



Jews will always find a welcoming home in Israel says Jewish Agency Chairman Natan Sharansky (page 10)

# South African Jewish Report

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Protesters rally outside the South African Zionist Federation Conference and the SA/Israel Expo on Sunday where chants such as “You Jews do not belong in South Africa” and “You think this is Israel, we are going to kill you” could be heard. The protest, organised by BDS-South Africa with representatives from the ANC Youth League, Congress of South African Students and some others who were reportedly shipped in from a neighbouring township without them knowing why they were present, topped off a week of anti-Israel activity across student campuses as part of Israel Apartheid Week. In response, the SAZF Conference, titled Israel: Nation of Creation, with its strong focus on the contributions of Israel to the world, served as a very successful counter strike to the negativity being espoused at its doorstep. See page 3.

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**Rabbi Ari Kievman**  
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# Mishkan can only be built with wisdom of the heart



Parshat Vayakhel-Pekudei

Rabbi Adrian M Schell  
Bet David, Morningside

There are two modes of revelation in the Torah. One mode is that of Sinai; revelation comes from a mountain top, in the form of laws and principles. The law treats everyone equally, Divine in origin, and descends to touch every member of the Covenant with its truths.

The other mode is that of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle. As the Israelite people build the Mishkan, they rely on their inner wisdom and individual gifts. Although the pattern of the Mishkan comes from G-d, the gifts that make the sanctuary what it is, come from the depth of the human heart.

Both of these models appear in our Parshat Vayakhel-Pekudei. Moses assembles the

community and reminds them of Shabbat. He is communicating in the mode of Sinai, in which law is paramount. Yet, Moses then moves into a second mode.

He says: “These are the things G-d has commanded: Take from you a gift for the Eternal. All those whose hearts are willing shall bring a gift for the Eternal” (Sh’mot 35:5). The Mishkan cannot be built only according to law. It must be built by those whose hearts are willing.

The people respond to this plea. “Every-one whose heart lifted him up, and everyone who was moved by a spirit of generosity, came bringing the gift of the Eternal for the work... all who were generous of heart” (Sh’mot 35:21-22).

Rabbi J Hammer points out that the Israelites respond not out of obedience, but because their hearts speak to them: “As the Mishkan grows in beauty, every single Israelite becomes part of the process of putting it together. The beauty of it comes from the

beauty of the generous-spirited hearts that design and build it.

“So too, we can only build a sacred community when the wisdom of the individual heart has a recognised place alongside the sacred text.”

There is a spiritual model that teaches us to distrust the heart, mind, and body and trust only the wisdom of sacred text. Yet the Torah tells us that the Mishkan cannot be built without the wisdom of the heart.

The Talmud (Berachot 55a) makes this very point in a midrash about the chief artist of the Mishkan. In this midrash, Moses gives instructions for the building of the Mishkan that are different from what G-d instructed - instead of G-d’s commandment to build first the Mishkan, then the Ark and at the end, the vessels, Moses instructs Betzalel to build the Ark first, followed by the vessels, and at the end, the Mishkan.

Betzalel intuitively feels that something is wrong and asks for clarification. Through Betzalel’s

inner wisdom, he has intuited what G-d wants, and the midrash implies that G-d agrees with him rather than Moses.

This fact seems to imply that the understanding of the inner sense can be just as revelatory, than obedience to text. Although it is true that the heart cannot always be trusted, sometimes our inner knowing helps us to see a different, perhaps even a more accurate truth, if we are listening to our hearts.

Shabbat Times		
Shabbat Vayakhel Pekudei		
March 13/22 Adar		
March 14/23 Adar		
18:09	18:57	Johannesburg
18:15	19:40	Cape Town
17:58	18:47	Durban
18:15	19:06	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:11	Port Elizabeth
18:11	19:01	East London

## Ludwick Mamabola goes for gold in Jerusalem Marathon

### OWN CORRESPONDENT

South African ultra marathon great, Ludwick Mamabola (pictured), has joined the Unity Challenge South African delegation to the Jerusalem Marathon 2015, being run today (Friday, March 13).

ORT SA said in a media release that Ludwick, who won the Comrades Marathon in 2014 and was the first South African to do so since 2005, has been preparing for the ultimate prize in Jerusalem.

“The hilly course of Jerusalem will be used by Ludwick as an official preparation run as he endeavours to win this year’s down run in the 90th Comrades Marathon



(between Pietermaritzburg and Durban).

“The Unity Challenge, a joint project of Mizrahi South Africa, ORT South Africa and the South African Zionist Federation is proud to be sending its second delegation to Israel to run the Jerusalem Marathon,” ORT stated.

Joshua Gavronsky, one of the organisers from South Africa (for Mizrahi), said the team of South African runners would be led by Mamabola. “This year he is expected to win the Unity Challenge.

“Ludwick has been dreaming of this [going to Israel to represent his country] for many years and he is thrilled to be there, leading his comrades from South Africa on the world stage in Jerusalem,” Gavronsky told SA Jewish Report.

As part of his trip, Mamabola is also scheduled to speak at a number of media conferences and charity events throughout Israel, showcasing the interest that the running world and people in general have in South Africa, in his achievements, his story and also in support of his historic run in Jerusalem.

- For further details, please contact: [www.unitychallenge.co.za](http://www.unitychallenge.co.za) info@unitychallenge.co.za or call Joshua Gavronsky, at Mizrahi South Africa (011) 485-3624 or Marcelle Ravid, at ORT South Africa (011) 728-7154, or e-mail them at, [josh@mizrachi.org.za](mailto:josh@mizrachi.org.za) [marcelle@ortsa.org.za](mailto:marcelle@ortsa.org.za)

## Reichental’s tale of survival resonates with SA audiences



MARLENE BETHLEHEM

Tomi Reichental, a survivor of Bergen-Belsen Concentration camp, had audiences in South Africa spellbound with his harrowing tale of survival. Reichental was a boy of nine at the time and has written a book called I Was A Boy In Belsen. He has spoken all over the world.

The Nashua Children’s Charity Foundation and the Jewish Women’s Benevolent Society brought him to South Africa. He spoke in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. One of the remarkable events associated with his visit was a dinner at Investec on Tuesday March 3, where he addressed 250 people, including Israeli Ambassador Arthur Lenk.

The evening commenced with a very unusual musical item. The MC Garbai School from Lenasia, a Muslim school for hard-of-hearing pupils, played a selection of music on marimbas, traditional African xylophones.

At a brunch on Sunday, March 1 for 400 people and at a dinner for 250, Reichental received a standing ovation. He also spoke in Cape Town on March 4 and in Durban the following day.

The Benevolent, which has given 121 years of service to the Jewish community, is the oldest women’s organisation in Johannesburg. As well as making sure the memory of the Holocaust is never forgotten, the Benevolent also strives to build bridges of friendship with other communities.

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# Positivity at successful SAZF Conference despite hate on doorstep



VANESSA VALKIN

This past weekend saw a notable gathering of Jewish communal leaders at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg for the 48th Annual South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) Conference. The theme was Israel: Nation of Creation, a very welcome, positive paradigm in which to narrate and think about Israel in a week that saw university campuses grapple with Israel Apartheid Week and Sandton police and our own Community Security Organisation hold off a crowd of BDS South Africa supporters outside the Convention Centre.

The conference, which is held every four years, kicked off on Saturday night with a formidable line-up of speakers. These included Chairman of the Jewish Agency Natan Sharansky; Mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barkat; Israeli Ambassador Arthur Lenk; and Canadian Member of Parliament, Former minister of Justice, and attorney general of Canada Irwin Cotler.

All the speakers expressed deep admiration for the work of the SAZF to strengthen bonds between South African Jews and Israel, and in nurturing the South African community’s support for Israel. Much homage was paid to outgoing SAZF Chairman Avrom Krengel for his committed 13 years of service. The new chairman is Ben Swartz and vice-chairmen are Harold Jacobs, Mark Hyman, Nicci Raz, Stuart Stone, and Tamar Lazarus. Krengel will remain on as president.

On Sunday special observers and delegates of the various organisations under the umbrella of the SAZF participated in a series of sessions. The first one, Unity, Diversity and Dissent, became quite heated, much to the audience’s delight, as youth leaders from Habonim, Netzer and community activist and organiser Ari Kruger, crossed the lines into dissent themselves.

Particularly interesting was a session called, Africa Rising: Does Israel have a Role to Play? Caylee Talpert from the Pears Programme for Global Innovation at Tel Aviv University, spoke about their work in creating Israeli ventures that address challenges in the developing world.

She also pointed to the ironic fact that the most impoverished segment, those 3,7 billion people living on less than \$3 a day, represented a \$5 trillion dollar market for enterprises in communications and energy, among others. Itai Melchior, trade representative for the Israeli Embassy, noted that there was more than R10 billion in trade between South Africa and Israel a year.

At the same time as the sessions, the first-ever South Africa/Israel Expo took place on the ground floor. More than 120 exhibitors including local and Israeli communal organi-

sations as well as local and Israeli businesses, had a much needed opportunity to educate visitors on their ideologies, products and programmes.

And ironically, as the Expo drew crowds, and delegates discussed Israel’s contributions to the world, down below at the corner of Maude Street, about 200 (although estimates of numbers varied) protesters gathered under the auspices of BDS-SA, chanting “You think this is Israel, we are going to kill you” and “no Zionist conference be held on our soil”.

Although Bheki Cele, deputy minister and member of the ANC’s National Executive Committee, was scheduled to attend the protest, he did not. But others like Deputy Minister Obed Bapela spoke, attacking the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, and falsely accusing a Jewish marshal of assaulting a protester.

The police and CSO did a remarkable job of keeping the protesters at bay, even though a few of them did try to approach the entrance.

As the protest outside drew to a close, the last session occurring upstairs was probably the most poignant. The topic was The Four Horsemen of the Middle East: Major Threats to the Jewish World. While an internationally acclaimed reporter who did not want her name mentioned, dissected the major threat we know as ISIS, new SAZF Chairman Ben Swartz and Professor Cotler, in different ways, called on the community and its leaders to step up and defend itself against outside threats.

Talking about Iran, Cotler urged the audience to focus less on the now too familiar threat of its nuclear capability and more on its horrific human rights abuses, as a way to move decision-makers to comprehend the real threat of that country and to protect against it.

Swartz talked about the domino effect of the BDS movement in South Africa, from the Durban Conference in 2001 to recent months where students on campuses have stood up and said “Shoot the Jew” or called for the deregistration of Jewish students.

“In the Diaspora, Jews have an obligation to defend and support Israel, and we need to step up and bat and get involved in our community, and thereby strengthen Israel,” Swartz said.

“BDS threatened to destroy our conference but we took them out,” he said in reflection after the weekend.

“We went out on the campuses (for Israel Apartheid week) with beautiful messages and we topped off this week at the SAZF Conference talking about uplifting Africa and agricultural miracles in Israel. We had nothing to do with their (BDS) narrative of hate. We left the police to deal with the haters, while we focused on what is good and exciting.”

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# Who’s who in Israel’s election?

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When Israelis head to the polls for the March 17 elections, 26 parties will be vying for the Knesset’s 120 seats - including such fringe groups as the Pirate Party, which supports total government transparency and freedom of information on the Internet, and the Green Leaf party, which advocates marijuana legalisation.

Fewer than a dozen, though, are likely to earn the 3,25 per cent of the popular vote necessary to enter the Knesset. They fall broadly into five major blocs.

**RIGHT WING**

*Major parties:* Israel’s biggest political bloc, the right wing or its offshoots have led Israel for the past 14 years. The flagship Likud favours a hawkish foreign policy and most of its lawmakers oppose Palestinian statehood. On economic policy, the party tacks conservative, promoting free markets, privatisation of state industries and reduced regulation.

Current polls show Likud running neck and neck atop the polls with the centre-left Zionist Union, which stands the best chance of unseating current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

To Likud’s right is Jewish Home, a religious pro-settler party that also favours free market reform. Historically a sectoral party representing Israel’s religious Zionist community, Jewish Home has successfully broadened its base in recent years by emphasising its opposition to Palestinian statehood and its efforts to reduce Israel’s high cost of living. Jewish Home is predicted to come in fourth or fifth in the balloting.

Smaller right-wing parties include Yisrael Beiteinu, a faction originally founded to promote Russian immigrant interests that was hit with a major corruption scandal weeks after elections were called last year. Also competing is the far-right Yachad party, a unification of hard-line Orthodox politicians and West Bank settlers.

*People to watch:* Benjamin Netanyahu, 65, the Likud chairman and current prime minister, is vying for his fourth term. His campaign has emphasised his strong stance on defence issues and the dangers of a nuclear Iran, but he has drawn intense criticism for his controversial speech to the US Congress on that topic earlier this month.

He has also been blamed in recent weeks for using excessive public funds on personal expenses like ice cream and alcohol. After negotiating for eight months with the Palestinian Authority last year, he has vowed in this campaign not to withdraw from the West Bank. First elected prime minister in 1996, Netanyahu won again in 2009 and was re-elected to a third term in 2013.

Naftali Bennett, 42, Israel’s economy minister and chairman of Jewish Home, has touted his hawkish, free-market bona fides and recruited secular candidates to the party. A hi-tech entrepreneur and past leader of the settlement movement, Bennett, 42, has starred in a range of goofy campaign ads, dressing up as a hipster and a nurse, and reading aloud a series of faux



children’s novels about government policy.

Eli Yishai, 52, chairman of Yachad, previously led the Sephardi Orthodox Shas party, from which he broke last year. Yishai had pushed Shas rightward by opposing West Bank withdrawal and urging the prosecution of African asylum seekers.

Avigdor Lieberman, 56, Yisrael Beiteinu’s chairman, is Israel’s foreign minister but may see his influence recede as his party’s Knesset representation shrinks. Lieberman campaigned this year on pledges to include Umm al-Fahm, an Arab-Israeli city, in a future Palestinian state and to sentence terrorists to death.

**LEFT WING**

*Major parties:* Israel’s flagship left-wing party, Labor, is resurgent this year after joining lists with the center-left Hatnuah to form the Zionist Union. The combined slate has emerged as Likud’s main competition, leading in most polls by a razor-thin margin. Zionist Union has run a largely negative campaign against Netanyahu while pledging to return Israel to Labor’s social-democratic ethos, pushing for a two-state solution and promising to improve Israel’s relations with the United States and Europe.

To the Zionist Union’s left is Meretz, which takes staunchly leftist positions on a range of issues, including Israeli-Palestinian peace, LGBT rights, separation of religion and state, and socialist economic policies. Meretz’s poll numbers have shrunk as Zionist Union’s have risen, but the party is still hovering above the electoral threshold.

*People to watch:* If Netanyahu loses, Israel’s next prime minister will almost certainly be Isaac Herzog, co-chairman of Zionist Union. Herzog, 54, is a soft-spoken politician whose supporters tout his ability to build consensus. The son of Israel’s sixth president, Herzog, known by his nickname, “Bougie”, is a 12-year Knesset veteran and has served in a range of ministerial positions.

Tzipi Livni, 56, Herzog’s co-chairman, has shifted from right to centre-left during a lengthy political career. Originally a senior official in Likud, Livni joined the centrist Kadima in 2005, where she served as foreign minister. She resigned from Kadima after losing its chairmanship, founding Hatnuah in 2012. In December,

she merged Hatnuah with Labour and has continued her vocal advocacy of Israeli-Palestinian peace.

A rising star in Zionist Union is Stav Shaffir, 29, a firebrand first elected to the Knesset in 2013 after taking a leading role in Israel’s 2011 social protests. As a lawmaker, Shaffir has been an outspoken advocate of fiscal transparency. To her left is Zehava Galon, 59, Meretz’s chairman, a Russian immigrant who has been a leading supporter of civil liberties since she entered the Knesset in 1999.

**CENTRE**

*Major parties:* Israel’s most unpredictable political bloc, the centre has two major parties. Yesh Atid, the current Knesset’s largest party, was founded ahead of the 2013 elections and passed landmark legislation mandating army service for some haredi Orthodox Israelis. The party has also pushed for a range of economic and religious reforms. In this campaign, Yesh Atid has focused on fighting corruption, reforms to help the middle-class and Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. Current polls predict Yesh Atid will finish third or fourth.

The fresh face in this election cycle is Kulanu, founded last year by former Likud minister Moshe Kachlon. The party has focused on economic reforms, pledging to increase competition in the housing and banking sectors. Despite the initial hype surrounding its creation, Kulanu has recently muddled in the polls and is slated to receive about eight seats.

*People to watch:* Yair Lapid, 51, a former TV journalist and head of Yesh Atid, entered the Knesset as a charismatic political neophyte in 2013. After two roller-coaster years as finance minister under Netanyahu, Lapid’s message this campaign is that he is a responsible politician with staying power who will continue his spate of reforms.

Kulanu Chairman Moshe Kachlon, 54, was formerly Netanyahu’s communications minister, but left Likud in 2013. As minister, Kachlon, who grew up in a working-class home, engineered increased competition and lower prices in Israel’s cellphone market. Fourth on his list is Michael Oren, Israel’s former ambassador to Washington and Kulanu’s point man on foreign policy. Oren will likely be the next Knesset’s only American-

born member.

**HAREDI ORTHODOX**

*Major parties:* The two main haredi parties are the Sephardic Shas and United Torah Judaism, a merger of several Ashkenazi haredi parties. Both have pledged to reinstate several policies benefiting haredim that were rolled back by Yesh Atid.

United Torah Judaism’s main issues are government support for yeshivas (including stipends for fulltime students), continued haredi control of the Chief Rabbinate, social services for low-income haredim and the restoration of exemptions from military service for fulltime yeshiva students.

Shas advocates more moderate versions of those policies as well as increased social services for poor families, many of whom are of Middle Eastern descent and vote for Shas even though they are not themselves haredi. Shas has seen its poll numbers decline following Eli Yishai’s departure and the 2013 death of Ovadia Yosef, the movement’s spiritual leader.

*People to watch:* Aryeh Deri, 56, Shas’ chairman, won 17 seats for the party in 1999 elections only to wind up in prison on bribery charges a year later. The charismatic Deri retook the helm of Shas following the 2013 elections and has focused his campaign on economic reforms to benefit poor families and fighting discrimination against Middle Eastern Jews.

**ARAB-ISRAELIS**

*Major parties:* The three small Arab parties - the secular Balad, Arab-Jewish Communist Hadash and religious Ra’am-Ta’al - united ahead of this election into the Joint List, which favours increased efforts to combat anti-Arab discrimination, recognition of national rights for Israel’s Arab minority and the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza and eastern Jerusalem.

Arab parties have never served in a coalition government and historically have been under-represented as a proportion of the Arab-Israeli population, currently about one-fifth of the country. The party has pledged not to join the governing coalition, but the Joint List could become Israel’s third-largest party, which may allow it to lead the Knesset opposition.

*People to watch:* The Joint List’s chairman is Ayman Odeh, 40, an attorney who previously represented the Arab-Jewish left-wing Hadash party on the Haifa City Council. Odeh has said that along with protesting discrimination, he wants to constructively influence Israel’s economic, social and cultural legislation.

Two of the most outspoken Arab-Israeli members of Knesset have been lawmakers Ahmad Tibi, 56, a former adviser to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, and Hanin Zouabi, 45. Israel’s Central Elections Committee banned Zoabi from running in the elections due to accusations that she supports terrorism, but Israel’s Supreme Court overturned the ban. The party’s sole Jewish member is Dov Khenin, 57, a well-known leftist activist who in 2008 ran for mayor of Tel Aviv. (JTA)

## How Netanyahu’s US Congress speech played in Israel

**BEN SALES**  
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In America, pundits and politicians are wondering what Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s speech will mean for the next few months, years, even decades of US-Israel and US-Iranian relations.

In Israel, everyone is focused on the next two weeks, with the elections coming up on March 17.

Since the speech was announced in January, Netanyahu’s critics have accused him of using the US Capitol stage

to boost his polls ahead of the election. Supporters say his only intention is to defend his country from a looming threat. And in Israel, where there isn’t much political debate on the need to prevent an Iranian nuclear weapon, reactions to the speech all addressed one question: What does this mean for the ballot box?

“There’s no doubt that the pictures of Congress giving a standing ovation can have a positive influence on the voters,” said Efraim Inbar, director of the Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies. “Israelis understand that the criticism of him was political. Israelis understand

that Israel-US relations are strong.”

In Israel’s newspapers, responses to the speech, as always, fell along ideological lines. At the pro-Netanyahu daily Israel Hayom, Boaz Bismuth, under the headline “The speech of a historic moment”, wrote that Netanyahu succeeded in transcending politics, as “there are moments in which a leader does what he does not for votes, but for the children... There are moments in history that a leader makes happen.”

Elsewhere, pundits were more sceptical of the prime minister’s goals. Nahum Barnea, a staunch Netanyahu critic at

Yediot Aharonot, wrote that Netanyahu created “a golden opportunity to leave an impression on voters in Israel, and used it to the fullest”.

Netanyahu has been emphasising the Iranian threat throughout the campaign, despite polls showing that voters care more about economics this time around. Oded Eran, a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies, said in light of that, Netanyahu’s speech would not influence the polls, as “there are problems of housing and cost of living and healthcare, and he didn’t change anything in this respect”.

But at the left-wing Haaretz, Yossi Verter wrote that refocusing the campaign was the speech’s key success. Now, Israelis will all be talking about Netanyahu’s marquee issue: Iran.

“It’s too early to say whether Bibi’s appearance on Capitol Hill two weeks before the election will stanch his Likud party’s steady decline in the polls and leave him in office for another term,” Verter wrote.

“What’s certain is that this week will be dominated by the issue Netanyahu and his campaign staff want to highlight: security, security, security.” (JTA)

# Whose story about Israel will you believe?



## TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

What is Israel’s real story behind the surface of pro- and anti-propaganda? The SAZF Conference last weekend tried to give an answer. BDS-SA gives another.

One insightful - but for South Africans, embarrassing - moment was when Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat, compared annual murder rates in Jerusalem and South Africa.

In “violence-ridden” Jerusalem, with its pervasive image in the media of political unrest, bombings and hatred, just one person per 100 000 was murdered annually, he said. In the supposedly peaceful place where the conference was being held, the figure was 39! Clearly, Israel has a problem in how its story is told.

This is echoed in the contest between BDS-SA and the SAZF, between Israel’s haters and admirers. BDS demonstrators tout the well-trodden theme of “apartheid Israel”. The conference, however, described an enlightened, safe society, the only Middle East democracy; the only country in the region where Christian numbers are growing in contrast to the Muslim states where they are persecuted, where women’s rights, Arab rights, religious rights, gay rights and others are protected.

The SAZF Conference was talking to the converted, however. Sadly, in South African society at large, BDS’ story is the one most people listen to. As Canadian human rights lawyer Irwin Cotler said in his address, supporters of Israel needed to somehow reclaim the narrative and show it as a force for good, not the malignant

The dance card had been completed before the ball began. The streets outside the SA-Israel Expo that took place in Sandton at the weekend, were always going to see protests and picketing, demeaning and denial and the regular well-worn toasts to hatred, to racism and to anti-Semitism. So no-one was surprised or even disappointed. It was pretty much business as usual.

Except for one startling aspect: Mainstream South African press on Monday morning reported that the BDS “bussed in” protesters who had no idea as to why they were there. They quote a woman from an impoverished area with a prettier name than it warrants - Orange Farm - that she was not aware as to why she was there or whom she was supporting or even protesting against.

And she was not the only one. It seems that the “catchment” area for the BDS rent-a-crowd was this area situated around 45 km to the south of Johannesburg.

The irony of this should not be allowed to go unnoticed. Orange Farm has a population of around 100 000 people. It is an “informal settlement” with few paved roads and has most people living in shacks. Only small areas of Orange Farm have been electrified.

Access to clean water is limited and when it rains, the “dongas” on the roads fill with muddy water that makes living there almost impossible. It is poverty-stricken with more than 40 per cent of the population unemployed.

It is a stain on South Africa’s record of transformation. Its people are desperate, but they have done nothing to deserve being exploited, being paraded and being used to further a political and racial goal of an organisation that claims to support human rights, but ignores their plight.

entity BDS portrayed.

And to show up the totalitarian regimes - the Muslim ones and others that are ignored by BDS - for the human rights violators they are. And support the minorities being oppressed under their rule, like the Kurds and Christians.

The aim is not to eliminate opposing stories about Israel. Differing narratives are essential in any healthy society - including Israel and South Africa.

“Nations and peoples are largely the stories they feed themselves,” says Booker Prize-winning Nigerian author Ben Okri. But are all stories acceptable?

Tensions exist in Israel over this, sometimes with unfortunate outcomes. This year the Israel Prize - the country’s highest honour, presented annually on Yom Ha’atzmaut in a state ceremony in Jerusalem - will not be awarded in the Literature category, because of a battle between left and right over which stories pass muster.

This is because Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu - who currently also holds the Education Ministry portfolio - tried to fire certain members of the judging panel for their leftist views, saying the panel comprised too many extremists.

He said on Facebook: “The committee... must be balanced and faithfully reflect a variety of ideologies, attitudes and dimensions of Israeli society. But over the years more and more extremists were appointed... including anti-Zionist elements - such as those who support refusal to serve in the IDF - and too little authentic representatives of large parts of the nation.”

Many Israelis would fully agree with him. The Attorney General, however, instructed him not to meddle in the panel’s makeup and he withdrew. But some panel members then refused to participate, saying the award had been tainted,

The rhetoric of the BDS outside the Sandton Convention Centre was desperate and ill-concealed. In many ways we have been spoiled by the slick pretence that tries to separate Jews from Zionists, and the BDS has tried for some time to convince us all that it is not all Jews they detest. It’s only the Zionist ones.

Despite the famous “Shoot the Jew” and other priceless humanitarian comments, the BDS has spent a lot of energy trying to sell a concept that pretty much no-one has bought. Sunday’s protest, perhaps due to lack of success, dissolved very quickly and real agendas and racism were quickly exposed. “You Jews don’t belong in South Africa!” “This is not Israel, we will kill you!” were some of the poisonous comments recorded from the ranks of the BDS.

The atmosphere inside the conference facility was a completely different matter. Multiple exhibitors, attendees and delegates such as the Jewish Agency’s Natan Sharansky and Mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barakat mingled with the crowds, allowed photos and debated concepts and gave support to those contemplating aliyah, those wanting to invest and those who were just checking out the options for some time in the future.

The last item on the well-worn dance card is always the review. And one can’t look at the day without wondering: When the sun sets and the bus has silently transported the residents of Orange Farm back to their shacks that are unlikely to have electricity or water or security, back to a place where it is best to be indoors after dark and back to a place where lack of education and of employment makes the future precarious and fragile, it is then that one has to wonder how the BDS could have been so cruel and so cold and so uncaring to the people of their own country.

And one has to indeed wonder, if their agenda is not humanitarian relief, then what it really is.

and various artists petitioned the Supreme Court to cancel the Literature Prize. Authors like Ruth Dayan and David Grossman withdrew their candidacy in protest.

Ironically, despite the controversy, it is to Israel’s credit that a battle over opposing views and stories can be debated and decided this way through a legal system protecting citizens’ rights to tell differing - and often difficult - narratives about their society. In many Arab countries, writers arguing for alternatives to the state- or religious-sanctioned versions would be brutally punished.

South African Jews face a struggle in asserting a positive Israeli narrative against BDS and its partners like Cosatu and sections of the media and academia. One of the best stories they have, however, is Israel’s openness to different views.

If the Israel-haters would listen, they might understand how well it resonates with the South African ideal, where a diversity of stories is celebrated, not suppressed. Unless, of course, their hatred of Israel comes from something other than ignorance or misinformation. Anti-Semitism perhaps?

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south african  
**Jewish Report**  
**Jerusalem’s  
secret revolution**

Visiting South Africa last week as a guest of the 48th Annual Zionist Federation Conference, Jerusalem’s Mayor Nir Barkat approached the trip as he might have a roadshow when he was once a high flying venture capitalist.

At his various speaking engagements in both Johannesburg and Cape Town, he presented a business plan with a crisp strategy, detailed numbers, and clear goals for his initiative to, in his words, “inject new DNA into the city of Jerusalem”.

This is not surprising. Barkat, who is actually married to a former South African, began his career in the hi-tech industry, creating an antivirus software firm called BRM. He later formed a venture capital fund and invested in several companies including Tel Aviv-based CheckPoint Software Technologies, today a \$14 billion global leader in hardware and software for network and data security.

Yet what is striking is that Barkat, who brings to mind business tycoon turned New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and who constantly refers to entrepreneurial ideology acquired from his close friend, Harvard Business School Professor Michael Porter, is actually running that ancient, holy city with cobbled streets, religious dissent and contested borders.

Barkat, now in his second term, after becoming mayor in 2008, has focused on building centres of excellence in tourism, commerce, medical research and education.

“Israel is an island of sanity in the Middle East and Jerusalem is its crown jewel,” says Barkat.

Tourism is a major opportunity, he believes. If cities like New York, Paris and London can attract tens of millions of tourists a year, so can Jerusalem. He estimates that an astounding four billion people of faith want to visit Jerusalem in their lifetime and his goal is to bring 10 million tourists to his city each year.

His tenure has been characterised by high profile cultural projects such as the Old City’s Festival of Light which draws 300 000 visitors annually. He brought the first Formula One racing event to the streets of Jerusalem last year and has helped make this week’s Jerusalem Marathon, with 25 000 participants, one of the most exciting events on Israel’s sporting calendar.

Barkat excitedly tells his audiences that Jerusalemites are about to witness the construction of an enormous business centre with 13 towers of 35 storeys each, offering over 10 million square feet of office space. This will open in 2018-2020 and will, in addition, house the largest convention centre in the Middle East.

Jerusalem is also becoming a world centre for fertility treatment with ground-breaking research at Hadassah and Shaare Zedek Medical Centres where a combined 5 000 IVF treatments are done a year. Barkat likes to provide statistics.

And despite the fact that Jerusalem is better known for terror attacks, there are on average a mere four to five murders a year. Last November’s brutal Har Nof killings brought the total to an unusual 12.

Barkat proudly notes that Jerusalem has a thriving hi-tech industry. The city’s prestigious Hebrew University gave birth to the original technology behind start-up Mobileye which creates software for driverless cars and was valued at \$7,6 billion at the time of its initial public offering in the US last year.

When a small audience of investors and donors at a breakfast during his roadshow seem gobsmacked by all this innovation and excellence and ask why the world knows almost nothing about this other modern, booming face of Jerusalem, he shrugs. A sad pause.

He believes he faces that same unwinnable battle that all Israeli political and business leaders fight. The media won’t write about the advancements, job opportunities and “revolution he is creating” - to quote his fans - on those cobbled streets and ancient hills.

“The world is not interested in that,” he sighs. It’s only terror attacks, a high velocity election race next week and the alleged apartheid state that people want to read and hear about.

Mayor Barkat is gone now but I would have liked to tell him this: He may need to apply some of those cutting-edge business strategies to his public relations and marketing divisions as well. Israel has rightly been accused, even by its most loyal supporters, of not caring enough about how the world views it.

Is it not time to draw Israel’s virulent critics away from images of tanks and bloody corpses to images of life-altering scientific and technological breakthroughs; sleek Formula One race cars shooting along the borders of the Old City, and tourists of all religions being welcomed into their deeply hallowed places of worship? Mayor Barkat - it is a battle worth fighting.

– Vanessa Valkin, Editor



# Israeli elections: PM Netanyahu had it right - it’s all about him

**BEN SALES  
TEL AVIV**

However much they disagree with his policies, opponents of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would surely admit he was right about one thing: These elections are all about him.

When he called for new elections in December, Netanyahu said the vote would enable him “to gain the trust of the nation”. Since then, the campaign’s central question is whether he has that trust.

Both his Likud Party and the party best poised to defeat him, the centre-left Zionist Union, have focused their messaging on the prime minister’s record and fitness for leadership - or lack thereof. Parties closer to the ideological extremes have argued that a vote for them will either strengthen or weaken Netanyahu’s re-election prospects.

A national campaign to “change the government” has put out ads attacking Netanyahu’s record. And when 40 000 people amassed in this city’s Rabin Square last Saturday night calling for a change in government, ousting Netanyahu was the focus.

The keynote speaker was former Mossad chief Meir Dagan, a respected general and harsh critic of Netanyahu’s handling of the Iranian nuclear threat and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“Six years Mr Benjamin Netanyahu has served as prime minister,” Dagan said in his speech. “Six years in which Israel has never been stuck as it is now. Six years he hasn’t led any real move to change the face of the region or to create a better future.”

Despite the campaign against him, Netanyahu stands a good chance of being re-elected. Likud and Zionist Union have been neck and neck atop the polls for months, and Israel’s right-wing bloc is considerably larger than its left-wing counterpart.

A poll by Israel’s Channel 2 earlier this month found that 47 per cent of voters say Netanyahu is best suited to be prime minister, with only 28 per cent choosing Zionist Union’s co-chairman Isaac Herzog.

A Haaretz poll from late February found that voters trust Netanyahu more than Herzog by a wide margin on diplomacy and defence, and that 51 per cent of respondents predicted that the prime minister would be re-elected.

“Not Tzipi, not Bougie. They won’t stand up to Hamas. They won’t stand up to Hezbollah. They won’t stand up to Iran’s nuclear programme,” Netanyahu said at a February campaign event, referring to Zionist Union’s co-chairmen Tzipi Livni and Herzog’s nickname. “That’s the real choice in these elections and no smokescreen can hide it. Who will guard the State of Israel? The left, headed by Tzipi and Bougie, or the nationalist camp headed by Likud and led by me? There’s no question.”

Netanyahu has sought to make his perceived forte - national security - the election’s central issue. His speech to a joint session of the US Congress on the dangers of Iran’s nuclear programme, achieved that goal for a few days,

landing Iran on Israel’s front pages.

“There’s no doubt that the pictures of Congress giving a standing ovation can have a positive influence on the voters,” said Efraim Inbar, director of the Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies.

“I think some Israelis are proud of their prime minister and wanted him to go to Washington and say there are essential interests we need to stand by, and that we don’t capitulate.”

But the chance to showcase his strength on a prominent congressional stage has also cost Netanyahu. The weeks leading up to the speech saw a range of Israeli politicians, including some former allies, criticise him for damaging US-Israel relations.

And then there are the other controversies.

Netanyahu and his wife, Sara, have been forced to fend off a series of allegations that they overspent public funds at their private residences on ice cream, alcohol and other luxuries. In February, the state comptroller published a report blaming Netanyahu for not adequately addressing skyrocketing housing prices, one of the campaign’s burning issues.

A Likud campaign ad this month seen as insulting to Israeli port workers, historically one of the party’s key constituencies, has further placed the prime minister on the defensive. And on March 6, the Israeli daily Yediot Acharonot reported on a 2013 document showing that Netanyahu had offered far-reaching concessions in talks with the Palestinians, undermining his right-wing bona fides.

Likud officials have responded by doubling down on the party’s historic opposition to Palestinian statehood and support of West Bank settlement. A Likud statement later that day called Netanyahu’s 2009 speech supporting a Palestinian state “null and void”. Senior Likud lawmaker Yuli Edelstein told reporters last Sunday that Likud’s “common denominator” was supporting continued settlement in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Herzog has seized on the prime minister’s troubles by positioning himself as the anti-Netanyahu. His campaign has referred to Netanyahu’s three terms in office as “nine years of nothing”.

“Unfortunately in recent years and especially recent days, Netanyahu turned spreading baseless hatred into a strategy,” Herzog wrote on Sunday on Facebook. “Netanyahu is dividing the nation, but Israel needs different leadership. I will unite it.”

In recent weeks, Netanyahu’s public statements have looked like a list of defences against the controversies that have embroiled him. But even as he parries, the incumbent has aimed to frame his resoluteness against attacks both domestic and foreign as yet another testament to his leadership.

“I stand strong against international pressures in everything connected to Israel’s security,” Netanyahu wrote on Facebook on February 24, pledging not to join a unity government with Zionist Union. “They’re ready only to give in, to capitulate, to retreat, to surrender.” (JTA)



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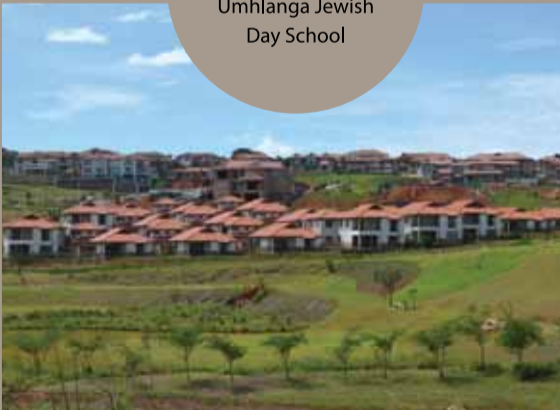
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# Team work pays off in combating Israel Apartheid Week

**BENJI SHULMAN**

Team work across the Jewish community and beyond meant that the 2015 efforts to counter BDS-SA's Israel Apartheid Week (IAW) met with a great deal of success. Started 11 years ago in Canada, IAW is a global event focused exclusively on anti-Israel activism. The organisers, from various groups, are all united by the shared goal of the destruction of Israel.

South Africa has been a particular target for IAW events since the country is the birthplace of the old hated apartheid regime. Organisers have therefore tried to tie their activism to South African events and rhetoric to give the campaign some kind of credibility.

The goal is to try and brand Israel as an apartheid state so that it will become acceptable to isolate the country. South African Jews therefore have a special responsibility to fight this scourge. Not only is this important for the rights of Jewish people and those whose rights across the Middle East are being ignored because of this canard, but also for the memory of those who fought for freedom in this country.

The South African Jewish community works tirelessly to make sure that this happens with representatives of the Jewish Board of Deputies, the South African Zionist Federation, the South African Friends of Israel, the South African Union of Jewish Students and the CSO all making sure that the response to IAW was planned and executed effectively.

The main stage for IAW activities is on university campuses, mostly in former Commonwealth countries and in the US. South Africa is no different in this respect and the frontline for the battle for Israel's legitimacy has fallen to the Jewish students.

A great deal of work goes into countering anti-Israel activity on campus and much of this is organised by the

motivated committees from SAUJS. In response to the hate and vitriol that characterises IAW, SAUJS has always responded with both the justice of Israel's cause as well as calls for dialogue and negotiation.

They have turned IAW on its head with their own version of Israel Awareness Week.

Given the importance of the campaign, the community was privileged to have chairman of the World Union of Jewish Students and other representatives visit the country to witness first hand how the process works.

At UCT an "Abraham's Tent" was set up where speakers from different faiths and perspectives shared their views on solutions. Included in this were a number of Israeli students from across the spectrum of Israeli society, who talked to their South African counterparts.

They also had a special training session with the Stand With Us organisation before they came. This included South African olim helping them to understand South Africa's cultural nuances. This helped to break down preconceived assumptions so that real understanding can take place.

It was exciting to see this process in action as one member of the Israeli delegation, who happened to be a Bedouin, was able to seriously engage Muslim South Africans because of their shared faith.

The UCT SAUJS T-shirts said it all: "Let's talk - If we can't, how do we expect our leaders to?"

Similar scenes played out across the country where the Israeli students helped to make a bridge between communities. This included the University of Pretoria where the newly-formed SAUJS chapter included Israeli food as part of their programme.

At Wits, a traditionally very active campus, IAW was considerably a less hostile affair than it has been in the past. One of the most popular speakers who came to visit the SAUJS tent



was activist Bassem Eid, a Palestinian who has worked tirelessly to bring peace in the region. He also answered questions on student radio station UJ FM via SMS.

Of course this doesn't mean things didn't get heated. One of the events on the IAW calendar at Wits claimed that the mayor of Johannesburg, Parks Tau, would be addressing anti-Israel groups at the university. Of course it is unacceptable for a mayor to address such a hostile partisan gathering and SAUJS promptly organised a peace rally on the campus protesting his presence.

In the end, the mayor never came, but nonetheless the rally continued as the SAUJS students voiced their pride in Israel and their hopes for peace.

Scenes were less wholesome at UJ where BDS protesters, known for their anti-Semitic and disruptive behaviour, stormed a speech by Bassem Eid and forced it to be abandoned. Besides this incident, however, the campuses were far quieter this year with more engagement and fewer incidents of intimidation than had been seen in the past.

One of the real game changers in the fight against IAW this year was the growing number of people in the Christian community who are engaged in supporting Israel.

In addition to more established organisations like Bridges for Peace and the ICE, other groups like Deisi (Defend Embrace Invest in and Support Israel) were extremely active, helping the community in its battle.

Deisi students who recently went to Israel on a fact-finding mission, spoke with conviction and fearlessly supported their Jewish counterparts both on campus and on social media.

Deisi COO Olga Meshoe, was also invited to speak on Wits campus and was accompanied by among others the Bishop of the Shemba tribe, making his presence known with drums and horns.

Not content to just support South African students, Deisi went to the UK. In co-operation with the SAZF and the UK Zionist Federation, Deisi founder and ACDP parliamentarian Kenneth Meshoe, did a live webinar to more than 400 people, giving his perspective as an anti-apartheid activist.

Adding to the international flavour was Africans for Israel who helped organise Father Gabriel Naddaf, a Greek Orthodox Christian who is an Israeli citizen, to come to the country. His message about the plight of Christians in the rest of the Middle East, outside of Israel, was enthusiastically picked up by both the print and electronic media. He was also a major hit on campuses and in churches.

Although much work goes into combating attacks on Israel by community structures, none of this would have been possible without the help of the community at large. Whether it was by making donations, hosting students in their homes, volunteering, organising dinners, fighting Israel's cause on social media or simply attending events like the SA Israel Expo or the SAZF Conference, ordinary South African Jews and Christians alike, can be proud of the role they have played in showing the true face of Israel to the world .

• Benjy Shulman is deputy director of public affairs for the South African Zionist Federation.

## Kenneth Meshoe: To call Israel an apartheid state is patently untrue

**SUZANNE BELLING**

Those who say that Israel is an apartheid state know deep in their hearts that this is not true, said the Rev Dr Kenneth Meshoe (pictured), MP, the leader of the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) and of Deisi (Defend, Embrace, Invest and Support Israel).

He was speaking during an international online webinar during Israel Apartheid Week arranged by the Zionist Federation of the United Kingdom (Young Adults Division) in association with Deisi and the SA Zionist Federation. Others online were Mark Hyman, vice-chairman of Deisi, Benji Shulman of the SAZF and Royi Gutkin, director of Young Adults of the Zionist Federation of the UK.

The ACDP has been in the forefront of waging war against "the propaganda and hatred of anti-Zionist groups who have been lying to the public saying that Israel is an apartheid state", Meshoe said.

He said he had challenged many of these propagandists to go with him to Israel, but they refused because they knew Israel, the only democratic country in the Middle East, was not an apartheid state.

Deisi, he said, was "totally opposed to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign

that seeks to isolate Israel with the ultimate goal of annihilating her". It challenged those who were deceived into believing the lie that Israel was an apartheid state and oppressed the Palestinian people.

Apartheid had been a system of racial segregation in South Africa enforced through legislation by the ruling National Party government from 1948 to 1994.

"What made apartheid different from segregation and racial hatred that have occurred in other countries is the systematic way in which the National Party government formalised it and enforced it through the law."

The South African Parliament passed many laws to entrench apartheid in the country. Israel had no such laws entrenching racial, religious or cultural separation.

Meshoe referred to what he termed the 10 pillars of apartheid, laws that entrenched it - the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, 1949; The Immorality Act, 1957; the Group Areas Act, 1950; the Natives Act (Abolition of Passes and Co-Ordination of Documents), 1952; The Bantu Education Act, 1953; The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, 1953; The Natives (Prohibition of Interdicts) Act, 1956; The Extension of University Education Act, 1959; The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, 1959; and The Bantu

Homelands Act, 1970.

Apartheid was an evil system that denied black people basic human rights in their country of birth.

Anti-Israel propagandists and "hateful liars", with their false allegations, minimised the pain that millions of black South Africans suffered under apartheid.

Arabs and Palestinians living in Israel, enjoyed rights that black people did not enjoy in South Africa during all the years of apartheid.

"As a person who has visited Israel about 13 times, I have not seen anything that can be compared to apartheid South Africa or that falls within the international definition of apartheid," he said.

Non-Jewish citizens participated freely in the economy and held influential positions. People of different racial, religious and cultural groups used the same modes of transportation, schools, facilities and amenities without any restrictions.

"The closest thing to apartheid I have been able to find in the Middle East is the way Lebanon has been treating Palestinian refugees who have been living in refugee camps since the 1940s and 1950s without many fundamental basic human rights."

The hypocrisy and double standards ap-

Photo supplied



plied by the international community and the media against Israel had to be exposed and condemned, he insisted.

"There is a wicked agenda against the State of Israel. May we not remain ignorant to this agenda but be bold and courageous to stand up in defence of the truth and to be quiet no more."

# Tiny, arid Israel in the forefront of agricultural research

ANT KATZ

Israel simply cannot afford to export water, says Professor Ronnie Friedman from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He was a guest speaker at the SA Zionist Federation’s Conference over last weekend.

Hebrew University must feel like home for the South African-born Friedman. His family made aliyah in 1960, when he was just nine years old. This was the first time that he has returned to SA since 1960. He went through high school on a bursary provided by the SAZF before doing his first two degrees at Hebrew University. He did a PhD at the Weizmann Institute of Science.

Friedman went back to Hebrew University to pursue a distinguished academic career, which he ended as the dean of the faculty of Agriculture. He is now the vice president for external relations and advancement at the university.

Under Prof Friedman’s guiding hand, Israel has completely rethought its view on agricultural exporting. “A single grapefruit takes about three buckets of water to grow,” he says. “We can’t afford to export water.”

So Israel took the route of developing and selling smart and better seeds, and re-importing the final

products. The smart seeds they sell don’t re-germinate and so the customers have to buy new seeds from them every year.

Similarly, Hebrew University has become the world leader in drip irrigation technology. Originally this was done to meet Israel’s own needs, to deliver water to crops more efficiently, with less water loss and ever-increasing yields.

They overcame huge technological challenges, such as having holes in pipes that don’t clog up. And, says Friedman, every tech developmental success leads to further research and improvements. For example, they have now developed the world’s first drip irrigation system that runs underground.

South Africa is a major buyer of Israeli agricultural technology, he says.

Israeli drip irrigation systems are commonly used in this country. Other areas of co-operation include crop sciences and seed development and production.

He says agricultural education today is completely different from what it was in the past. “Biology is biology,” he says, but with the rapid advancement of agricultural technology, the way to teach agriculture is by approaching it across the entire range, from conception of seeds to post-harvest protection.



Agricultural expert Professor Ronnie Friedman.

And, today, this always has to be viewed “in an environmentally friendly manner”.

On how he views 21st century agriculture, Friedman draws a triangle. In each corner he writes a word: Farmers, Industry, Research. The objective, he says, is that farmers should get healthier and larger agricultural output.

The farmer, he explains, is at the core of his triangle. The agri-industry is those who supply goods and services to the farmers. Research, he says, is the key to increasing the yield a farmer can expect from working the same land. This applies across the spectrum of agriculture, from animals to vegetables, from dairy to fruit.

Hebrew University’s agriculture department, therefore, focuses

on both teaching farmers and developing and commercialising agricultural technologies.

Israel’s agricultural leadership globally, says Friedman, is a consequence of the country’s necessity. That is why Israel leads the field in so many agricultural commodities and agri-technologies today.

David Ben-Gurion always said that Israel had to strive for food self-sufficiency, explains Friedman. From the beginning of the State of Israel, therefore, agricultural research has been at the forefront. How could the country feed its people in their arid conditions and with limited arable soil and access to water?

By the mid-seventies, he says, Israel had achieved food security by becoming completely self-sufficient.

The research and development that led to this incredible achievement then became intellectual property that Israel could export.

One famous example, and myth, centres on the development of the mini-tomato. It wasn’t developed in Israel, says Friedman, it came from Japan. But the Israelis improved it by classical genetic selection, he explains, “not genetic

modification (GM).

“I personally don’t have anything against GM foods,” he adds, “but many consumers do.”

Similarly, Israeli research created cows that deliver 18 000 litres of milk per year, more than 50 per cent higher than anywhere else in the world.

Again, says Friedman, this was not the result of injecting the cows with hormones or “any other hocus-pocus methods”, but simply by researching and perfecting their nutrition.

One of the biggest areas in which Israel is currently assisting South Africa, says Friedman, is bee-keeping. “South Africa is losing bees fast,” he says, and this could have a catastrophic impact on the pollination of crops.

The research project is being funded by the South African government, some local agricultural interests and money has even been provided from overseas. Hebrew University, says Friedman, has been tasked with coming up with a solution - something he believes they are well on the way to delivering.

• For more on the interview, see [www.sajr.co.za](http://www.sajr.co.za)

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# Jews will always find a welcoming home in Israel

ANT KATZ

South African Jews have to decide for themselves whether they have a future in South Africa - whatever their decision, they will always be welcome in Israel.

This was said by Chairman of the Jewish Agency Natan Sharansky (pictured), who was a guest speaker at last weekend’s SA Zionist Federation Conference in Sandton, in an interview with Jewish Report. (The full text of the in-depth interview appears on the SAJR website.)

Sharansky, born and schooled in Donetsk in the Ukraine, is a human rights activist and author who spent nine years in Soviet prisons as the most famous of the “refuseniks”. He was integral in paving the way for one million Russian Jews to immigrate to, and be absorbed by, Israel, growing the Holy Land’s Jewish population by 25 per cent.

This immigration doubled the number of doctors and tripled the number of engineers. Israel created new industries to accommodate the highly qualified engineers.

Now, 25 years on, many of those doctors are retiring and Israel has a shortage. Hospitals are fast-tracking aliyah arrangements to get doctors from Russia, France, and other countries in as soon as possible.

There is enough work for migrants to Israel, Sharansky says. The economy is doing better than almost any developed country and unemployment is among the lowest, if not the lowest, in the developed world.

The Jewish Agency is helping Jews trapped in the Ukraine daily: “We have a big operation. With the help of local Christians we are moving (Jews) to more stable places,” he says. In 2013 Israel absorbed 2 000 Ukrainians. Last year the number grew to 6 000.

He expressed his concern over the threat of assimilation. US Jewry is losing 300 people a day to assimilation. But, says Sharansky, the figures are skewed because every time a survey is done, the criteria gets broadened. Were the criteria to remain, he says, the figure would be much higher.

His two biggest concerns are that Israel’s enemies constantly try to delegitimise the country; and the loss of Jews to assimilation due to communities not having a connection to Israel.

But he stresses that he is against dogmas. “I believe the best place to live is Israel, but I am against saying people are obliged to [live there]. Changing one Diaspora for another is a choice people have to be allowed to make,” he stresses.

Sabras only understand anti-Semitism theoretically, he says, as they have never experienced it firsthand.

Can one feel “Proudly Jewish South African”? He says he knows and understands that there are Jews who want to disengage themselves from anti-Israeli feelings.



“My role... (is) to bring Israel to the Diaspora, and the Diaspora to Israel.

“We have to be the masters of the Internet, to disseminate information to our own people and dispel the lies told about Jews and Israel by our enemies,” he says.

Core Jewish world population is about 14 million, he says, with the “expanded population” about 18 million. This includes individuals with a Jewish father or spouse, as well as children living in a household with a Jewish step-parent. Those eligible for the Right of Return under Israel’s Basic Law (the nearest thing it has to a constitution) total about 22 million. “The law is the law,” he says. “The Jewish Agency is only the implementer.”

Sharansky, on his fourth trip to South Africa, says SA Jewry is very connected to Israel and probably the “most together” among all Diaspora communities. He believes South Africa probably has the highest level of children at Jewish day schools in the Diaspora.

Israel has changed its philosophy to one in which Israel and Diaspora Jewry are partners. The paternalistic past where Israel was the poor relative has changed. Israel is now spending taxpayers’ money to strengthen Jewish identity among Diaspora communities.

Concerted efforts to “delegitimise” Israel are worrying. “The biggest victory for our enemies is to disconnect Jews from Israel,” he says, so the Jewish Agency’s aim is to tell Jews they have no reason to be ashamed of Israel.

He again extends an open invitation to prospective olim. “If people or their forefathers have assimilated and now want to return to Israel, they can. If they are prepared to serve in the army, learn the culture and help build the country, they are welcome.”

But he concedes that Israel has to “create much more welcoming arrangements” for this class of migrants, including conversion programmes.

See the full interview on [www.sajr.co.za](http://www.sajr.co.za)

# CSO ensured an incident-free SAZF Conference and Expo

In an aptly-titled media release - “We’ve got you covered” - the Community Security Organisation (CSO) paid tribute to the host of staff-members and volunteers who ensured a smooth and incident-free SAZF Conference and SA/ Israel Expo over last weekend in Sandton.

The Conference and Expo featured a host of international guests and speakers.

“The event showcased the best of local and Israeli businesses, companies and associates. The CSO participated not only as an exhibitor, but also in protecting Jewish life and the Jewish way of life in keeping with its mandate.

“Some 1 800 guests attended the conference on Saturday evening and the Expo on Sunday saw 3 000 visitors through the doors. Feedback from the event has thus far been extremely positive and we are proud of the selfless and passionate volunteers and staff who make up the CSO.”

The CSO is a Jewish community-based security organisation which was established over 20 years ago as a result of direct threats to the South African Jewish community. Today the CSO has become the sole protector in combating anti-Semitic threats against the community.

“The CSO is justifiably proud of its successes in protecting Jewish life and the Jewish way of life in South Africa. It will continue with this mission and will continue to empower the community to protect itself,” it says in the release.

“The CSO protects shuls, schools and community functions, and also participates in locating missing community members. In addition, the CSO’s medical response team, Ezra, which consists of highly trained and experienced doctors and medics, responds daily to various medical emergencies.”

“The CSO is wholly reliant on communal funding for its existence. Therefore, in order to ensure the continued security of the Jewish community, it is imperative that the CSO secures the necessary funding.

“This funding will be used to, among other things, build resources, recruit and train volunteers, and develop its professional staff. Your contribution will go a long way in helping us to ensure the safety and security of the Jewish community.”

- To become more involved in protecting the community, attend a security training course or just learn more about the CSO, please contact us on 0860 276 276.



# Telfed creates a home from home for SA olim

OWN CORRESPONDENT

As human beings we have an inherent need to belong: to one another, to our friends and families, to our culture and to our country. Feeling that we are part of a greater community is fundamental to our sense of identity, happiness and wellbeing, especially when we consider relocating abroad.

“Wherever you stand on the aliyah continuum or support for Israel, as Jews, most of us want to see both our local community and Israel flourish. In order to do that, the organisations that facilitate these aspirations need help,” says Telfed CEO Dorron Kline.

For southern Africans, moving to Israel, with its cultural and language differences, is no easy feat. Telfed - the South African Zionist Federation in Israel - has absorbed many thousands of southern African olim and is in ongoing contact with another 100 potential ones in South Africa at any given time.

In 2013, the Australian Zionist Federation assigned the absorption of Australian olim to Telfed, with an additional 240 immigrants arriving each year, 30 per cent of whom are originally southern Africans.

Telfed also strives to give back to the community in South Africa. Following an invitation

from the South Africa Israel Centre, Kline is currently in Johannesburg, where he participated in last weekend’s Israel Expo and continues to advise numerous potential olim.

A meeting was held in early March with Michael Sieff, CEO of the Chevrah Kadisha, in order to strengthen co-operation between the two organisations, especially regarding olim under their mutual care. Similarly, he recently met with Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein.

In the spirit of ongoing co-operation, Kline served as MC for the IUA Top Donors Dinner in March, honouring Frances and Natie Kirsh. He also addressed three synagogues and was interviewed on ChaiFM, all part of an important awareness programme, sharing with the local community the importance of Telfed for southern African Jewry.

Since 1948, Telfed has been on the ground helping southern Africans in Israel. Guided by a small team of 13 (part-time) professional members of staff, and engaging a national network of 240 volunteers, Telfed has impacted the lives of some 25 000 southern Africans in Israel.

At one time the Jewish Agency/Keren Hayesod contributed approximately 80 per cent of the non-profit’s financial requirements. Since 2009 this support has been reduced to almost nil.

“Fundraising is now a vital aspect of enabling

us to fulfil the important mission of supporting olim, with 33 per cent of the annual budget totally dependent on community support and donations,” stresses Kline.

Telfed is the only oleh organisation in Israel to provide subsidised rental accommodation to new immigrants, providing 102 apartments between three community buildings. Approximately 30 per cent of the services for the southern African community are financed from rental income, with another 30 per cent funded by allocations from family foundations managed by Telfed.

A major concern of any new immigrant is to secure viable employment: Telfed retains a full-time employment advisor and HR consultant to offer advice on the local job market, vacancy referrals and training sessions.

As in any new environment, the process is fraught with bureaucracy and guidance from the organisation’s absorption counsellor provides needed direction. Annual study bursaries are provided for some 400 students in need.

Through the PRAS programme, students who commit to 94 hours of annual community service, receive study grants. This involvement includes assisting southern Africans with special needs, providing companionship for the elderly, helping children with homework, teaching Hebrew and volunteering in absorption centres.

The warm community vibe extends to “Lone Soldiers” serving in Israel: Telfed invites them to periodic luncheons and activities, arranges gift packs, treats, clothing and shopping vouchers, and offers home hospitality for Shabbat and festivals.

Telfed was awarded the Ministry of Absorption’s Award for Excellence in Volunteerism in 2014, for the role the organisation is playing in encouraging the southern African community to be involved in Israeli society, through social projects (such as Telfed’s Ethiopian Community Initiative - TECI) benefitting the broader community.

Keren Telfed, a self-help welfare fund operated by Telfed for over 30 years, has had a life-changing impact on the southern African community in Israel, particularly for families at risk: the elderly, those with special needs and single parent families. Some 150 - 180 economically challenged family units receive financial assistance from Telfed each month.

As Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein recently declared: “I would like to congratulate the South African olim who are giving chizuk to the people of Israel. In so doing, these young men and women are living the highest Torah ideals of chesed and Jewish unity.”

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HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE DON’T TALLY WITH GENOCIDE STORY

The debate (in Jewish Report’s letters page) between Rabbi Pesach Fishman and Martin Frack over the morality and Divine directive of the extermination of the Canaanites, is missing a very important element: The preponderance of historical and archaeological evidence points to the conclusion that the conquest and its accompanying genocide never happened.

Archaeological and historical conferences and symposia featuring luminaries in the field such as Israel Finkelstein, William Dever, Mark S Smith, and others have found, among other things, the following elements:

- A continuity of settlement between the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages, wherein the conquest was supposed to have taken place and the inhabitants expelled.
- Pottery and architectural styles exhibiting continuity, indicating the same cultural grouping through the centuries.
- The fact that Hebrew is merely a dialect of the Canaanite language.
- Similarities between the architecture of the Tabernacle, the Jerusalem Temple, and numerous Canaanite temples.
- The names of Canaanite gods within the Tanach, even in people’s own personal names, and attributes and deeds ascribed to such gods in texts such as the Ugaritic tablets, being ascribed to the G-d of Israel using similar or identical language.
- Israelite traditions and festivals being derivative of Canaanite ones.
- The lack of evidence of destruction dating to the supposed time of Joshua, and certain destructions that did take place, such as Taanach and Hazor, it’s difficult to determine who was responsible for those destructions. Add to this contradictions between the account of the book of Joshua and that of the book of Judges.

A substantially different picture seems to emerge. The early Israelites are now seen as a subsect of the wider Canaanite people. They were not foreigners but indigenous and aboriginal inhabitants of the Land of Israel, particularly in the highland regions.

Population increases were due mainly to Canaanite peasants and freeholders fleeing the increasingly oppressive lowland city-states for freedom in the hill country, and this population found the ideal of the Covenant compelling.

Also compelling was the Exodus narrative, for which there is lots of evidence that some form of it actually took place (There may have been more than one Exodus), even if it was on a much smaller scale than that described in the biblical narrative. It became the epic story for all the Israelite clans and tribes, even those who never experienced it.

As for the conquest and extermination narrative, it was likely the work of scribes who sought to create a national identity based on the monotheistic ideal, and used tales of ancient conquests that may have existed in an oral state within the population, to unite the Israelite tribes against the oppressive social structure of the lowland city states and the pantheon of gods that justified it. Thus was the national identity caused to coalesce around the Covenant ideal.

**Jared Joel Sydenham, Johannesburg**

**SIFRIN’S COLUMN ON BIBI’S SPEECH MAKES HIM ‘SICK TO THE STOMACH’**

Last week’s edition of Jewish Report featured a column by former SA Jewish Report editor, Geoff Sifrin, entitled “In whose Jewish name does Bibi speak?”

After reading the article a few times, I literally felt sick to the stomach. Let me explain my disgust at the author’s arrogance: Some 2 500 years ago in Persia where almost the entire Jewish population lived, a Jewish leader by the name of Mordechai warned the Jewish people of their impending destruction through the urging of the wicked Haman.

Even though Mordechai was not popular with many, he asked the Jews to don sackcloth and fast and pray for deliverance. Imagine if there were a Jewish publication at the time whose columnist announced: “In whose Jewish name does Mordechai speak?”

Fast forward to Europe 10 years before the Second World War. A Jewish leader, like Ze’ev Jabotinsky, (not popular with many Jews) announces that he has near certain information that the Nazi government under Adolph Hitler wishes with all his heart to annihilate every Jewish man woman and child.

The leader urges the Jewish

population to do everything they can to flee the impending danger. Once again the leading Jewish newspapers publish articles by columnists writing: “In whose Jewish name does Jabotinsky speak?”

Last week the prime minister of Israel (not popular by many) is invited to speak to the United States Congress. He speaks as the leader of the one and only Jewish state whose Jewish sovereignty has just recently been restored after nearly 2 000 years of cruel exile.

He emphatically states to the entire world Jewry that never again will Israel be harmed by another Haman or Hitler. Amidst thunderous applause, the prime minister assures the people of Israel that they will stand alone if needs be, to defeat any enemy.

Lo and behold, in South Africa, the leading Jewish newspaper publishes an article by a well-known columnist who writes: “In whose Jewish name does Bibi speak?”

Now can you understand why I feel sick to the stomach?

**Choni Davidowitz Sandringham, Johannesburg**

LUKEWARM AUDIENCE RESPONSE AT SAZF CONFERENCE SADDENING

I felt proud and privileged to be among the many thousands of South African Jews present at the auspicious occasion, celebrating the “Nation of Creation” at the SA Zionist Federation Conference at the weekend, with auspicious international speakers.

The programme itself was inspiring. Keynote speakers among others, included luminaries such as Avrom Krengel, Nir Barkat, mayor of Jerusalem, with strong South African ties and Irwin Cotler, Canadian MP, all of them inspiring and on par with Benjamin Netanyahu’s momentous speech to the US Congress.

As with most other proud South African Jews, I was overwhelmed by the top tier professionalism of the entire evening’s events, the magnificent indigenous South African choral presentation (of which seemingly inadvertently, the name and details were omitted from the programme).

From 1966 to 1977, I held various high-level administrative positions in the secretariat of the SAZF, then still at 84 De Villiers Street, Johannesburg. On an IBM golf ball typewriter, I transcribed every speech of the opening nights of SAZF conferences - this in the times of the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War. I also transcribed the experiences, lives and history of Mahalniks in the 1948 War.

This preamble is a background to the opening night of the 48th SAZF Conference this year. As proud, inspired and emotional as I, among many, felt during the proceedings, I felt immeasurably disheartened at the comparatively lukewarm audience response to speakers at this scintillating event.

Compared to Netanyahu’s speech, where the emotions and love of Israel evoked from that audience expressed itself in affirming and boisterous clapping, our keynote speakers, Avrom Krengel, Barkat and Cotler, among others, galvanised the audience with their humility, insight and love for Eretz Israel. But the applause was far from rousing.

Inasmuch as the audience predominantly was of the “older generation” - more so having been witness to the miraculous history of Eretz Israel - it seemed to me as if the general audience were mostly mere spectators at a show.

**Pam Stein Linksfield, Johannesburg**

FACING A WORLD THREAT, IT’S APPROPRIATE THAT JEWS STAND TOGETHER

Geoff Sifrin in his Taking Issue column in last week’s Jewish Report headed his article on Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu’s speech at the US Congress, by way of a question: “In whose Jewish name does Bibi speak?”

Within his column Sifrin made the points that Netanyahu:

1. might be seen as the Jewish Churchill, voicing his fears of an Iranian nuclear threat to Israel and the world in general.
2. some Jews do not march in lockstep, and he mentions the Jewish “Not in My Name” campaigns.
3. Ronnie Kasrils, right here in SA, expressed a similar sentiment. Does he purport to be a Jew? I rather think not.
4. some 500 “Proudly Jewish” persons including prominent ones, denounced Israeli actions against Gaza in 2014. Do they regard themselves as above us “common Jews?”

ANSWER TO HEALTHY EATING: GO VEGETARIAN

Bev Goldman’s remarks (Jewish Report, February 27) about expensive kosher chickens include the claim that they are “clean, healthy, hygienic”.

In the PE Herald of March 2, a report appeared on a new scare about bacteria which is found naturally in chicken gut, namely campylobacter, detected in some 73 per cent of chickens in the UK, with a similar rate of prevalence thought to be in South Africa.

“You can’t get rid of it,” says SA Poultry Association’s Dr Louis Theron.

The germ causes severe diarrhoea, can be harmful to people with weakened immune systems and is also linked to Guillain-Barré syndrome, which can cause temporary paralysis.

Is it worth taking the risk of this infection, or salmonella? The best advice in the light of scares about fish contaminated by pollution of the sea and harmful drugs and hormones in other animals is to go vegetarian. Avoid harming your body and hurting your wallet.

**Dr Bryna Lewis Port Elizabeth**

LOOKING FOR WHEREABOUTS OF DANIEL SACHS

David Lewin from London is searching for Mark Daniel Sachs (maybe Sacks ) born on December 29, 1953 in South Africa. He lived for some time in Israel and may have then moved to England.

He is the son of Pauline and Professor Theodor Gerald Sachs.

Lewin may be contacted at: e-mail: davidlewin@btinternet.com; web: http://remember.org/unite or http://searchandunite.or tel: +44 208 446 0404.

As Netanyahu representing Israel is effectively the only Jewish voice to stand up and speak at Congress, one reckons that he does speak for us - Am Yisrael! Who else has had the guts to do so? Did not Churchill do so similarly during the Second World War and did the British people “Not in my name” him?

I have studied Churchill fairly thoroughly and cannot find evidence, when England had its back to the wall, that there were very many dissenters. So why do some of our own Jews always have to oppose leaders of Netanyahu’s ilk? Do they suffer from a “I know better than you” syndrome?

Since the Second World War, Judaism is facing the threat of another Shoah. In the light of history of some 80 years ago, it is appropriate that we stand together. May Hashem protect us.

**Maurice Skikne, Johannesburg**

**INFORMATION SOUGHT ON THE THREE BALL BROTHERS**

Dr Michael Schabitz of Berlin is looking for photographs and information on Rudi Ball, a Berlin ice-hockey player who immigrated to South Africa in 1948, and his brothers Gerard and Heinz and their heirs. He writes:

“In the European summer of 2015 the European Maccabi Games will take place in Berlin. For this reason the Zentrum Deutsche Sportgeschichte E V is planning an outdoor exhibition near the main railway station about Jewish sport stars and their fate during the Nazi period.

“One of our protagonists will be Rudi Ball (born June 22, 1911 in Berlin, died September 1975 in Johannesburg), a Berlin ice-hockey player who emigrated to South Africa in 1948. He played in South Africa for Tigers IHC (1949/50) and Wolves IHC (1950/51).

“We are very keen to find photos from Rudi Ball and his brothers Gerhard Ball (born September 25, 1903 in Berlin, died 1982 in Spain, emigrated to South Africa in 1948) and Heinz S Ball (born 1907 in Berlin, died 1966 in Cape Town, moved to South Africa in 1936.”

His contact details are: Dr Michael Schäbit; exhibeo - Ausstellung. Präsentation. Recherche, Veteranenstr 14, 10119 Berlin, tel.: 030 / 44 35 17 10 or cell phone 0179 / 80 96 5.

Read the South African Jewish Report online

www.sajr.co.za

# Sydenham Pre-Primary tots host IDF soldiers



Photo: Ingrid Seeff

SUE BENJAMIN

The grade R pupils at Sydenham Pre-Primary School had the privilege of singing Purim songs for the visiting IDF soldiers, brought to Johannesburg as part of the Hope for Heroism project. The soldiers recounted their personal stories of participating in the defence of the Land of Israel. Letters of thanks and cards of appreciation made by the children were presented to the soldiers as a thank you for protecting Jews and democracy in Israel. In keeping with the spirit of Purim, each of the 12 soldiers received his own mishloach manot. To the delight of the children they were all given a “brothers for life” bracelet which they all are proudly wearing.

# Purim with style and verve at Yeshiva College

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Yet another incredible Purim was celebrated on the Yeshiva College campus: from Megilla-reading for the entire school, to a seudah for our Boys’ High School, a breakfast for our Girls’ High School, a carnival for our Primary School - and a show and parade for the Nursery School. All proceeds are being donated to Hatzolah.



Photo supplied

# Lots of Purim fun at Sandton Sinai Primary

AMY JAFFE

The grade Rs of Sandton Sinai Primary School enjoyed a truly wonderful Purim at school. The festivities and fun costumes added to the holiday spirit of “mi she nichnas adar, marbim be simcha – whoever enters Adar should increase their joy.” The children enjoyed a Purim play, exchanged mishloach manot and bounced on the popular jumping castle. Pictured are, back: Lior Zekry; Elisheva Marcow; Sam Girnun; Jayden Bregman; Ariel Dermiek; Noa Sher, Naomi Benjamin, Danit Marcow, Front: Ally Joselowitz; Zara Karp; and Taegan Friedman.



Photo: Malinda Chazen

# KDL celebrates Purim with enthusiasm

GABI KINROSS (GRADE 10)  
PHOTOGRAPH: JAMIE BOOLKIN (GRADE 10)

It was that time of year again when on March 5, the learners of King David Linksfield in Johannesburg magically transform into grannies and grandpas, ninja turtles, superheroes and more. Purim again lived up to its great reputation. The time put into agonising over what to dress up as and finding the right outfit, paid off, as the learners arrived at school, flaunting their quirky, hilarious and very suitable costumes. After mingling and laughing, the shul service commenced with prayers and a thrilling but very efficient, quick Megillah reading. As everyone listened and created pandemonium at the sound of “Haman”, the learners got more and more into the Purim spirit. At break, delicious hamantashen and other treats were sold with the proceeds going to Yad Aharon, in order for the learners to fulfil the mitzvah of giving tzedakah on Purim. One of the other mitzvot is giving mishloach manot. The learners were given the opportunity to prepare packets of sweets to give to their friends. Then the most exciting part of the Purim school day arrived: the assembly, run by the matrics! They mimicked the usual Friday morning assembly, but now, they had their own, entertaining take on it. The skits on teachers had the audience in stitches.

Then for a promotion of the Purim play, an excellent dance from its repertoire was performed. The “best dressed” competition saw learners from each grade going on stage. The audience clapped and cheered to vote for a winner - which was a boy dressed up as “The Punisher”. School closed early so that the learners could attend Purim carnivals hosted by different shuls. King David Linksfield collaborated with King David Victory Park’s annual Purim Ball.



Daniel Abrams (grade 10) dressed up as an old lady and Danya Lipshitz (matric) dressed as an avatar.

More news on our website [www.sajr.co.za](http://www.sajr.co.za)

# Purim at KDVP lives up to high expectations

HANNA BEN-MOSHE

King David Victory Park High School celebrated Purim, on Thursday, March 5, with tremendous enthusiasm. The learners listened to the reading of the Megillah and had a fun assembly with the traditional matric Purim play. The learners also prepared mishloach manot with the Division of Informal Jewish Education on the field. The school day ended with the Purim Carnival, a costume parade from the different grades. The school continued to celebrate Purim in the evening with a combined party with King David High School Linksfield, an outstanding event enjoyed by all who attended.



Photo: Yael Gordon

Micaela Dermeik; Jemma Sundelson; Tristen Haverly; and Alexa Novick.

# Wheelchair will help disabled KDL visitors

OWN CORRESPONDENT

The Chazak Foundation recently donated a wheelchair to King David Linksfield School to help the school to assist visitors with disabilities. The Foundation helps support and assists people and families who suffer from disabilities. Chazak stands for strength. Each day could be a battle for those struggling with a disability but it’s through their strength and perseverance that one overcomes those bad days. Chazak Foundation is there to show people that they are supported and if strength is needed Chazak Foundation can provide it.



Pictured are Michelle Vinokur handing over the wheelchair to two King David learners, Adam Storger and Dale Wasserman.

# Herzlia Constantia assists brave Cape fire fighters

## OWN CORRESPONDENT

The massive fires that raged through the Cape Peninsula were fought on many fronts by a host of brave fire fighters and volunteers. In the true spirit of community outreach and tzedakah, Herzlia Constantia made tons of sandwiches for these men and women.

The PTA donated the breads and fillings, parents donated sunscreen lotion, pupils made the sandwiches and put together goodie packs together with beautiful thank you cards made by the grade 3s.

“We cannot put into words the gratitude and appreciation we have for these very brave men and women. The parents and pupils of Herzlia Constantia felt they had to do something to show our thanks to these wonderful people who have put their lives on the line to save our homes and our national parks.

We are all affected in one way or another by these devastating fires,” said Jos Horwitz, principal of Herzlia Constantia.

The Herzlia Constantia grade 6 Jewish Life and Learning and Environment Committees (JLL) delivered the rescue packs to the fire fighters at the Lakeside Fire Station.

Pictured are members of the JLL and environment committee delivering sandwiches and water to



the fire teams. Back: Doron Sumeruk with the fire fighters of Lakeside Fire Station. Front: Gabrielle Kaplan; Greig Hutchison; Jedd Katz; Gideon Swiejd; Darren Moore; Sasha Dave; and Uriel Tagar.

• Last weekend a helicopter pilot fighting fires at Cape Point lost his life during an emergency landing.

# Touch rugby makes big strides at KD Victory Park



ANNA MOROSS AND EMMA STEIN

Touch rugby was introduced at King David High School Victory Park in 2013. The school started this sport with one goal in mind-to be the best possible. It has definitely exceeded expectations.

Both first and second teams won gold in their respective leagues last year and have been promoted to higher leagues for this year. Their successes have continued with both teams winning their last five matches. The first team won their last match 8 – 0! This would not have been possible without the two coaches, Jonathan Tshona and Justin Sher.

Girls touch rugby is a growing sport at King David and the school is confident that its teams will go from strength to strength.

Pictured are Gina-Lee Ellis; Shanna Fanaroff; Gila Dove; Jemma Sundelson; Natasha Lipschitz; Micaela Dermeik; Alexa Novick; Emma Stein; Anna Moross; and inset, Justin Sher (coach).

More news on our website [www.sajr.co.za](http://www.sajr.co.za)

## Community Columns

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

### An excellent SAZF Conference

I would like to begin my column this week by congratulating the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) on an outstanding conference this past weekend and in particular thank and acknowledge Avrom Krengel for his unwavering commitment to our community during his 13 years as chairman of this important communal organisation.

The Board and the SAZF work closely together on a number of issues and the success of this relationship has been due in no small part to Avrom’s leadership. I would also like to wish Ben Swartz and his executive all the very best as he takes over the helm.

Nothing could overshadow the glittering occasion of the Conference, when a star-studded line-up of speakers kept the audience gripped with the challenges and the pride that our beloved State of Israel present us - not even the ugly BDS protest.

On Sunday, protesters outside the Conference yelled expletives and hideous insults, making it clear once again that the aim of the demonstration, in the protesters’ own words, was to “shut down Sandton”.

When their attempts at doing so failed, it became apparent that the rally was nothing more than a front to stoke up Jew hatred in South Africa. The BDS protest was part of the Israel Apartheid Week (IAW), a week in which one is able to say whatever one wants about Israel, however offensive or untrue it may be.

It is uplifting to note the unadulterated success our university students on campuses around the country experienced during IAW. Their overwhelming message of peace and dialogue as the key to transformation, was truly a dignified response to this hate-fest. Their guests, Bassam Eid and Father Naddaf, among others, as I mentioned last week, reinforced their success. Kol hakavod to SAUJS around the country.

The bullying tactics of the BDS movement were typified by Deputy Minister Obed Bapela who spoke at the protest and falsely attacked the SAJBD. One would expect a more measured and dignified tone from a government official and we certainly are examining our rights to take this unfortunate incident further.

The constant attempts by the BDS movement to disrupt our functions were once again unsuccessful. We reiterate that it is every South African citizen’s constitutional right to attend events of our choosing without fear of intimidation. We would like to compliment the SA Police Service for its amazing support, as well as the remarkable team of CSO volunteers who tirelessly go beyond the call of duty to ensure the safety of our community.

Despite Bapela’s statement, the Board has over this past week had many encouraging engagements with Government on local South African issues, as well as Israel. I look forward to reporting on these meetings in next week’s column. As difficult as many of these incidents are to accept, I want to reassure our community that our detractors are in the minority and the Board will leave no stone unturned in ensuring that our proud and dignified community continues to thrive. In every way possible, we will continue to send out the message that we are proud Jews and proud South Africans who are deeply committed to building the South Africa we all dream of.

• 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

# Will the 2015 Budget make light work?

Given the impact of South Africa’s power crisis on our country’s economic growth, the question is... how much tax will you have to fork out to keep the lights on?

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Today, Friday (March 13)

• UZLC hosts Benji Shulman  
on “The Israeli Elections”.  
Venue: Our Parents Home.  
Time: 12:45 - 14:00. Con-  
tac: Gloria (011) 485-4851  
or 072-127-9421.

Sunday (March 15)

• RCHCC rescreens by popular  
demand “The Way we  
Were”. Time: 19:30. Cost:  
R120 (incl refreshments).  
Venue: Clive M Beck Audi-  
torium. Time: 19:30. Cost:  
R120 (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 Tony

Tuesday (March 17)

• Sydenham Shul & Education  
Africa present “Sounds of  
Celebration II”, a musical  
production of young South  
African talent performing on  
traditional instruments from  
South Africa, Greece, Japan,  
Trinidad & Tobago, Scotland  
and much more, including  
King David Linksfeld’s  
Marimba Band and Jewish  
guest star performer Choni  
G. Venue: Emperors Palace  
- Theatre of Marcellus. Time:  
20:00. Ticket prices range  
from R40 to R100. Book-  
ings: www.ticketpro.co.za  
and participating Postnet  
outlets. Information: Tal,  
072-492-0664 or (011)  
640-502.

• WIZO Forum presents “The  
Key to Self-Fulfilment” - find  
out how to live your life  
with meaning, passion and  
purpose with four women  
who have discovered secrets  
to a life well lived. Venue:  
Beyachad. Time: 09:30.  
Cost: R40 (incl tea and  
refreshments). Booking:  
Sandy (011) 645 2515.

• RCHCC hosts Hugh  
Raichlin with an audiovisual  
presentation on “The Jews  
of China”. Venue: Clive M  
Beck Auditorium. Time:  
19:30. Donation: R80 (incl

refreshments). Booking:  
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728-8378; e-mail: rchcc@  
telkomsa.net or rene.s@  
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• Second Innings has arranged  
a visit to “The View”,  
the original mansion of  
Randlord Thomas Cullinan  
in Parktown. The tour starts  
at 10:30. Meet the bus at  
Golden Acres at 09:30. Cost:  
R180. Booking: Betty Kowal,  
(011) 532-9616.

Friday (March 20)

• UZLC hosts Marcelle Ravid on  
“Miracles in Johannesburg”.  
Venue: Our Parents Home.  
Time: 12:45 - 14:00. Con-  
tact: Gloria 072-127-9421  
or (011) 485-4851.

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week. The event features musical  
performances by 150 talented young  
artists and a guest appearance  
by Choni G, winner of the title  
“Jewish Star of 2012”. But hurry,  
the competition closes today,  
Friday March 13.

ISRAELI ELECTION:

Readers can vote in  
the Israeli Embassy’s mock election. Read the  
predictions from last week and this week, of our  
Cape Town pundit Aubrey Katzeff.

ISRAEL EXPO:

See who the big prize-winners  
were.

THE FULL SHARANSKY INTERVIEW:

The JA head talks to Jewish Report. A  
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Harvey

# Striker Nick Blackman could be heading for Israel

**JACK MILNER**

You know how people say this person looks Jewish, or you can tell they are Jewish because of their names?

On that basis a lot could be gleaned from the name of UK football player Nick Blackman. When Blackman was named into the Blackburn team in 2009, he became the only Jewish soccer player in the Premier League. He was later on loan to a couple of clubs and then in 2013 he signed a three-and-a-half-year deal with Reading, for whom he now plays.

However, Blackman is longing to play internationally and at the end of last year he had an offer from Israel. The 25-year-old striker revealed in 2010, while on loan at Motherwell, that he could play inter-

national football for Barbados, England, Holland or Poland.

If he ever does play international football, though, it will not be the first time that he has played on the international stage. Blackman first experienced international football at just 13 years of age - when he played for Great Britain at the Maccabiah.

He told the Daily Record: “I was only 13 when I went to the Maccabiah, the Jewish Olympics, and I was part of a British schools team.

“I qualified through my gran Marta. She was in Holland when the Second World War broke out and was made homeless. Her family had died and she was on her own, so a Jewish family took her in. She became Jewish and when I had the chance

to go to the Maccabiah, I took it.”

Blackman’s Jewish background may have largely gone under the radar in Reading, but it has been noticed in Israel. In November The Tilehurst End, local Reading newspaper, was approached by Aviv Kohen, who works for Israel HaYom, the biggest circulating newspaper in Israel, about the Reading forward.

According to Aviv, Blackman could be eligible for Israeli citizenship, which of course would make him eligible to don the blue of Israel. Aviv carried a lengthy article in Israel HaYom in which he detailed the background of the Salford-born forward and if all things go according to plan, this all may lead to Blackman realising his dream of international football on an unlikely stage.



Reading striker Nick Blackman could be invited to play soccer for Israel.

# Jewish athletes shine in the Midlands Ultra Triathlon

**JACK MILNER**

Just one second separated second-placed Mark Sack from winner Gerhard de Bruin in the Midlands Ultra Triathlon at Midmar Dam on March 1.

Mark completed the 1,9km swim, 90km cycle and 21,1km run in four hours, 24 minutes and one second, with that last split second dividing him from professional triathlete De Bruin.

Sack had a great swim and managed to stick with the top professionals and completed the swim in 27,32 minutes; he lost just over a minute on De Bruin and that made all the difference in the end. He maintained a solid and consistent pace on the bike through the hilly and undulat-

ing Midlands terrain and completed the bike leg in a time of two hours and 30 minutes, which placed him fifth overall with the 21,1km run left.

He clawed back from De Bruin, with the second fastest run of the day - completing the leg in an excellent time of one hour and 22 minutes.

It was a superb achievement by the 44-year-old, who also finished first in the 40 to 49 age group.

The fastest time on the run was achieved by Gavin Mofsowitz, who completed the 21,1km in one hour 20,42 minutes. He made up lots of ground on the opposition to finish fourth overall in a brilliant time of 4:28,39 in a well-

planned race. Mofsowitz swam the 1,9km in a time of 29 minutes, while riding himself into the top 10 by pulling back some strong cyclists and completing the bike leg in 8th place overall.

Mofsowitz needed to have the run of his life in order to qualify for the SA team, with a top five finish. This incredible feat was achieved and he was able to pull back four places with a phenomenal effort to catch the Ironman Pro, Bradley Venter, with 300m to go in order to slip into the top five.

Mofsowitz also achieved a silver medal in the 30 - 34 age group.

Other great results by our Jewish triathletes included the young Dean Joffe, who finished in a time of 5 hours and eight minutes, and a first place win in the 20 - 24 age group. It is great to see some new and upcoming Jewish talent. Joffe’s father and mentor, Steven, also completed the gruelling event in a time of 6 hours and 14 minutes.

Jodi Zulberg claimed first place in the women’s 40 - 49 category in an overall time of 5 hours and 43 minutes. Shaun Rosenberg finished in a time of 5 hours and 23 minutes, while Herschel Jawitz completed the Ultra in a time of 5 hours and 44 minutes.



Gavin Mofsowitz (left) and Mark Sack with the medals they won at the Midlands Ultra Triathlon at Midmar Dam on March 1.

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## Community

# Two Progressive rabbis inducted at Bet David

Rabbi Julia Margolis and Rabbi Adrian Schell (pictured) were inducted at a special ceremony at Bet David Progressive Synagogue in Morningside, Sandton early in February.

The ceremony was led by Rabbi Emeritus Hillel Avidan and the induction of South Africa’s first female rabbi, was attended by several dignitaries, including representatives from the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and the German Embassy.

Bet David said in a media release that Rabbi Schell hailed from Germany and both he and Rabbi Margolis completed their rabbinic training at the Abraham Geiger College in Potsdam.

The two rabbis have taken over rabbinical duties at Bet David following the retirement of Rabbi Robert Jacobs.



## World News in Brief

# Israelis trust Bibi on Iran far more than Herzog, Obama

JERUSALEM - A large plurality of Israelis back Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s stance on the Iranian nuclear issue compared to the more conciliatory approaches of US President Barack Obama and Zionist Union leader Isaac Herzog, a new Israel Hayom-New Wave Research Institute poll found.

Asked whom they trust more to deal with the Iranian nuclear threat, 41 per cents of respondents chose Netanyahu, while 15 per cent chose Obama and only 6 per cent chose Herzog.

Forty-six per cent of those polled said Netanyahu’s address to Congress about Iran was the right move, while 39 per cent thought it was a mistake. The poll was conducted from March 3 - 4 among a random sample of 500 Hebrew-speaking Israeli Jews ages 18 and over. (JNS.org)