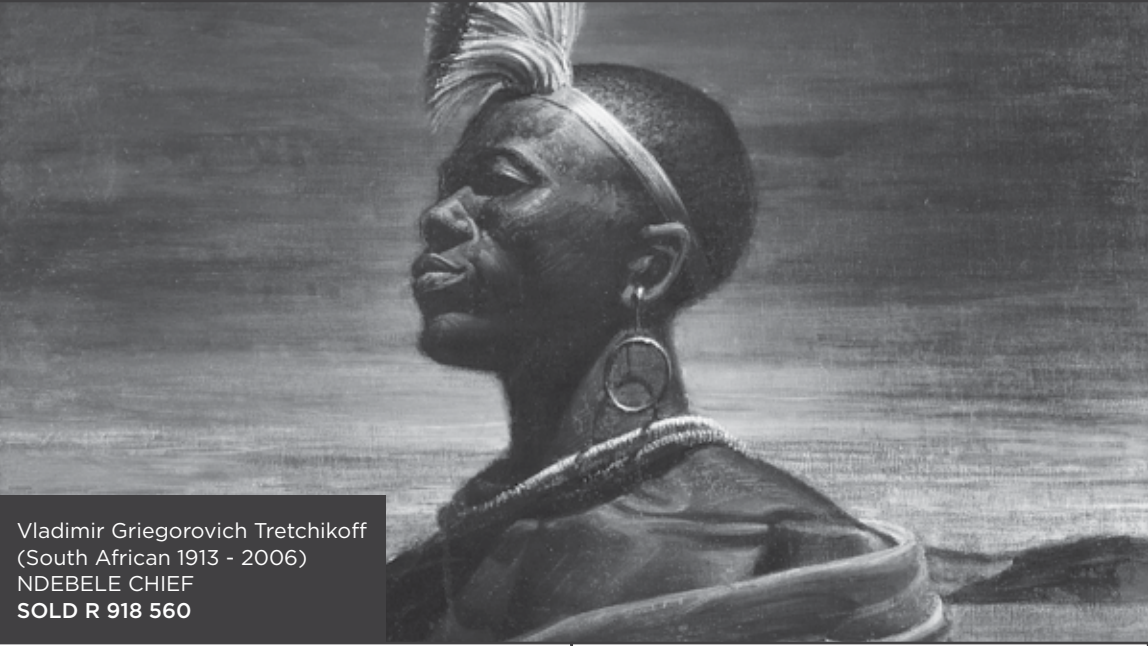
“As a young black person, you are very suspicious of corporate South Africa,” says Khumalo. “But I never felt like the black guy in the white team... everyone just put in a lot of effort.”

Investec played another key role for Khumalo when, having gone out on his own, he attended a screening of a football match at the bank’s Sandton offices during the 2010 World Cup. It was there that he met his partner

Given Mkhari, who was just building the MSG Afrika group.

Investec had just acquired a stake in MSG and wanted Mkhari to find a partner with a finance background and so, with the support of Investec, Khumalo became the third partner. The two have since bought Investec’s stake, but still have close relationships there.

For Khumalo, a key to success in business is being passionate about what one does. “I have always tried to stay away from businesses I don’t feel strongly about,” he says.



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The Editor, PO Box 84650, Greenside, 2034 email: sharon@sajewishreport.co.za

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.

RUSSIA HAS EVERY RIGHT TO INTERVENE IN UKRAINE

I would like to respond to two articles in your April 24 edition, “Transcending the anger and injustice” and “Will Russia missile deal with Iran end Israel’s silence on Ukraine?”
Unlike the artificial “rainbow nation” in South Africa (a country with completely different nations with completely different traditions and which, as a country, is a result of an agreement between the British and the Boers, which ended the Second Anglo-Boer War), Ukraine is the birthplace of the Russian nation.
It should have a good relationship with Russia

and is a victim of foreign powers forcefully ousting a democratically-elected government and installing a self-hating fascist one (which supports the same criminals who murdered Jews during the Second World War).
So, Russia has every reason to intervene in Ukraine, something which regrettably it doesn’t. There are only Russian, Chechen, Serb and other volunteers fighting for the democratic pro-Russian side, while there are Western, Croatian, other Chechen and ISIS volunteers for the regime’s side.

Israel has no reason to support a Western-installed regime which glorifies those who fought on the Nazi side during the war.
As for statues and xenophobia in South Africa. I hope and pray that the Cape will achieve independence following the 2016 municipal elections, and that statues of great people will stay while those which don’t belong in the Cape (Mandela, Chris Hani and Queen Victoria) will be removed.

Avner Eliyahu Romm, Jerusalem

JEWES CAN ONLY CALL ISRAEL THEIR ‘HOME’

I found the editorial two weeks ago, on teaching our children the meaning of freedom and the positive aspects of being part of the Jewish community in this “great democracy” of South Africa, informative.

But I feel that those words are the diametric opposite of what our children should know about living in a land which can never be called their own. They certainly cannot ever be free in any country but their own, and that country is certainly not South Africa, or any other place outside Israel.

The editorial states that our children are part of a fascinating tribe of people who have thrived wherever they have settled. This might have been true before the rebirth of Israel under Jewish sovereignty after 2 000 years of cruel exile. Since then, however, the Diaspora has become Jewry’s graveyard.

Demographers have asserted that Diaspora Jewry has lost a million of its sons and daughters in intermarriage and assimilation in the last two decades. At present we are losing 60 000 young men and women every year. As we remember the physical Shoah which claimed the lives of six million in the death camps, we state with confidence that Hashem would never permit another Shoah to befall His people. But we were wrong.

The Shoah of “Aisav” lasted six years, and ceased with the Allied victory in Europe, but the Shoah of assimilation through assimilation and intermarriage is gaining in strength every day. From a Jewish population of six million in the United States at the end of the Second World War, 70 years later the number has dwindled to less than five million and falling at a rate of 65 per cent.

At a normal birthrate the United States Jewish population should be over 30 million.

Throughout the Diaspora (even in “democratic” South Africa) Jewry is doomed, albeit at a slower rate here than in other countries.


It is fatal to deceive ourselves by assuming that Jewish day schools can preserve us; they can only postpone assimilation but not cancel it; they can only delay it, but not prevent it.

The Jewish house in the Diaspora is burning while the inhabitants are asleep. Our leaders, especially the religious ones, are silent. Lay leaders’ reluctance to encourage aliyah is understandable, but tragically many “positive” Jews and certain Chassidic sects, even affirm and justify the exile.

Young Jews in South Africa, and all of the Diaspora, are not thriving in foreign lands. They have not been meant to thrive in exile for the last 67 years. They are meant to follow the Talmudic rule that the precept of living in the Land of Israel is equivalent to the observance of all biblical precepts.

The ship of Diaspora Jewry is sinking, and the spiritual leaders are going around with their ordinary rabbinic ministrations instead of trying to save the passengers. The only way to survive from the present Shoah is to return to Eretz Yisrael, where we can truly thrive in our own land.

Choni Davidowitz
Golden Acres, Johannesburg



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It was all white and blue...



SUE BENJAMIN

Am Yisrael Chai
Yom Ha'atzmaut was celebrated at Sydenham Pre-Primary amid much festivity. Israeli flags flew proudly and the walls were decorated with beautiful murals created by the children.
The colours of blue and white featured everywhere; 67 years of independence were celebrated with lots of dancing and singing; and humus, techina and pita bread were enjoyed at snack time. The celebration ended with the singing of Hatikvah.

YC warmly greets Yom Ha'atzmaut



OWN CORRESPONDENT

In celebration of Yom Ha'atzmaut, the entire Yeshiva College campus in Johannesburg participated in a unifying davening of Hallel and the large shul was packed with learners from grade R to matric.
The atmosphere was incredibly festive, with learners dancing with Israeli flags. The davening was led by Yeshiva College Managing Director Rabbi Leron Bernstein.
One of the highlights of the Yeshiva College Primary Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations was a "tour" of the various cities in Eretz Yisrael. Each class was given a model of a city in Israel to build.
Those models were then displayed on the Yeshiva field and each class got to visit the various cities via a series of tours that were conducted courtesy of Yeshiva grade 10 boys. The day culminated in the entire campus dancing together on the field.

This is what an ambulance looks like!

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Hatzolah Medical Rescue last week visited the Torah Academy Nursery School to mark the beginning of the new month on the Jewish calendar, Rosh Chodesh Iyar.
The word Iyar is an acronym of the verse, Ani Hashem Rofecha - I am Hashem your healer!
Lennie Glasser and Alon Crouse from Hatzolah showed the children the inside of an ambulance and let them try on a real Hatzolah uniform. The Hatzolah team spoke to them about safety and the invaluable work of the organisation in saving lives.
Hatzolah also teaches high school children how to perform CPR and first aid.
Pictured are Yisroel Rodal; Alon Crouse from Hatzolah; and Dav Warharftig.



Photo: Chana Rivka Lewin



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Bilateral trade between SA-Israel, in SA’s favour

ANT KATZ

Business between South Africa and Israel is booming. The big questions are: What is it worth and how fast is it growing? Neither SA nor Israeli authorities are able to provide reliable figures, so Jewish Report tried to piece the puzzle together.

The answer would seem to be a bilateral trade relationship between the two countries of more than R21 billion in 2014. And, according to the SA Revenue Services’ published statistics, trade in goods grew by 24 per cent last year - and South Africa is the beneficiary of a substantial surplus.

While the figures are somewhat skewed by the changing value of currencies, the SARS source is quoted in rand and therefore largely discounts currency fluctuations.

The figure SARS gives for bilateral trade in the last calendar year, 2014,

is R10,3 billion. Of this figure, SA exports to Israel were valued at R7,2 billion, while South African imports from Israel were R3,1 billion - leaving South Africa with a healthy R4,1 billion surplus.

The figures, derived from the SARS website, only cover trade in goods and do not include those for tourism or services.

Bilateral trade between the two countries in the calendar year 2013, according to SARS’ statistics, totalled R8,3 billion. Again it was South Africa that enjoyed a hefty surplus as it exported goods worth R5,5 billion to the Jewish state, while importing just R2,8 billion.

The latest figures, quoted on the SARS website this week, are up to February 2015. These indicate bilateral trade between the countries of R500-odd million for the two months.

Stats-SA provides the official

figures for tourist arrivals in South Africa. Of the total 41 341 tourist arrivals in South Africa by Middle Eastern passport-holders, 22 116, or over half, were on Israeli passports.

Of these 22 116 arrivals by Israeli passport-holders, the vast majority (19 106) were coming to South Africa on holiday; 853 stated that they were coming for business purposes; 2 078 were in transit; and 49 entered South Africa to study.

SA Tourism’s figure for the average spent in South Africa by a foreign tourist flying into the country was R13 200 in 2012. Israeli tourists are likely to spend more, says an industry source, but to conservatively quantify the value of Israeli tourism to this country, it would be better to use the average.

Assuming this average increased slightly to R14 000 by 2014, it would have added about R310 million to the SA economy.

Israel’s trade consul in South Africa, Itai Melchoir, assisted Jewish Report in obtaining the official Israeli figures for South African passport-holders who travelled to Israel in 2014. These were listed as 20 000 entrances (which is likely a rounded off figure).

Here, too, the scales are weighed in South Africa’s favour. As tourism is considered an import (foreign money coming into South Africa) - this adds to South Africa’s surplus position vis- à-vis bilateral economic benefit.

What is interesting is that 4 000 of the SA tourist arrivals in Israel are listed as having been by land. Melchoir says that there is no presentation of passports between Israel and Palestine so that would mean the South African passport-holders land arrivals would have been from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan or Egypt.

The average tourist in Israel spent

\$1 549 in 2012. At today’s exchange rate that would mean SA tourists to Israel spent R18 635 each, or about R370 million in all.

Thus bilateral tourism was worth almost R700 million last year.

There are no reliable figures to quantify the value of services provided by one country to the other as they are not monitored on government databases.

From some “guestimates” from both South African and Israeli authorities, it would seem safe to assume that this figure could well exceed the trade in goods - and is probably growing at least as fast as the trade figures.

And, in terms of services, Israel would likely be selling more of these to South Africa than vice versa. This equates to a massive bilateral business relationship between the two countries in 2014. And growing fast.

Cosas claims racism at SA-Israel wheelchair ice-hockey

VANESSA VALKIN
AND OWN CORRESPONDENT

The Congress of South African Students (Cosas) in the Western Cape last Friday lodged “an official racism complaint” with the SA Human Rights Commission against GrandWest Casino in Cape Town and the Israeli Embassy, over what the student body alleged was “racism experienced at the recent ice-hockey game (for disabled athletes, where inter alia an Israeli team competed against a South African one)”.

Protesters, under the auspices of BDS South Africa, had disrupted the game by throwing marbles on the ice and had then been forcibly removed. They also threw down red paint to reflect the blood of Palestinians who “suffer under Israel’s Apartheid government”.

In a media release Cosas said: “The recent events that transpired at GrandWest Casino, exposed us to the racism Palestinians are exposed to daily by the Israeli Apartheid State.”

Cosas complained that its members had been denied entry because of “skin colour”. It said in a media release it had bought tickets to the match “with the intention of protesting against the hosting and legitimising of the apartheid state of Israel, but we (were) not allowed our right to enter. It was clear that our members were being separated and denied entry based on our skin colour.”

Michael Farr, spokesman for Sun International, owner of GrandWest Casino, said that any accusation of racial profiling is “untrue”. “All persons with tickets to the game were allowed access following a security search.”

Farr pointed out that the protesters who threw marbles had endan-



gered the lives of the players. “We felt our behaviour was appropriate.”

Cosas also alleged that “men in black” who said they worked for Israeli Ambassador Arthur Lenk, “were very brutal and violent towards us. They made racist remarks and the security of GrandWest Casino were implicated”.

Besides lodging a complaint with the Human Rights Commission, Cosas also intended lodging a complaint against Ambassador Lenk and the “Embassy of the Apartheid State of Israel”, as the security indicated that Lenk had told them not to (allow) black people in and against GrandWest “as they were the venue and are responsible”.

MDA-SA heeds Beit Emanuel’s anti-xenophobia food appeal



ANT KATZ

Magen David Adom South Africa, played an important middle-man role in heeding Beit Emanuel’s call for foodstuffs to help in its anti-xenophobia campaign.

MDA-SA Chairman Mark Hyman told the Jewish Report that his organisation had put up the funds which ensured that 4 500 meals of e’Pap were delivered.

E’Pap is a concentrated, highly nutritional food product that saw its inventor (and co-owner of e’Pap Technologies), Basil Kransdorff, becoming a finalist in the Jewish Report-hosted Absa Jewish Achiever Awards in the unlisted companies category in 2013.

“When we heard of the people’s plight,” said Hyman, “we immediately put together the funds required to assist.”

Hyman approached Kransdorff who agreed to give MDA-SA such a substantial discount that MDA-SA was able to hand “roughly twice” as many meals to Beit Emanuel’s Rabbi Sa’ar Shaked. The distribution was handled by Beit Emanuel.

Rabbi Shaked thanked MDA-SA for “sharing with us the great mitzvah of stretching out our hand to those in need.

“Our sacred Torah commands us 37 times to love the stranger; one of the most famous of them demands that ‘The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your G-d.’ (Leviticus 19:34)

“You, the people of Magen David Adom had already proven on many occasions that when it comes to saving life, you don’t differentiate between blood to blood. Your Magen David is red when you assist all human beings, for the blood of all human beings is red.”



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What's On

Sunday (May 3)

• RCHCC rescreens by popular demand "Gett: The Trial of Viviane Amsalem. Venue: Clive M Beck Auditorium. Time: 19:30. Donation: R70 (incl refreshments). Booking: Hazel or René (011) 728-8088/8378, A/H (011) 728-8378, e-mail: rchcc@telkomsa.net or rene.s@telkomsa.net or www.greatpark.co.za

• Second Innings hosts Robyn Sassen, freelance art critic, on "Five Women Artists And How They Changed The Art World". Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres. Time: 10:00 for 10:30. Cost: R20 members, R30 visitors (incl tea and light refreshments). Contact: Linda Fleishman (011) 532-9701.

Monday (May 4)

• UJW adult education division hosts Michael Freeman, Israeli deputy ambassador, on "Heroes & Hotels:

Tuesday (May 5)

• The Lewandowski Chorale screens a fundraiser, "Harris's Story" Venue: RCHCC. Time: 19:30. Booking essential. Information: Di 082-338-4462 or (011) 726-1559.

• UJW adult education division hosts Estelle Sher, musicologist and JPO lecturer, on "A Programme of Music and Discussion Based on the Current JPO Programme". Venue: Home of Stella Beder: 104 Pembury Lodge, 1 Kernick Avenue, Melrose North. Time: 10:00. Donation: R35. Contact: UJW office (011) 648-1053.

Wednesday (May 6)

• UJW adult education division hosts Dr Lorraine Chaskalson , former lecturer

Hamburgers & Hi-Tech: Israel in 2015". Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 09:30. Donation: R35. Contact: UJW office (011) 648-1053.

in the Dept of English at Wits, on "Contemporary Poetry and Its Relevance to Our Own Lives". Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 09:30. Donation: R35. Contact: UJW office (011) 648-1053.

• South African Rugby Legends Association, Food & Trees for Africa & NSRI, celebrate three of South Africa's legendary world champions - Jodi Scheckter, Joel Stransky & Shaun Thompson at a gala dinner. Chester Missing will be in comedy action. A charity auction will be held in aid of SARLA. Venue: Sandton Shul, Time: 18:30 for 19:00. Cost: R18 000 per table of 10. Contact:Tanya@richmark.co.za or 084-523-7773.

• Beit Emanuel hosts a Lag B'Omer bonfire in the shul garden. Time: 18:30.

Friday (May 8)

• UZLC hosts Prof. Tshilidzi Marsala on "Modelling Interstate Conflict". Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 -

14:00. Contact: Gloria 072-127-9421 or (011) 485-4851.

Sunday (May 10)

• Second Innings hosts Michael Sieff, CEO, Chevrah Kadisha, on "Almost Everything You Want To Know About The Chev". Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres. Time: 10:00 for 10:30. Cost: R20 members, R30 visitors (incl tea and light refreshments). Contact: Linda Fleishman (011) 532-9701.

• Big Band Music Appreciation Society meets at St John's College Auditorium, Houghton. Time: 14:15 sharp. There'll be a short DVD on a selection of Big Band performances followed by an audio programme presented by Ian Young, "These are Some of my Favourite Swings". A DVD will be screened, "Best of the Big Bands - Artie Shaw and Friends. Enquiries: Marilyn 072-243-7436 or Jack 082-450-7622.

Community Columns

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Community opens its heart to xenophobia victims

As I write, the National Office of the Board is preparing to send to Durban a truckload of essential provisions collected by Johannesburg Jewry for xenophobia victims.

It says a lot about how generously the community responded to the Board's appeal for donations, that even after we had contributed to the two main sites dealing with xenophobia victims in Gauteng, we have been able to send a further 80 boxes of material to KwaZulu-Natal, which has been particularly hard hit by the violence. I commend and thank our community for this wonderful and heart-warming response.

On Monday South Africans celebrated Freedom Day, marking 21 years since the inaugural elections that launched a new era of multiracial democracy in our country.

It is especially at these times of profound concern that we all feel over the attacks on foreign nationals, that we need to embrace anew the values of human rights and zero tolerance for all forms of discrimination that underpin our society. The latest xenophobia crisis demonstrated how easily these basic values can be forgotten when anger and hatred are allowed to get out of control.

Over the weekend, unfortunately, we witnessed another instance in which the non-racial, democratic ethos of this country was undermined, this time by no less than the president of the Student Representative Council at Wits University, Mcebo Freedom Dlamini.

In an exchange with others commenting on his Facebook site, Dlamini made a series of hateful comments about Jews, including endorsing assertions that Hitler knew what he was doing in perpetrating the Holocaust and expressing agreement with the notorious "Christ killers" decide libel



Above Board
Mary Kluk
National Chairman

that has been used to propagate anti-Jewish hatred for nearly two millennia. He further expressed unabashed admiration for Hitler and what he had achieved.

Wits Vice Chancellor Adam Habib was quick to come out with a statement deploring these comments and unequivocally dissociating the university from them. We are following up with his office to ascertain what further action is being contemplated against the individual concerned.

In addition, a formal complaint of anti-Semitic hate speech has been lodged against Dlamini with the SA Human Rights Commission, and we are providing as much support that we can to the SA Union of Jewish Students, whose members have been most immediately affected by this incident. The core mandate of the SAJBD is to protect SA Jewry

against anti-Semitism in all its forms.

We will not, indeed cannot, allow people to get away with such defamatory attacks, especially when they hold representative office. Such overt incitement to hatred, in addition to being offensive and hurtful in and of themselves, is also dangerous in the country where, as the xenophobic violence so starkly demonstrated, hate speech can easily lead to acts of violence against those targeted. This point was clearly stressed in our submission to the SAHRC.

As in the past, the Board will leave no stone unturned in ensuring that this reprehensible behaviour is appropriately dealt with and that a strong message is sent out that those who engage in anti-Semitic hate speech, will be held accountable for their actions.

• Listen to Charisse Zeifert on Jewish Board Talk, 101.9
ChaiFM every Friday 12:00 - 13:00.

This column paid for by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies



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Follow the stories as they evolve

A weekly newspaper is sometimes like a car with a faulty choke, it chugs along, week by week, offering readers news that happened over the past week.

A website, however, can be updated 24/7 so when an evolving story occurs, as was the case on Sunday in Nepal, web stories are constantly refreshed and replaced by new ones. However, they live on the Internet forever! There are currently 10 386 content items on www.sajr.co.za and all are accessible through Google Search.

In the coming week several stories will play out: The Nzimande visa issue; The multiple disciplinary issues between Wits and the SRC President Dlamini; and Looking for almost 100 Israelis still missing in Nepal - among others.

Visit www.sajr.co.za/LATEST daily and you will find the latest posts & user-chirps.



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Healing through sport

ILAN HERRMANN

Cape Town was the setting for the 4th stop of the 7 series ITC Triathlon World Championships. The triathlon which took place last week-end had representation from 36 countries.

The event will be remembered, however, for a most remarkable group of athletes who were hailed and applauded by commentators, spectators and participants alike for a heroic show of courage, strength and hope. The group was a five-person Israeli Para-Athletics team who raced under the banner of the Tikvot organisation of whom they are a part.

Tikvot in Hebrew means “Hopes”. It is a non-

profit, volunteer-based organisation that rehabilitates Israel’s wounded soldiers and victims of terror through the medium of sport. It was formed in 2007 by former South Africans Jeff Essakow, Rocky Muravitz (current chairman), Vic Essakow and Udi Udelman from Israel.

The director of Tikvot and race organiser was Simone Farbstein, assisted by Tikvot volunteer Ora Rov, formerly Melmed, both expats.

The para-athletes were Michael Katzanelon 55, Moshe Zibersky 42, Adir Mizrahi 40, Yael Inbar 39 and Dvir Avizrat 34. They have been training as triathletes for three years and usually have a six-day-a-week training schedule of about two to three hours each day.

The para-athletic Israeli triathlon group was formed by Farbstein and two of the athletes, Adir and Dvir, and has since grown to comprise 20 athletes.

The Cape Town event consisted of a swim of 1,5km, biking for 40km and a 10km run. The swim had to be cancelled, however, due to intensely low water temperatures on the day.

The athletes did the standard triathlon distance while Michael, called “Katza”, participated in the other event which was the “sprint triathlon”, that being half the distance of the standard race. This is the first international triathlon outside of Israel that these athletes have competed in. Back home they do about seven triathlons a year.

It is important to remember that the Tikvot group competed against regular bodied athletes in all events.

The crowd who watched the Tikvot team in action in Cape Town, could not stop cheering them on. Some Jewish day school learners also took part in the race with some of them racing along with the Tikvot athletes and wearing Tikvot shirts.

In turn, the athletes came away with an unforgettable and enriching experience, having been embraced, supported and loved by all whom they came into contact with during their visit. “They can’t get over the amazing warmth and hospitality of the community,” said Farbstein.

While this was all taking place, another Tikvot athlete Eitan Chermom, was racing in the London Marathon and incredibly took the gold medal in the Paralympic Marathon event.

Tikvot facilitates approximately 600 people a year. It strives to help wounded victims of terror or soldiers injured through military action, to overcome their pain, trauma and disability and to rebuild productive lives.

These defenders of the State of Israel often have to cope with a long period of hospitalisation and overcome numerous physical and mental problems.

It’s a lot about rebuilding confidence, self-esteem and strengthening morale and helping them believe that they can still succeed and achieve great things despite the setback they have experienced.

Tikvot is not funded by the government but entirely by donors who identify with their cause. Its programmes cater to all ages, including children, and to people with all types of injuries.

Tikvot athletes have won world championships in respective sports and many inspiring stories have emerged with victims of terror advancing through the treatment to go on to achieve sporting and professional successes.

It is well known that South Africa has a long

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