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Yom Hashoah: Keep their memory alive



Every year the number of Holocaust survivors decreases as age takes its toll. But the urgency for younger generations to not only keep the memory alive, but to view it as a reminder of the unspeakable atrocities perpetrated by “civilised” people, increases. “Never again” should be indelibly imprinted in their minds. The number of young people at this year’s Holocaust remembrances was encouraging. About half of the 2 000 plus people who attended the ceremony at the West Park Jewish Cemetery in Johannesburg last week Thursday were schoolchildren, including a healthy number from non-Jewish schools, as well as the German School in Johannesburg. Pictured are Raizel Lampert from King David Victory Park and Valentine Ngwenya from Pholosho Primary School in Alexandra township. See story on page 2.

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Learn to give and take



In this week’s parsha, the Torah places two seemingly unrelated instructions together: “A person shall revere his mother and father and you shall guard My Sabbaths, I am Hashem your G-d.”

Why does the Torah juxtapose them in a single verse? Rashi explains: “The Torah is warning us that even though we are obligated to revere our parents, should they say to us: ‘Desecrate the Sabbath!’ we may not heed their words and the same is true of all other mitzvot.”

This is why the verse ends with the statement: “I am Hashem your G-d” - to teach that both parent and child are obligated to observe G-d’s mitzvot and neither has the authority to overrule Him.

In this verse the Torah is addressing a possible source of great conflict in the home: parental allegiance versus religious allegiance.

When children begin to show an interest in Judaism to a level beyond their parents’ observance, conflict can often arise. The child requests kashrut in the home, but the parent is not ready for the financial and emotional demands involved. The child wants to observe Shabbat, but his family wants to have Friday night dinner at granny who lives across town beyond walking distance.

The child wants to attend a yeshiva or seminary, but the parents demand a secular education. A parent leaves an instruction to be cremated but the child opposes this wish because it contravenes the Torah’s instruction to bury.

These and other dilemmas can and do lead to breakdowns in family relations and, in certain instances, lead parents away from Judaism. Jewish law is clear on the matter: parents may not make demands on children that contradict the Torah. But what is not so clear is how to resolve the inevitable conflicts that arise.

There are no clear-cut rules to follow, mostly because each and every case is unique. Nevertheless, the following points may be of assistance:

To parents of a newly-religious child: If properly nurtured and assisted, your observant child can become a prized and special child. This is because Judaism demands a very high standard of behaviour in the realm of interpersonal relationships especially between parents and children and, if allowed to practise his/her religion, you can expect a respectful, decent child.

Furthermore, because of Judaism’s rigorous moral code, your religious child is at lower risk of becoming a delinquent, a criminal or sexually promiscuous. If necessary, consult a rabbi or a knowledgeable third party to give you an objective view or to facilitate a family meeting.

To children of non-observant parents: Your embracing of an observant lifestyle might seem foreign to your family and, at worst, it might be construed as a rejection of the values they have raised you with.

You need to see it from their point of view and not to expect them to change immediately. Try to become an even better child and their appreciation of Judaism will grow in leaps and bounds.

Consult with a competent halachic authority to discover what leniencies may be applicable to you while you are still living at home and under your parents’ guidance.

Patience and respect are the most vital ingredients to ensure a loving relationship between the newly-religious child and his/her parents.

Crucial to apply lessons learnt from the Holocaust to our own times



DAVID SAKS

Holocaust remembrance cannot be limited to remembering how and why the Holocaust came about and mourning those who were lost in that inferno; applying its legacy and lessons to our own times is today equally crucial.

This was a common thread in the presentations made at the Johannesburg Yom Hashoah ceremony held last week Thursday at West Park Cemetery

Alongside this was an emphasis on passing on the responsibility for remembering and educating about the Holocaust to the next generation. Over 2 000 people, including members of the diplomatic corps, party political representatives and senior leaders from other faith communities, were in attendance. About half of these were learners from both the Jewish and several non-Jewish schools, including the German School.

“My eyes saw what no man should ever witness,” said Veronica Phillips, the day’s keynote speaker. The mission to educate the next generation would fail, she warned, if all it ended up doing was producing “educated psychopaths”, of the kind who had perpetrated the horrors she had lived through.

Phillips, who only very recently began speaking about her experiences, described the harrowing ordeals she endured in the Ravensbruck, Penig and Johanneorgenstadt concentration camps and Death Marches, and the enduring grief of having lost her beloved father and other close family members.

After the war, she qualified as a genetic scientist and lectured at Wits University. However, as a result of the torture to which she had been subjected, she suffered eight miscarriages. She asserted that when it came to education, teaching reading, writing and maths was secondary to “making our children more human” by imbuing them with fundamental moral and humanitarian values.

Regardless of religious belief or political affiliation, Yom Hashoah was a day that brought Jews from across the spectrum together, said SAJBD President and Durban Holocaust Centre Director Mary Kluk. All who attended, she continued, were “well aware that in Nazi-occupied Europe, merely to have been born Jewish was a death sentence. No exceptions were made, not even for those who had converted to Christianity.”

Applying the legacy of the Holocaust to South Africa, Kluk said that the lesson that all South



Survivor Veronica Phillips, the keynote speaker

Africans must take to heart was that words led to action. The country’s “turbulent past” included multiple instances of hate speech leading to deadly violence, “from the deadly racist rampage of Barend Strydom in the streets of Pretoria in the dying years of apartheid through to the xenophobic attacks against foreign migrants in our own times”.

Israel’s Ambassador to South Africa Arthur Lenk focused in his message on this year’s Yom Hashoah theme of remembering how often its victims resisted their persecutors’ attempts to brutalise them but instead strove to maintain and preserve their essential humanity.

The Holocaust, he said, posed challenging questions concerning the abyss into which humanity was capable of descending, yet it also showed how even under the most horrific circumstances, the spirit of life went on.

There have been other genocides since the Second World War, but the Holocaust, involving as it did a carefully planned, almost industrialised programme of mass murder by an educated people, was something different and unique, said Federal Republic of Germany Ambassador Walter Lindner.

If something like this could take place in the land of Goethe, Beethoven, Kant and Hegel, it could happen anywhere. Lindner emphasised how seriously Germany approached the need both to commemorate the Holocaust and to be continually vigilant against the re-emergence of the kind of racist, xenophobic ideologies that had made it possible.

He gave the assurance that in Germany, Israel and the Jewish people worldwide had a staunch ally, and that commitment to the security of Israel was one of the pillars of German society.

The ceremony was chaired by SAJBD Gauteng Council Chairman Shaun Zagnoev, with Cantor Chilly Chrysler, accompanied by pianist Evelyn Green, with Professor Russel Lurie leading a chorale ensemble in renditions of the Hazkara, Partisan Song, Ani Ma’amin, Shiviti and Hatikvah.

Lieutenant Hilton Kaplan delivered the Soldiers’ Tribute on behalf of the SA Jewish Ex-Servicemen’s League. At the commencement of the ceremony, violinist Waldo Alexander played the theme from the film Schindler’s List, while the Holocaust poetry readings included Redhill High School pupil Gemma Davies reading an extract from her prize-winning poem “Brother”

KASHRUT ALERT

The kashrut division of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues has announced that it will be holding a mashgiach training and kashering course, this Sunday from 10:00 - 17:00. The course will take place at the offices of the Beth Din and the cost of the course is R650. For further information, contact the kashrut division at tel (011) 214-2600 or fax (011) 540-7528.

Shabbat Times

May 13 / 5 Iyar
May 14 / 6 Iyar
Parshat Kedoshim

Starts	Ends	
17:12	18:02	Johannesburg
17:37	18:29	Cape Town
16:54	17:45	Durban
17:14	18:05	Bloemfontein
17:08	18:00	Port Elizabeth
17:01	17:53	East London

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ANT KATZ

Israel’s first-ever official memorial to their fallen soldiers was unveiled in Pretoria on Wednesday at Israel’s Remembrance Day (Yom Hazikaron) commemoration in Pretoria. The memorial, which honours the 87 expat-South Africans who fell defending the Holy Land, was unveiled before a host of dignitaries and family-members of the fallen. Construction of the magnificent memorial which has been erected in the Israel Embassy grounds, began last month and features the names of each of the 87 fallen. In attendance were various communal leaders and heads of Israeli organisations.

Due to an upgrade to www.sajr.co.za we are unable to post new content at present. We apologise to our readers.

Ramallah statue of Madiba: The real cost to Johannesburg ratepayers

ANT KATZ

The ratepayers of Johannesburg have donated a six-metre-tall, R6 million statue of the late President Nelson Mandela to the Palestinian people. All the while, the city’s long-suffering ratepayers, who battle to get roads tarred, traffic lights to work or potholes fixed, are regularly told there is “no budget for it”.

A senior member of the City Council, who asked not to be named, told Jewish Report this week that at the end of the day “much more than the published figure of R6 million” was spent on the project, the third City-funded “project” with Ramallah under 18 months.

The giant statue was last week unveiled in Ramallah by Johannesburg Mayor Parks Tau and Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas. The six-metre tall statue towers over its surroundings and the area where it is placed has been renamed Mandela Square.

The statue is the work of South African artists Tania Lee, Christina Salvoldi and Lungisa Kala who were appointed by the tender awardee, Koketsi Growth, whose directors include Dali Tambo and Mandla Langa.

Ramallah Mayor Musa Hadid was quoted in the Jerusalem Post as saying: “The square bearing Mandela’s name will become a major tourist attraction in Ramallah, just like his similar statue in

Johannesburg is one of the most-visited tourist attractions in the city.”

Tau said: “Having overcome apartheid in South Africa with the support of the international community, it is natural to extend our ubuntu principles as Africans and indeed stand in solidarity with those nations currently experiencing various forms of political and humanitarian unrest.”

Tau had told the media what the price tag was, adding that Israeli customs had sought duty “equivalent to 10 times the price of the statue”. This amount, he said, was not paid. He did not, however, say how much was in fact paid.

Jewish Report has asked the city’s media department for a full accounting of the costs involved in this act of generosity.

The enquiry by Jewish Report includes whether correct supply chain management procedures were followed; whether the construction was within the budgeted price; the transportation costs to get the two-tonne behemoth to Ramallah; and the number and cost of travel, accommodation and any other costs borne by the City of Johannesburg for their delegation attending the unveiling (Jewish Report has been reliably informed that Tau was accompanied by at least two others: Council Speaker Connie Bapela and mayoral committee member Nonceba Molwele); and

whether the city funded the event that was held with the public unveiling.

Jewish Report also enquired whether the city has a foreign policy and under which portfolio it would fall.

The answers are important for the city’s ratepayers ahead of the local municipal elections, scheduled for August 3. Johannesburg has been spending large tranches of ratepayers’ funds annually for the past three years - in fact over the past 18 months.

In November 2014 “a mission from Johannesburg visited Ramallah”, according to the city’s website. Jewish Report has established that nine delegates went on the mission, namely: Johannesburg Executive Mayor, Councillor Parks Tau; the Speaker, Councillor C Bapela; the head of the private office of the executive mayor, Loyiso Ntshikila; the head of the private office of the Speaker, Monty Sekhukhuni; and Jan Erasmus.

Non Johannesburg delegates were: national deputy minister Obed Bapela; a representative of the SA Local Government Association (Salga) based in the City of Tshwane; the ANC Regional Secretary; and the president of the Students Representative Council (SRC) of Wits University.

As far as could be established, all nine members of the delegation were funded by the City.



In early 2015, the city and Wits University SRC (seemingly irregularly in the case of the latter) funded a reportedly very expensive five-star trip for a delegation from Ramallah to visit Johannesburg.

Finally, Ramallah’s Mayor Hadid made it clear at the unveiling of the statue: “We look forward to more steps being taken to enhance this relationship

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Cape Town community turns up in numbers to remember the 6 million

BRIAN JOSSELOWITZ

More than 1 200 people attended the annual Yom Has-
hoah commemoration at Pinelands Cemetery last week
Thursday. Although the South African Jewish Board of
Deputies (SAJBD, Cape Council) expected pickets and
protests outside, the ceremony went off without inci-
dent.

It was a fitting tribute to the memory of the six million
who perished in the Nazi extermination camps. Gilad
Stern, who initiated legal action against the SAJBD for
refusing to allow women to sing at what is essentially a
religious occasion, was not there, according to various
sources.

The weather played its part: it was a beautiful day and
the atmosphere was dignified, respectful and serious.

Among the dignitaries was Helen Zille, premier of the
Western Cape and a sprinkling of Members of Parlia-
ment, Cape Town Deputy Mayor Ian Neilson, ambassa-
dors, consuls, as well as Christians, Muslims and Rwan-
dians who have felt the pain of genocide in Rwanda itself.

Speaking to Jewish Report afterwards, Neilson said:
“The Holocaust was one of the greatest disasters to befall
the Jewish people. The annual remembrance of those
who died is moving and reflective and it is my privilege
to attend the memorial every year. As a broader com-
munity, we must all remember how such deadly racial
hatred grew in an advanced, modern country and how we
need to guard against racism and deal with it wherever it
arises.

“We must not allow racists to speak for us and where
we encounter racism we must counter it strongly and ensure that people know their
rights.”

As always the ceremony started with the lighting of six candles at the Holocaust Memo-
rial by survivors, assisted by members of their families.

Vanya Keren spoke on behalf of her father Shmuel Keren who lost his family in the
Holocaust. Keren spoke of how much she admired her father and how he built a memo-
rial in the village of Pabrade where his family was murdered by the Nazis and their willing
Lithuanian accomplices.



Among the 1 200 people at the Yom Hashoah ceremony at Pinelands Cemetery in Cape Town, last week Thursday, was Western Cape Premier Helen Zille (second from left).

Shmuel Keren-Krol, in an autobiography in 2004, recalls how the Krol family were
murdered in a mass execution in 1942. Shmuel and his mother survived and lived in the
surrounding forests. However, his mother was killed by Polish bandits days before the Ger-
mans were driven out by the Russians in 1944 and Shmuel’s remarkable odyssey across the
globe began in 1946 after he was sent to an orphanage in Vilnius in 1945.

Keren-Krol first came to Cape Town in 1966 but returned to Israel to fight in the Six
Day War in 1967, before returning to Sea Point in December that year, where, after getting
married in 1968, established his own business importing filigree jewellery and big-brand
name watches.

Each year a different cantor and choir is invited to perform on the day and this year it
was the turn of Ivor Joffe and the Green and Sea Point Choir who delivered a stellar per-
formance. Herzlia pupils Cain Rademan on cello and Hayden Norrie on keyboard played
Eli Eli.

Rowan Polovin, chairman of the SAZF Cape Council, read a message from the State of
Israel on behalf of Israel’s Ambassador to South Africa Arthur Lenk.

Other items on the programme included a Partisan song by a choir, followed by a Yid-
dish poem recited by Dr Veronica Belling while the son of a Rhodes survivor and poet,
Isaac Habib, read a Ladino poem.

The highlight was the main address by Herzlia head girl Teagan Levin, who spoke about
“Remembering The Children”.

“It was a mature, sensitive and remarkable tour de force,” a community member said
later.

Teagan said how lucky they were to be born into security and that they owed it to their
heritage “to try to make the world a better place”.

Haskara followed and then the laying of wreaths by representatives of the Army, Air
Force and Navy, by members of the SA Jewish Ex-Service League, Jewish Maritime League,
volunteers from the MOTHS and SA Legion of Military Veterans. Laying a wreath for
Machal and Nachal volunteers was Leslie Marcus, a veteran of the 1948 War of Independ-
ence who, under gunfire, rescued a wounded colleague who was in the direct line of fire.

The man spent 18 months in hospital and Leslie visited him in
Israel every year. The man, who died a few years ago, would invite
his children and grandchildren to meet his rescuer and tell them
that if it were not for Leslie, none of them would be there.

A trumpeter blew the Last Post and Reveille, followed by the
communal Kaddish and the national anthems.

- The case between the SAJBD and two Orthodox Capetoni-
ans, joined by SACRED, will take place in August to
decide whether (inter alia) women should be
allowed to sing at Yom Hashoah.



Food for thought: Teagan Levin, head girl of Herzlia, delivers the main address.

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Viewpoint

The halacha and ‘women singing’ at communal events

As sent out to the community last week.

CHIEF RABBI WARREN GOLDSTEIN

Yesterday, I attended the Yom Hashoah service, and once again felt the agony and horror of what we, the Jewish people, have been through, as well the sacred duty we have to remember and pay respectful and heart-felt tribute to the victims of the Holocaust.

It brought home to me the real tragedy of how, in recent weeks, a few people have brought the Yom Hashoah service into the South African courts. They are insisting that the Cape Council of the Jewish Board of Deputies include a woman singing solo in the ceremony of the day. The Board has declined to do so because it would mean that those who observe the halacha which does not allow this, would be excluded from Yom Hashoah.

What is most painful for me is that Yom Hashoah, with its trauma and national grief, is being used by those who are taking this matter to court, as an opportunity to score political points, in the pursuit of personal and ideological agendas.

At the ceremony yesterday, I felt the sadness of the situation even more deeply. The Holocaust, of all things, is being used as an attempt to divide our community. Such conduct is beyond the pale. The Holocaust taught us in a graphic and painful way that we are one people.

The Nazis did not distinguish in their murderous intent between Jews of different levels of observance. They didn’t distinguish between Orthodox or Reform Jews, or unaffiliated Jews; they did not distinguish between Jews who observed the halacha and those who did not.

It is such a tragedy that it has come to this. Surely, dialogue and communication, and not a court summons, is the best way to solve problems? Surely, we should reach out to each other in love and respect, even when we disagree?

Most importantly, let us not forget that, after all is said and done, Yom Hashoah is not about us and our issues, it is about paying sincere and humble tribute and respect to the memory of the holy people, six million men, women and children, who were murdered in the Holocaust.

Those who have gone to court to force a change to the traditional format of the service, claim they are doing so in the name of women’s rights. But the facts suggest otherwise. The fact is that women play a very prominent role in the Yom Hashoah service.

The fact is that two recent past chairpersons of the Cape Board of Deputies were women who presided over Yom Hashoah services. The fact is that women are often the keynote speakers and poetry readings are done by women of all ages. The fact is that women, together with men, play a major role in the Yom Hashoah service.

The fact is that the halachic injunction against a woman singing solo in the presence of men is not about discrimination against women. Torah Judaism does not tolerate discrimination against any person. In fact, one of the central values of Torah Judaism is that of the equality of all people. As the Talmud states: “Beloved is every human being created in the image of G-d.”

There is a religious and ethical duty in Jewish law to treat every human being with respect and dignity, irrespective of race or gender, or social and financial status.

The equal worth and equal right to dignity of men and women is a central ethical value within the overarching structure of Judaism and the halacha. Discrimination against women is an anathema to Torah Judaism which reveres the prominent role of women, both in Jewish history, as well as in daily Jewish life.

Many heroes of the Torah are women, most notably the four founding mothers of the Jewish people, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. When the Jewish people left Egypt and were in the desert for 40 years, the leadership governing the people was a triumvirate of Moses, Aaron and Miriam.

The examples of the dynamic and important leadership roles that women play and have played within the context of Jewish religious life, are too numerous to mention and span thousands of years from the prophet Deborah, one of the great heroes of the Book of Judges, to modern times.

The halacha against women singing in the presence of men is actually a reflection of Torah Judaism’s worldview and ethos concerning human sexuality. Unlike other certain religious philosophies which view human sexuality as an affront to holiness, Judaism takes the opposite view.

It sees within human sexuality the potential for achieving holiness, provided that sexuality is expressed within the sacred privacy of marriage. The crucial words here are “private” and “holy”. In fact, the Talmudic word for marriage is “kedushin”, which means “holiness” and also means “specially designated”.

And so, within the sanctity and privacy of marriage, the expression of sexuality becomes an important value. There are many laws within Judaism that aim to preserve and protect sexuality within the framework of a private and holy relationship between husband and wife.

Thus there are many laws governing the sanctity of the sexuality of a woman, including that she should dress modestly (as should men!) and that a man ought not to look at a woman who is not his wife and who is immodestly dressed. These laws intend to empower women with proper command over their sexuality and dignity.

This has nothing to do with discrimination and everything to do with holiness. A woman’s singing voice is regarded by the halacha as being private in the same category as her unclothed body, and therefore Jewish law requires that it be reserved only for private occasions with her husband or only in the presence of other women, where it does not constitute a threat to her holiness and dignity.

Immersed as we are in modern Western culture, in which sexuality, and especially that of women, has been commercialised, and even degraded, we often become desensitised to Judaism’s philosophy of modesty and holiness in sexuality. The halacha operates as a legal system, with laws that apply in all circumstances, even if the context may change somewhat. And so the laws of sanctity and modesty apply even, and some would argue especially, in the context of a memorial service for the Holocaust.

I would like to commend the Board of Deputies for their courage in defending the traditional format of our Yom Hashoah memorial service. It is the right thing to do. It is right because it helps us create an all-inclusive Yom Hashoah service that every member of the Cape Jewish community feels comfortable to attend. It creates a safe space in which the community is held together in all its diversity, in a spirit of unity and tolerance.

It is the right thing to do because respecting the halacha is a precious Jewish value, which we uphold in our communal gatherings irrespective of our own personal level of observance.

Some members of our community keep more

Continued on page 6 >>

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Viewpoint

The halacha and ‘women singing’ at communal events *Continued...*

>> Continued from page 5

aspects of the halacha than others and yet we all live together in unity and tolerance; but when it comes to official communal events it is only right that we as a Jewish community respect the halacha.

Since the very inception of our people, the halacha has been a vital part of Jewish life and identity. Halacha is Jewish law as it is found in the Written and Oral Torah, the Talmud, and later codified into the Shulchan Aruch - the Code of Jewish Law.

The injunction against the woman singing solo in public in front of men, is one that comes from the Talmud and is recorded in the Code of Jewish Law and is part of the halacha. For thousands of years Jews have lived by - and sometimes even died for - keeping the halacha.

From the horrors of the Holocaust, many stories of heroism have emerged of Jews who risked their lives in order to fulfil the halacha. We have just celebrated Pesach in a free democracy, but let us not forget what

it was like to do so in the Holocaust. The devotion to observing halacha can be felt in the following account written by Holocaust survivor Yona Emmanuel, about Pesach in Bergen-Belsen in 1944:

“A few days after Purim, the question arose: What should we eat during the eight days of Pesach? Could we refrain from eating the bread portions throughout Pesach and live only on the soup and unpeeled potatoes that were distributed at lunchtime?

“The rabbis of the camp ruled that the prohibition against eating bread on Pesach was suspended because of the mitzvah of ‘and you shall live by them’. The rabbis composed a special prayer to be recited before eating chametz: ‘Our Father in Heaven, it is clear and apparent to You that it is our desire to do Your will and to celebrate the festival of Pesach by eating matzah and by observing the prohibition of chometz, but our hearts grieve that our enslavement prevents this, as we are in mortal danger.

“We are hereby ready and prepared to fulfil Your mitzvah of “and you shall live by them” - “and not die by them” and to heed the warning of “guard yourself and guard your life carefully”. Therefore, it is our prayer to You that You keep us alive and enable us to exist and redeem us soon, in order that we may observe Your laws, do Your will and serve You with a full heart. Amen.’”

Emmanuel continues: “Without questioning the validity of this ruling, we decided that we would try, as much as possible, to refrain from eating chometz on Pesach... For about three weeks before Pesach, I set aside potatoes each Monday from the food we all received. I was able to set aside 10 potatoes a day... It is obvious that the food we received was not ‘strictly’ kosher for Pesach, but we managed not to eat any chometz...

“Before Pesach, Baruch obtained a small amount of flour from Jews who had reached the camp from Benghazi in Libya. We prepared to bake enough

matzah so that there would be a kezayit [an olive size] for each one [of us] for the seder night... A few people joined us to bake the matzah.

“A young man named Yosef Adler, may G-d avenge his blood, supervised my mother as she kneaded the dough. Each person helped in his or her own way. We placed the dough that had been prepared carefully and according to all the laws onto a metal sheet in the oven... Suddenly the cry was here: ‘Achtung! (‘Attention!’).

“The door opened and - to the astonishment of all - an SS officer entered and asked what we were doing. My mother managed to hide some of the utensils while the others told the German that we were preparing a birthday cake.

“Luckily, the Nazi soldier was one of the oldest of the camp staff. He turned and left. The seder night passed without any disturbances. We observed the mitzvah of the Four Cups by drinking four cups of tea. We read the Haggadah, and each of us ate

a small amount of the matzah.” Jewish history is filled with heroic examples such as that described by Yona Emmanuel, of the devotion to fulfilling halacha in all its glorious detail. Halacha has been intertwined with Jewish life and destiny for thousands of years. As a Jewish community, it is only right that we have a Yom Hashoah service which is conducted in such a way that is respectful of the halacha.

It is so sad that a very small group of people have dragged the South African Jewish community and, indeed, Yom Hashoah itself into court, and have attempted to tear apart our communal unity, nurtured lovingly and painstakingly over many decades.

Let us defend the integrity and unity of our Yom Hashoah service. Let us defend the unity of our community. Most importantly, let us remember with dignity, humility and sincerity our brothers and sisters who perished in the Holocaust.

May their memory be blessed

Why women’s voices must be heard at Yom Hashoah

PROF DAVID BILCHITZ

Fania Fenelon was arrested in Paris at the age of 21 for being half-Jewish and for helping the French Resistance. Fania had studied at the Paris Conservatory, specialising in piano and singing.

When she was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944, she auditioned for a place in the women’s orchestra. Once accepted, she and other members of the orchestra had to sing and perform instrumental music for the SS officers as well as for victims en route to the gas chambers. Upon the liberation of the camps, movingly, she sang a rendition of “G-d save the King”, and “The Marseillaise” on a live BBC broadcast.

Similar stories abound, such as that of Lyube Levitski, a talented opera star who sang in the Vilna ghetto at a memorial concert for the victims of a mass killing by the Nazis in 1942. The poet Avraham Sutzkever remembered how “the audience stood in sacred silence as one stands in front of an open grave. Every word, every sound recalled the victims at Ponar”.

In light of this moving history, Holocaust ceremonies on Yom Hashoah across the world include songs sung by both men and women. These songs represent deep collective memories of the Jewish people, of how the most beautiful music was transformed into an instrument of coercion and repression by the Nazis.

Music was of course also a lifeline to retain the prisoners’ belief in a better world, to resist the horrors surrounding them and to remember loved ones who had been murdered. Singing at Holocaust ceremonies in many ways represents a reclamation of music and a statement that the Jewish people continues to live and thrive. It also gives concrete expression to the idea of Never Again. Never again will we allow humans to treat others as sub-human and fail to respect their essential humanity and equality.

In this context, it is tragic that the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) has banned women from singing at communal Yom Hashoah ceremonies across South Africa.

This decision represents a deep insult to the memory of the thousands of women who sang

both for life and death in the Holocaust. It is experienced by many women (and men who care about equality) as a serious harm to our dignity and historical memory.

It is deeply saddening that Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein displays, in a recent article, a deep insensitivity to this history and the feelings of a large segment of the South African Jewish community on this issue.

Chief Rabbi Goldstein is completely off the mark when he states that individuals across the community are using this as “an opportunity to score political points” and that the Holocaust “is being used as an attempt to divide the community”.

In fact, it is Chief Rabbi Goldstein who has chosen to play politics with the Holocaust and to divide the community on this issue. Growing up, I remember well teenage boys and girls from Jewish day schools reading and singing moving dirges and tributes at the Yom Hashoah ceremony.

The late Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris sat on the podium in a dignified manner and never objected. This was the practice in our community until, in 2005, Chief Rabbi Goldstein chose to walk off the podium when Hilit Milner from King David sang “To everyone there is a name”. Since then, the SAJBD has effectively banned any woman from singing at the ceremony.

No other community in the world bans women from singing at Holocaust memorial ceremonies. Orthodox rabbis (including Charedi rabbis) across the world sit through memorial ceremonies on Yom Hashoah where women sing and none walks off the podium.

Why is it then that South Africa is the exception in the world? In a country that has been ravaged by past discrimination, should we not be setting the example in rejecting such a naked exclusion?

The key reason given by Chief Rabbi Goldstein and the SAJBD for the policy is that Jewish law (halacha) unequivocally prevents men from hearing women singing (the “kol isha” prohibition). To allow women to sing at the ceremony would therefore prevent religious Orthodox men from attending the ceremony. There are numerous problems with this reasoning.

First, it suggests that women must be prevented from singing (and thus equal participation in the ceremony) because of a prohibition faced by some Jewish men. Why instead should these men (who regard themselves as bound by the prohibition) not excuse themselves when women sing?

Secondly, and sadly, Chief Rabbi Goldstein has presented an entirely one-sided account of Jewish law on the topic. This is a large subject which I cannot do justice to within the confines of a short newspaper article (a longer version is available on Jewish Report Online). Nevertheless, I have - with the help of senior Orthodox rabbis internationally - learnt the matter is not nearly as clear cut as Chief Rabbi Goldstein suggests.

Several respected halachic experts are of the view that the kol isha prohibition is limited to cases where women’s voices are expressed in a context or manner that is sexually charged.

Rabbi Moshe Lichtenstein, for instance, rosh yeshivah of Yeshivat Har Etzion, writes: “In terms of day-to-day life, this means that we may permit... participation in official ceremonies of a serious and formal nature... It is both possible and appropriate within the framework of halacha to permit these scenarios” (Tradition 46:1 , 2013).

Lichtenstein is not alone in his ruling with, for instance, Rabbi David Bigman (Yeshivat Ma’alei Gilboa) and Rabbi Ronen Neuwirth (Beit Hillel) ruling similarly.

I do not deny that there are of course more stringent views. However, the point is that there are differences of opinion in Orthodox halacha surrounding the scope of the kol isha prohibition. Why then does the Chief Rabbi force on the community an excessively strict approach in this area?

Why is there no recognition that the exclusion of women from singing at Yom Hashoah is a deep insult to many and violates their sense of dignity? Why cause distress to some Holocaust survivors and their descendants where there is no religious compulsion to do so? Why not consider the divisiveness this strict approach has created and the harm it is causing the SAJBD?

These questions are difficult to answer as Orthodox rabbis around the world have gone a

different route. It is particularly troubling that the SAJBD allows its policy to be determined by such an unnecessarily stringent interpretation of Jewish law. I should mention that I have deep respect for the work of the SAJBD in other areas and am saddened by the failure of our communal leadership in this area.

While I have utilised a framework of analysis internal to Orthodox Jewish law above, many will criticise the kol isha prohibition from a feminist point of view as being objectifying, paternalistic and patriarchal.

Judaism is an ancient tradition and, as such, we should not expect that it fully coheres with recent advances surrounding the status and rights of women. Issues surrounding women have created divides both between and within denominations within Judaism. I thus cannot agree with Chief Rabbi Goldstein’s simplistic denial of the difficulties that Orthodox Judaism has with the equal treatment of women.

In conclusion, I would like to express my agreement with the Chief Rabbi that it would be desirable to solve this issue within the Jewish community and reach an agreement outside of court.

Given the historical and moral imperatives, women’s voices must be heard at the ceremonies. At the same time, we should strive to include everyone. This will require a will and ability to engage on both sides. South Africans are good at finding ways to solve our problems: let us hope that we can do so in this instance too.

• David Bilchitz is a Professor of Fundamental Rights and Constitutional Law at the University of Johannesburg.

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TAKING ISSUE



Absence of good leadership is partly to blame. The last time South African Jewry

A simmering resentment exists about this among many Jews, however. Creative solutions require setting aside egos and Jewish politics. Provocative as the Equality Court case might be, perhaps it might spur community leaders into re-examining the status quo.

- Read Geoff Sifrin's regular columns on his blog sifrintakingissue.wordpress.com

Asked when he will fulfil a campaign promise to visit Israel, Khan said: "I've not even had my first Monday at work to be fair, I've had six hours sleep since Wednesday. But I'm keen to make sure I'm the most pro-business mayor we've ever had and that means going on trade missions, including to Tel Aviv." (JTA)

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Quagmire of new evidence engulfs beleaguered Bobroffs

ANT KATZ

A five-year-long legal process ended two weeks ago when personal injury lawyers father-and-son duo Ronald and Darren Bobroff (pictured) were finally struck off the roll by the Law Society of the Northern Provinces and the recent sale of their practice, Ronald Bobroff and Partners Inc, (RBP) was reversed.

Since the Bobroffs absconded to Australia on the eve of facing charges in South Africa, the floodgates have been opened about their “unscrupulous dealings” emanating from a myriad Road Accident Fund (RAF) cases stretching over many years.

What had previously been almost unbelievable allegations of gross overcharging of clients made against them, have now become a matter of public record - ruled on by a court of law.

New information has come to light that the Bobroffs had apparently misappropriated over a quarter of the over R1 billion that the RAF had paid to claimants through their legal firm in the past 10 years.

Anthony Millar, current president of the Law Society of the Northern Provinces, says: “I believe you are looking at R250 million fraud at this stage,” but he adds: “With what we know” so far. Given that the Bobroffs would have legally been entitled to a maximum of 25 per cent in contingency fees, it means they have taken something like half of all the money awarded to their clients for themselves.

The Law Society’s Millar has fought and won cases against the Bobroffs that saw them having to pay money back to clients. Despite several court findings to the contrary, the Bobroffs dug their heels in and insisted their “illegal” fee agreements were legal. The High Court disagreed, so they took the matter to the Supreme Court of Appeal which also disa-



greed. Not happy with this, the Bobroffs took their case to the Constitutional Court - which also found their agreements to be illegal, says Millar.

The irony is that at one time Ronald Bobroff used to be president of the Law Society of the Northern Provinces.

The Carte Blanche investigative programme which did a major exposé of the Bobroffs’ case last year, has further chased matters up and last weekend’s show with presenter Devi Sankeree Govender provided much more information.

Govender introduced an array of accusers who could now state as fact what had previously been suspicions and allegations. Some of the cases were nothing short of sensational.

Their former cost consultant Cora van der Merwe told Carte Blanche that after experiencing the Bobroffs’ fraud first-hand, she could not stay quiet and proceeded to give in-

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SA JEWISH REPORT

News

13 – 20 May 2016

“Getting out of this was like getting out of an abusive relationship,” says whistle-blower vd Merwe. She says she was kidnapped, had her phones hacked, and was accused of theft

formation to journalist Tony Beamish under the Protected Disclosures Act last year.

She says Ronald and Darren Bobroff did not even conceal their fraud from their staff. The Bobroffs, she said, “gave us all training” on how to amend documents by changing the figures, for example, and then making it look like the original.

But whistle-blowing is stressful and it took its toll on her. “They hacked my phone and accused me of theft of documents,” she told Govender. Ronald, in his interview with Carte Blanche in 2015, called Van der Merwe a Russian spy. She has subsequently laid charges of kidnapping against Ronald Bobroff and a well-known private investigator.

Darren Bobroff, is according to the prime-time TV show, “a bit rough around the edges”. They recorded him talking to Van der Merwe on the phone. The swearing, tone and threats of violence, which the programme broadcast - with the appropriate bleeps, were horrific.

“Getting out of this was like getting out of an abusive relationship,” Van der Merwe says, still showing signs of emotional scars.

Van der Merwe was in court to hear her former employers struck from the roll and prevented from practising law here. She finally felt vindicated. “I felt that perhaps I can have trust in the justice system again.”

Then there was lawyer George van Niekerk and his clients, husband and wife Matthew and Jennifer Graham, as well as Discovery Health. Matthew had been seriously injured in a car accident five years ago and they approached the Bobroffs to take up their case with the Road Accident Fund. Van Niekerk is a director of law firm ENSafrica. When the Grahams realised they had been short-changed by the Bobroffs, they approached him for help.

Discovery Health, which had many run-ins

with the Bobroffs over a long time, financed the case as they had been at odds with the Bobroffs for years. Their gripe was that the Bobroffs would tell clients they did not have to pay back medical costs to Discovery from RAF pay-outs; Discovery disputed this.

Van Niekerk says it took ENS five years “and a huge amount of money” to get the Bobroffs to “realise that the game was up”. Carte Blanche accused the Bobroff law firm of “ripping off” its clients largely through the legal term, “over-reaching”. Van Niekerk calls it “theft by stealth”, essentially overcharging on a large scale.

Mathew Graham obviously initially had no idea he was being swindled by the Bobroffs, said Govender. But on reviewing the case, Van Niekerk quickly discovered “Bobroffs’ fraud”, they say.

The Law Society, famously lax in censuring its members, would not take any action. So Van Niekerk took the Law Society to court five years ago. The court ordered the Law Society to investigate RBP. But for the next two years apparently did nothing.

The Bobroffs refused to open up their books and the Law Society seemingly wasn’t going to make them. Last year, however, the personal injury duo “capitulated”, says Govender, and although by then “some evidence had been destroyed”, enough remained for the Law Society to act.

The Law Society’s report, finally released in January, describes a string of irregularities - essentially falling under the categories of: Unprofessionalism; Dishonourable Conduct; and Over-reaching.

The Grahams, says Van Niekerk, became “the reluctant poster-kids for the Bobroffs’ greed”.

He says they have “been abused, threatened by the Bobroffs, and finally the Bobroffs tried to buy them off”. But the Grahams turned down the offer because they realised there was more at stake and were “insisting that the Bobroffs couldn’t escape the censure of the Law Society”, by buying their silence.

They won their case and they brought down the Bobroff house of cards - but they will probably never see the R500 000 they were overcharged.

A visit by the Hawks proved to be the last straw for the father and son duo, who then absconded, leaving behind Ronald’s 68-year-old wife Elaine.

The Bobroffs - Ronald and Darren and Darren’s wife Lisa - may have fallen from grace in South Africa, but have reportedly bought some luxury properties in the upmarket suburb of Vaucluse, in Sydney.

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Pretoria community remembers those murdered by the Nazis



Lighting candles for the six million killed: Louis Pearlman (chairman, SAJBD Pretoria); Wilfred Lautenberg (president, Bet Menorah); Lesley Beckbessinger (president, JAFFA); Ian Hertz (president, Pretoria Hebrew Congregation); Hilary Jocum (chairman IUA/UCF); David Eichhorn (chairman, Pretoria Chevrah Kadisha); and Doris Lurie, the main speaker.

DIANE WOLFSON PRETORIA

A Yom Hashoah remembrance service was held at the Pretoria Hebrew Congregation complex where a record number of diplomats, political leaders, Christian Friends of Israel and other dignitaries joined the Pretoria Jewish community in a solemn ceremony to commemorate the six million Jews killed by the Nazis during the Second World War. Grade 11 and 12 learners from various schools also attended.

Israel’s Ambassador to South Africa Arthur Lenk, delivered a strong message and said that even more than 70 years after the Holocaust, the words “never again” do not ring true. In his opening address, Victor Gordon, former chairman of the Pretoria Council of the SA Jewish Board

of Deputies, reiterated that the Holocaust was the greatest tragedy that had befallen the Jewish community since the fall of the Second Temple, “yet this was not our Holocaust, rather humanity’s Holocaust”.

Gordon stressed that “the universal lesson of the Holocaust is that while the Holocaust happened to Jews, there is indisputable evidence that where Jews are the initial target, others inevitably follow.”

Ariel Fine, a matric learner at Pretoria Boys’ High School, brought a message on behalf of the youth: “A huge problem of the youth of today is that they have no connection or interest in the Holocaust and this is probably the last generation to have the opportunity to have access to Holocaust survivors,” he said.

“What I know for sure, is that we need to remember in order not to

repeat the mistakes of the past.”

Doris Lurie, while being a war survivor, could better be described as a refugee, having fled Vienna two days after Hitler invaded the country. She told her personal story of a difficult journey of over two years of survival and escape through Europe to Switzerland, then France, before managing to sail to South Africa at the tender age of 12.

Seven memorial lamps were lit in memory of the six million Jews who perished, with Lurie lighting the seventh lamp to acknowledge the past and the belief in the continuation of future generations.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Lurie met with learners from the various Pretoria schools who attended - both Jewish and non-Jewish - where she answered their questions and talked to them informally.

The small Klerksdorp congregation remembers the six million

SUZANNE BELLING

Over 20 members of the Klerksdorp Jewish community, which comprises only 34 souls, commemorated Yom Hashoah in the house they have converted into a shul.

The programme opened with the rendering of El Male Rachamim by Tamir Samovich, an Israeli resident of the town.

Marlene Waks, local chairman of WIZO and the Ladies Synagogue Guild, lit the six candles of remembrance, each representing one million Jews of the six million who perished in the Holocaust. Her husband, Michael, is chairman of the Klerksdorp Hebrew Congregation.

“We must never forget,” was an explanation of the Holocaust by Joan de Jong, while Sara Samovich sang songs, including one written by a Holocaust survivor.

Jackey Shall read a moving article on the Shoah, written by a 17-year-old.

Communal Kaddish was recited, after which the congregation sang Hatikvah.

Photo supplied



Members of the Klerksdorp Jewish community behind the six candles of remembrance for Yom Hashoah.

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World News in Brief

‘Hummus in most Israeli fridges’

JERUSALEM - More than 90 per cent of Israelis say they eat hummus at least once a week, and nearly 70 per cent currently have some in their refrigerator. A survey conducted by the Geocartography Institute for credit card company Diners Card and the Hummus Abu Ghosh restaurant also found that more than half of Israelis like wiping their hummus in a circular motion with a pita and just nine per cent see the popular chickpea spread as a symbol of Arab-Jewish coexistence, Haaretz reported on Monday. The survey was designed to coincide with Yom Ha’atzmaut, Israeli Independence Day. Five hundred people, considered a representative sample of Israel’s adult population, were surveyed, researchers said. Other findings included that five per cent of Israelis eat hummus six times a week and that 60 per cent buy their hummus at grocery stores, while 15 per cent prefer hummus restaurants and 13 per cent make the dip themselves. Israelis over the age of 55 were more likely than their younger compatriots to make their own hummus). (JTA)

Israeli flag burned at Babi Yar Holocaust Memorial in Kiev

KIEV - The mayor of Kiev, Ukraine, has asked authorities to identify a group of people who were filmed burning an Israeli flag at the Babi Yar Holocaust memorial. Babi Yar is a ravine near Kiev where between 100 000 and 150 000 Jews were massacred by the Nazis throughout the Holocaust. The flag-burning incident is the latest in a series of anti-Semitic incidents targeting the memorial and took place on Israel’s national remembrance day for the Holocaust, Yom Hashoah. “It is intolerable to brutalise the memory of the victims. Especially at the place that which is globally known as one of the symbols of a terrible crime of fascism, at Babi Yar, where tens of thousands of people of different nationalities, the majority of them Jewish, were killed,” Kiev Mayor Vitali Klitschko said in a statement. (JNS.org)

A growing epidemic

I hope I’ll be forgiven this week for avoiding the bedlam in the news - lawyers on the run, friction within our community over women singing in public, and local politicians spending precious rands on statues in contentious hot spots - to write about another urgent issue which is fast becoming an epidemic in our community. The illness, known as obsessive exercise disorder (OED), is gaining momentum across all religious streams, genders and ages. Many of the afflicted can be seen from the pre-dawn hours, setting out in packs for gruelling, multi-hour cycles or runs. Among the most extreme are those in training for marathons, triathlons and long-distance ocean swims. Prevalent among the symptoms is altered speech so that words like “Comrades, Iron Man, Two Oceans, times, training, and injury” show up repetitively in speech. Once OED sets in, it is hard to shake and the affected soon change their lifestyles completely - going to bed at 20:00, following rigid diets and staying away from crowded spaces for fear of catching the flu or a virus that would affect training or actual competitions. Jokes aside, the popularity of fitness is today unprecedented. A multitude of factors have impacted this - from a greater awareness of the health benefits of exercise coupled with the fact that people lead highly stressful, busy lives and exercise is an effective method for unwinding and releasing much needed endorphins. Also, today there is an increased focus on staying young and fit with higher expectations to look good. After

all, 40 is the new 30 and 50 is the new 40 and aided by botox, cosmetic surgery and exercise, the “sky is the limit”. Having a gym membership is now as common as having a cell phone and in Cape Town where I live, the Sea Point beachfront - the hub of Cape Town Jewry - is a mini-Olympic Village. Particularly on the weekends, throngs of people are running, cycling, and walking -kitted out in the best sports gear and equipment money can buy. Top-end bicycles can cost more than a small car and for the exercising fashionistas, a pair of imported gym pants can set one back as much as R2 000. The more innovative from our community have realised the commercial potential of the exercise mania and have introduced some highly original group fitness options. Steve Uria who returned to South Africa after many years in the United States, brought us SWEAT1000 for the A-type, high energy crowd who wanted to sweat out 1 000 calories in one hour. He partnered with the entrepreneurial Rothschild brothers (Paul and Andrew) who then rolled out the concept in studios nationally. Uria then introduced another novel concept for group fitness classes called Switch. Classes occur in a dance club type of setting with smoke, strobe lights and pumping music. Participants work out in pairs, doing high intensity exercise in two-minute intervals - from squats to jump rope to spinning - before switching to the next exercise or equipment. There is also a burgeoning support industry around this sporting zeal. Physios, bio-kineticists, personal



South African Jewish Report

trainers, private pilates instructors, nutritionists and vitamins are in demand. For the many injuries that result, physiotherapists, chiropractors, massage therapists and podiatrists are also thriving. It is worth a chuckle when one considers the passion and focus that goes into the exercise and training. While historically as a people, we may be over-represented in the category of Nobel Prize-winners, we are not too well represented in the category of Olympic gold winners. And even though we put tremendous resources and energy into our children’s sporting activities (ask any Jewish parent!), it doesn’t always translate into Springbok colours and professional sporting team participation. Perhaps this fanaticism is really just about the intense focus that we Jews have on most things we do. Whether it is raising our children or building our careers, we often attack the task obsessively with a great determination to excel at the highest level possible. We are no different with exercising and trying to stay young.

– Vanessa Valkin, editor

Community

Island of Mauritius remembers the murdered six million

SUZANNE BELLING

It was a week of remembrance and festivities on the island of Mauritius for its 90-strong Jewish community and its non-Jewish supporters. Yom Hashoah, the ceremony in memory of the six million Jews who perished at the hands of the Nazis, took place for the first time on the island last week Thursday. The event was organised by Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, CEO of the African Jewish Congress. With the Israeli flag in the background, dignitaries from Mauritius participated in the moving ceremony, with many of them learning more about the Holocaust than they knew before. The ceremony took place in the St Martins Jewish Cemetery, where Andrew Slome, OBE, a former South African who has lived on the island for many years, welcomed guests and gave a brief explanation of the cemetery. Rabbi Laima Barber of Chabad of Mauritius recited Psalm 91 while the six candles, each representing one million of the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust, were lit by the dignitaries (pictured). A minute’s silence was observed and the traditional siren was

sounded as is the custom in Israel. “We are gathered here at a fitting place to commemorate the Nazis’ brutal annihilation of six million Jews during the Second World War,” Rabbi Silberhaft told the congregation. “We are outside the Beau Bassin prison where the Jews who managed to escape Hitler’s evil hand, were nonetheless subjected to unbearable conditions in the prison under the auspices of the British, who would not let them go to the then Palestine (now Israel). “Jews who died during that terrible period – from illnesses, including malaria and dysentery – not being used to the tropical conditions on Mauritius, are buried in the St Martin’s Cemetery. “Also on this unique property is the Jewish Museum of Mauritius which houses all the information during the wartime period and other relevant documents pertaining to our history.” Rabbi Silberhaft then recited the traditional memorial prayer and led the singing of Hatikvah. After the ceremony the attendees were given a tour of the nearby Jewish Museum and viewed the permanent exhibition there. The museum was the brainchild of the late Mervyn Smith, former president of the AJC and chairman of



Rabbi Laima Barber, from Chabad of Mauritius; Marc Birger, whose father Isa Birger was the only Jew on the island at the time when Jewish detainees were held on Mauritius during the Second World War and was appointed the official liaison between the various relief organisations in South Africa and London; the Rev Eddy Cheong See, an executive member of the Council of Religions; Andrew Slome, OBE; Alain Soup, president of the Amicale Maurice Israel; Max-Emile Bolle, an active member of the Jewish community of Mauritius all of whom lit candles to commemorate Yom Hashoah, with Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft (third from right), CEO of the African Jewish Congress who organised the ceremony and was guest speaker. the board of trustees of the SA Holocaust Foundation. It is run under the auspices of the Mauritius Museums Council and was opened by Ann Harris who succeeded Mervyn Smith in November 2014. The focus was on South Africa for the rest of the week, with a wedding on Sugar Beach of South Africans Dalya Levin and Trevor Abromowitz, conducted by Rabbi Ari Shishler of Johannesburg, assisted by Rabbi Silberhaft, with cantorial renderings by Choni G, chazzan of the Gardens Shul in Cape Town. A kosher Friday night dinner was arranged in the Sugar Beach Hotel where Rabbi Silberhaft has established a kosher kitchen. The week also saw the 50th anniversary of the Amicale Maurice Israel, an organisation of Mauritian non-Jewish friends of Israel who have led co-operative projects between the island and Israel in agriculture, manufacturing, irrigation and other ventures. Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha’atzmaut ceremonies also took place on Mauritius.

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Yom Hashoah movingly remembered at King David Linksfield

BEV ROSENFELD

Yom Hashoah commemorated last week Thursday at King David High School, Linksfield, under the supervision of Mazal Sacks was a moving experience. The guest speaker, Irene Fainman, spoke about the years she spent as a child in a labour camp. Six

candles were lit in memory of the six million Jews who perished. Daniel Abrams and Rebecca Barnes put on a top-class exhibit honouring the memory of those killed. The grade 10s and student leaders went to West Park Cemetery for the communal Yom Hashoah commemoration.



Holocaust survivor Irene Fainman; vice-principal Mazal Sacks; principal Lorraine Srage and grade 11 pupil Rebecca Barnes.

Jacob Hansen – a learner Yeshiva College can be proud of

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Yeshiva College is tremendously proud of learner Jacob Hansen who, after playing a cricket match against Skeen Primary School and noticing the state of the school and the learners’ lack of sports equipment, took it upon himself to collect a staggering amount of sports equipment and clothes for the school and its learners. This phenomenal act of chesed has earned Jacob recognition as this month’s 94.7 Lead SA Youth Hero! He was interviewed on 94.7 and 702 last week Thursday.



Davening at Sydenham... a good way to start the day



SUE BENJAMIN

What a great way to begin a Thursday morning - davening outside in the fresh morning air! The sweet sounds of Mode Ani, Shema and the brochas could be heard throughout the campus. The “rabbi” and “chazzan” fulfilled their roles and they walked proudly holding the Torah. Their words of advice to the young congregants were “to share” and “be nice to your friends”. Pictured are “Rabbi” Noah Meyers; Chase Cohen; and “Chazzan” Benji Smith.

KDVP tots write messages to Hashem on their ‘Kotel’

LYNDA ROMAIN - HEADMASTER

In celebration of Yom Hashoah, Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha’atzmaut, the grade R children of King David Victory Park Pre-Primary School made their own Kotel at school. They posted letters to Hashem, davened and kept a minute’s silence. Pictured posting their messages are Franky Lyons; Elan Shapiro; Jesse Rubin; and Phoenix Bernstein.



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A good deed at time of WWII, resonates in Sardinia

GWYNNE ROBINS

Elie Wiesel has written: “And so we must know these good people who helped Jews during the Holocaust... and we must remember them.”

Lina Kantor and her family have just returned from a visit to Sardinia where they did just that. While visiting Rhodes island in 2014 for the 70th anniversary of the deportation of their Jewish community, she started reminiscing about the Italian family, the Sotgius, that had rescued her by “adopting” her. Her son Gary typed the family name onto his computer and discovered that the family had written a book *Da Rodi a Tavolara* (From Rhodes to Tavolara) and one of the chapters, called the “Deportation of the Jews”, was available to download.

Sitting across from the Jewish Martyrs memorial, Lina translated the Italian text to her family. It vividly discussed

her rescue and the role of the Sotgius in persuading the Turkish consul to take the Turkish Jews under his protection.

Gary immediately got in touch with the publisher who gave them the contact details of the Sotgius. The Sotgius had passed away but their children - Federica, Antonello and Donatella - were delighted to be found and soon they were regularly skyping and e-mailing each other.

On Rhodes Island Gary had met Marco Clementi, an Italian historian who had recently opened up the carabinieri (police) archive on Rhodes Island after nearly 70 years.

Inside, among 90 000 documents including lists of the Rhodes Island Jews, Clementi found a file with Lina Amato’s name upon it which enclosed her certificate of adoption by the Sotgius.

They had cleverly taken the precaution of backdating the document to 1941 when they

married, instead of the actual date in 1944 just before the deportation of the Jews when they agreed to hide Lina.

Lina and Gary submitted a formal application to Yad Vashem to have Girolamo and Bianca Sotgiu recognised as Righteous Gentiles. Yad Vashem investigated and agreed and in March, Lina, her husband Harry, children and grandchildren travelled to Cagliari, Sardinia, where they were swept off their feet by the warmth of their reception from the Sotgiu family and from the community.

The president of the Sardinian Parliament had a private meeting with them, presenting Lina with a medal, before they all went into the ceremony arranged by the Israeli embassy in Rome to hand over a medal and certificate of honour from Yad Vashem to give posthumous recognition to the Sotgius as Righteous Gentiles.

Later the mayors of Cagliari and Olbia held separate receptions for them, attended by university students with schoolchildren brought in to meet them. Italian television and newspapers reported on the event and it was used as an occasion to teach the citizens about the Holocaust.

A short distance by boat from Olbia on the island of Tavolara, lay the graves of Girolamo and Bianca. The Kantor family placed stones from Cape Town on the graves and Gary said Kaddish.

Another moving moment was when Donatello presented her “sister Lina” with a brooch that had belonged to her mother Bianca, saying that her mother would have wanted her to have it in remembrance of the past.

This was an unforgettable visit and may result in equally memorable visits to Cape Town by members of their “new” family.



Distinguishing the graves of Girolamo and Bianca Sotgiu.



Federica Sotgiu on the left and Lina Kantor on the boat to Tavolara in March this year.

Opinion and Analysis

Six ways Israel is counting its blessings on Independence Day

BEN SALES
TEL AVIV

When Israel entered its 1948 War of Independence, the coastal city of Rishon Lezion was a hardscrabble farming settlement with fewer than 20 000 inhabitants.

As waves of immigrants inundated Israel in its founding years, many were settled in temporary camps on Rishon Lezion’s sandy outskirts.

The arrivals braved rainy winters in tents and subsisted on the national food rationing programme, which limited Israeli consumption of eggs and meat.

Not seven decades later, Rishon Lezion is Israel’s fourth largest city, a bustling hub of nearly 250 000 freckled with malls.

Its rise mirrors the meteoric growth experienced by Israeli society in the 68 years since the nation’s founding. Though Israel faces social, cultural, religious and military challenges, it has burgeoned economically, technologically and militarily. The nation celebrated its Independence Day on Wednesday; here are six statistics that show how the country has progressed from its humble beginnings.

Israel’s population has grown tenfold since 1948

Israel was founded with a population of 806 000. Today there are 8,5 million Israelis, about 75 per cent of them Jews.

In 1948, just over a third of Israelis were native born, or “sabras”, the rest were immigrants either from war-torn Europe or the Middle East and North Africa. Today, three-quarters of Israelis are native born.



Photo: Hadas Parush/Flash 90

Soldiers at Israel’s 67th Independence Day ceremony at Mount Herzl in Jerusalem, on April 22, 2015.

But aliyah continues to swell the numbers: 30 000 immigrants arrived in Israel in 2015, including almost 8 000 from France, 7 000 from Ukraine and about 3 800 from the United States and Canada. In total, some 2,5 per cent of Israel’s population - approximately 200 000 - are from the US.

Israel’s cities have grown apace. West Jerusalem, in 1948, had less than 100 000 residents. Now the city’s eastern and western halves include more than 800 000 residents. Sixteen Israeli cities boast more than 100 000 residents and eight have more than 200 000.

A higher percentage of Israelis than Americans own cell phones

In Israel’s first decades, phone access was a luxury. Through the 1970s, new immigrants sometimes waited years to get a landline in their apartment. In the meantime, they lined up at the local pay phone with a handful of tokens.

Now, 96 per cent of Israelis own cell phones, more than the 90 per cent in the US. A swarm of Israeli phone companies compete for customers’ shekels, while Israeli technological innovation has made cell phones more powerful.

Since 1948, Israel’s economy has grown even faster than its population. The country’s GDP in its founding year was \$6,6 billion in today’s dollar terms. Now Israel produces about 44 times as much - nearly \$300 billion a year.

In 2010, the country joined the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, a group of the world’s most affluent countries.

Standards of living have also risen. Israel’s GDP per capita today is approximately \$35 000 - 6,7 times what it was in 1948, adjusted for inflation. Nine years after the state’s founding, just one-tenth of Israelis had an air-conditioner for the country’s sweltering summer. Now, thankfully, almost nine in 10 Israelis have the machines at home. The country boasts nearly three million cars, compared to 34 000 in 1948.

Israel’s Air Force grew from nothing to the region’s most powerful

When Israel’s provisional government declared independence, a militia, the Hagannah, was in place to defend it. But the new state had a total of zero combat aircraft. The first shipment of 25 planes came a few weeks after Independence Day from Czechoslovakia.

The Israel Air Force has since established itself as the best in the Middle East. At 680 combat aircraft, it isn’t the region’s largest fleet, but technological prowess, training and Israel’s stability make it the most

Continued on page 17 >>

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A column of the Chevrah Kadisha

Musing on motherhood

Whoever said “the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world”, knew what he was talking about. No one I know would deny that truth.

As a son, husband and father, I get to experience, first-hand, and daily, the unique qualities of mothers. They appear to have a G-d-given ability to put the needs of their children way ahead of their own, and to feel no sense of sacrifice while doing so. They selflessly go without so that their children can have every opportunity in life. Their reward is the nachas they get.

This past Sunday, on international Mother’s Day, I found myself thinking about the many mothers in our residential facilities. The vast majority have graduated to grand-motherhood and even great-grand-motherhood, but they will always be, first and foremost, mothers.

Walking around and engaging with them, one can feel the power of their individual personalities and imagine the impact they made, and that many continue to make.



ChevrahKadisha
AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITY WELFARE

Partners in Chesed
Michael Sieff

This column is paid for by the Chevrah Kadisha

Each one has changed the world in some essential way by raising families, influencing and guiding their children and grandchildren and setting their unique example.

Some may well be retired, tired, and advanced in age, but the marvellous legacy left by one generation of mothers to the next provides our community with a wealth of inspiration and accumulated experience.

How often do we hear a woman say: “I do it this way because it’s the way my mother used to do it when I was child at home?”

Mothers create the atmosphere in the home, teach their children enduring values, respect for themselves and for others, and turn the house from a mere dwelling into a warm and nurturing home.

They instruct, support and challenge their children to inspire them to grow into adults worthy of making the world a better place - adults who can take their place in society and ensure that this remarkable and wonderful cycle continues.

Honouring our parents is ingrained in our culture and religion and many would say that hearts and flowers one day a year are not enough. That’s why, at the Chev we consider it a privilege to join you in demonstrating respect and appreciation every day of every year.

May our partnership continue to thrive!
feedback@jhbchev.co.za

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies



Good youth attendance at Yom Hashoah heart-warming

The outstanding feature of last week’s Yom Hashoah ceremony in Johannesburg was undoubtedly the large number of school learners in attendance, comprising over half the estimated 2 000 people present.

For the first time, it included a significant number of non-Jewish learners. Each learner was provided with a Holocaust education pack produced by the SAJBD specifically for the occasion.

This tied in with the theme of “Dor l’Dor” - Generation to Generation - that emerged in the various presentations given. We sincerely thank our keynote speaker, Shoah survivor Veronica Phillips, for being willing to share her story, painful though it clearly was, to have to relive her horrendous personal memories.

In doing so she provided a living link with the events being remembered, something that was particularly important for our young people to be exposed to. It will not be very long before no survivors are left to bear testimony to what they witnessed and experienced, making it that much more critical to prepare our next generation for the solemn task of remembering the Holocaust in all its detail.

The significance of having young people from outside our community attending is that it underlines how in South Africa today, the Holocaust should not be interpreted as being an exclusively Jewish tragedy that occurred over seven decades ago, but also as an event that contains profound and important lessons for our own society.

Our National President Mary Kluk, who in her capacity of director of the Durban Holocaust Centre is intricately involved in promoting Holocaust education in the broader society, strongly emphasised the risk that racist discourse and other forms of hate speech pose to our society.

What began as hateful rhetoric, paved the way to legal discrimination, seizure of property, expulsion and eventually mass murder. For South Africans, and indeed the world at large, it should be an ever-present reminder of what the consequences can be when hatred of “the other” is allowed to run wild and of the responsibility and indeed obligation that not

only governments, but the person in the street has to strenuously oppose it wherever it surfaces.

This week, we have again seen a renewed upsurge of popular outrage over yet more instances of racially offensive communications, this time allegedly emanating from individuals who hold positions of considerable influence in society.

Such rhetoric, even when it does not lead directly to violence, sows deep division, mistrust and resentment within South African society, making it very difficult to address, as a united nation, the serious challenges facing our country.

Yom Hashoah is the first in an annual trilogy of events on the Jewish civil calendar. This week our community joined with the people of Israel and world Jewry in marking Yom Hazikaron - the remembrance ceremony for Israel’s fallen soldiers and civilian victims of terror - followed immediately by Yom Ha’atzmaut, celebrating the rebirth of the Jewish State.

The order of these events, commencing with tragedy and destruction, culminating in national liberation and, in between, the price that was and is still being paid for this, symbolises the resilience of the Jewish people and its ability, even in the wake of the worst tragedies, to build a more secure, more peaceful and more prosperous future for itself and future generations.

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

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

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World News in Brief

Poll: 58% of Israelis happy with their financial status

JERUSALEM - Israelis are largely happy with their financial situation, according to a new survey published by the country’s Central Bureau of Statistics last week. The survey found that 58 per cent of Israelis ages 20 and over were satisfied with their financial status in 2014. The survey also found that 10 per cent of Israelis were “very satisfied” with their financial status.

Broken down by gender, 59 per cent of men and 57 per cent of women were satisfied with their financial position. Among Israeli Jews, 60 per cent said they were satisfied with their financial situation, while 48 per cent of Israeli Arabs said the same. Fifty-four per cent of Israelis from ages of 20 to 44 said they were satisfied with their financial status, a figure that rose to 58 per cent for those between the ages of 45 and 64 and to 69 per cent for Israelis ages 65 and up. (JNS.org)

Islamic State reportedly planning to attack Israel from Sinai

JERUSALEM - The Israeli military is concerned that the Islamic State terror group is planning a large-scale attack against Israel from Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula, Germany’s Bild newspaper reported on Sunday, citing an Israel Defence Forces officer.

The Sinai has become an Islamic State stronghold in recent years. According to the Bild report, there could be hundreds of Islamic State operatives currently training in the Sinai and awaiting an order to strike Israel.

The IDF officer quoted by Bild said that while it is not clear what a future Islamic State attack against Israel would look like, it could include the use of tanks and artillery by the terrorist group. (JNS.org)

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Medjool date energy bars - vegan and gluten-free

ALY MILLER
NEW YORK

Get creative with some vegan, gluten-free fruit and nut bars. Dense and chewy. Dates, full of natural sugar and potassium, combined with nuts and seeds are sure to keep your “hanger” at bay.

If you’re like me, snacks like these come in handy - breakfast only gets you so far. Stranded at work, you’ll soon be on the hunt for a mid-morning snack. Don’t get me wrong, grazing is great fun - but it sure can get expensive if you don’t plan ahead.

While browsing for recipes, I noticed a simple formula: 1.5 to 2 cups of dried fruit to every 1 cup of nuts. Most recipes call for Medjool dates as a significant part of that dried fruit ratio, due to their plump and gooey sticking power. (Medjool date palms originate from the Middle East, but are now cultivated all over the world. They are prized for their large size, extraordinary sweetness and chewy texture.)

I think prunes or sun-dried figs could work just as well. For flavour and texture, you can add up to another half cup of optional ingredients, such as spices, chia seeds, cocoa powder or shaved coconut. And the best thing is, if the “dough” just isn’t sticking, you can always add more dates.

Using these basic rules, I came up with a few winning recipes; file these away, because they’re kosher for Pesach too.



Note: this recipe calls for a food processor.

Ingredients
Coconut date bars

- 1 cup Medjool dates, pitted (12-14 dates)
- 1 cup dried prunes
- 1/2 cup raw cashews
- 1/2 cup raw almonds
- 1/2 cup shaved coconut
- 1/2-1 tsp sea salt (optional)
- Apricot cardamom bars

- 1 cup dried apricots, packed
- 1 cup walnuts (you can also toast them)
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1/2 tsp ground cardamom, or more to taste
- 1/2 tsp ground ginger, or more to taste

Cocoa, cranberry and fig bars (below)

- 1 cup Medjool dates, pitted (12-14 dates)
- 1/2 cup sun dried Turkish figs
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries, unsweetened
- 1 cup mix of raw walnuts, cashews, and

- almonds
 - 2 heaping Tbsp cocoa powder
 - 1 tsp sea salt
- Method**

The recipe is the same for all bar recipes.

 - Make sure the dates are pitted. Add all ingredients into the food processor and process until a large ball forms. This can take up to 2 minutes of processing.
 - Add more dates, prunes, or figs if the mixture is still not forming into a ball. With the processor off, push it around a bit with a wooden spoon to make sure all the fruits are blended together properly. Blend for another minute after it reaches ball-state.
 - Take a break from the dough and line a square pan or rectangular baking tray with parchment paper.
 - Press the dough-like mixture into the lined tray. Chill overnight. Then, remove the dough from the tray and cut into squares or rectangles. Store them in the fridge with parchment paper between each bar so that they don’t stick together. (The Noshers through JTA)
- *Aly Miller, who lives in New York, graduated in 2011 from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she studied human geography and lived in a lively vegan Jewish co-op.*

Around the Jewish World



London elects its first-ever Muslim mayor

LONDON - Sadiq Khan, the Labour MP for Tooting, has won the race to become the Mayor of London with a comfortable victory over Conservative rival Zac Goldsmith.

Over 1,3 million Londoners voted for Khan, Communities Minister in the last Labour government, giving him 57 per cent of the vote. He is the son of Pakistani immigrants. His father was a bus driver.

Khan, a former human rights lawyer, will be the capital’s first Muslim mayor.

Despite a strong campaign, Khan was affected by the anti-Semitism crisis in the Labour Party. His party lost key votes in Jewish areas across England and Scotland.

In interviews with the Jewish Chronicle during the campaign, Khan said he would support interfaith initiatives, Jewish schools and security measures for the community.

He has also said he would fight anti-Israel boycott initiatives and looks forward to building ties between London and Tel Aviv.

He admitted he changed his position on Israel boycotts after the Jewish Chronicle revealed that Khan had repeatedly called on ministers to impose sanctions in 2009.

He told the JC afterwards: “The evidence clearly shows that Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel do not help us achieve peace – we must not turn our face against Israel”. - Jewish Chronicle.

Jewish groups rush to help Fort Murray evacuees

TORONTO - Jewish organisations are rallying to help support the tens of thousands of displaced residents of Fort McMurray in Alberta, who have been forced to evacuate the area due to a ravaging wildfire.

The Alberta government declared a state of emergency

on May 4 as a result of the catastrophic fires and 90 000 people have been evacuated.

On May 4, the Jewish Federation of Edmonton set up a PayPal account to collect donations for evacuees staying in and around Edmonton.

Community relations director Tal Toubiana said the Federation had been publicising the campaign through its website and on Facebook, in the hope of reaching the city’s Jewish community of roughly 5 000 people and the wider Edmonton community.

He said it hadn’t been decided where the Federation would donate the money it raised, though it would likely go to an organisation such as the Canadian Red Cross.

Ve’ahavta, a Toronto-based social service organisation whose programmes include international crisis response, also launched a Fort McMurray relief fund on May 4 and Ve’ahavta CEO Avrum Rosensweig said it was able to raise more than \$6 000 overnight.

He said Ve’ahavta was in discussions with other organisations to determine how best to allocate the funds, which had been mostly donated by people in Toronto. - Canadian Jewish News

Israeli cancer vaccine triggers response in 90% cancer types

NES ZIONA - An Israeli biotechnology company is developing a vaccine for cancer which is not designed to treat the disease, but to prevent it from returning.

Vaxil BioTherapeutics, based in Nes Ziona, Israel, has spent five years developing ImMucin, a prophylactic cancer vaccine, which can trigger a response in about 90 per cent of all types of cancer, according to the company.

“Vaxil is developing a drug to keep the cancer from coming back,” says Julian Levy, Vaxil’s CFO. “We are trying to harness the natural power of the immune system to fight against cancer by seeking out cancer cells and destroying them.”

Levy explains that ImMucin is not a replacement for traditional cancer treatments such as chemotherapy or radiation. Rather, the company is targeting a different stage in the patient’s battle against cancer, specifically the early stages of detection, as well as during remission.

The drug won’t be helpful to many cancer patients who are in advanced stages of the disease because it requires a relatively healthy body to be fully effective.

ImMucin works by stimulating a part of the immune system and teaching it to attack certain cells with certain markers that indicate the presence of cancer. When the drug is introduced during an early stage of cancer, the hope is that as a patient’s cancer begins to creep back, the immune system is trained appropriately to know which cells to destroy and which to leave be. - NoCamels.com

Queen’s Holocaust survivor hat maker killed by lorry

LONDON - A Holocaust survivor who made hats for the Queen, has been killed by a lorry in central London.

Herta “Georgette” Groves, 96, was pronounced dead at the scene after a lorry ran her over outside Wigmore Hall last week.

Groves was born in Vienna to middle-class Jewish parents. During her teenage years she helped other Jewish women obtain visas to escape Nazi-occupied Austria.

She fled to the UK aged 19, leaving her family behind. Her father, Wilhelm, died from pneumonia after being forced at gun-point to shovel snow. Her mother, Amelia, and sister, Alice, died in a concentration camp in 1942.

In the UK, she launched the London Hat Company and became well known for making high-fashion headwear. She counted the Royal milliner as one of her clients.

Groves, who lived in St John’s Wood and was married twice, recorded her war experiences for Steven Spielberg’s Shoah Foundation in 1997.

She said: “The British gave us a chance to re-start our lives. We could rebuild everything here.

“The message is that the Holocaust can’t be forgotten - it needs to be remembered for future generations.” - Jewish Chronicle, London

Jewish teens learn lessons of Zionism

PHILADELPHIA - “If you will it, it is no dream,” Zionist leader Theodor Herzl wrote in 1902.

More than a century later, Herzl’s words - translated into Hebrew - served as the inspiration for a gathering of educators and Jewish teens called Ein Zo Agada (“It Is No Dream”) on a recent Sunday afternoon in Philadelphia.

The event was conceived by leaders of two Zionist youth movements - Habonim Dror and B’nei Akiva - and motivated by a single question: “What are the needs of Jewish teens?”

The answer is education - in particular about Israel.

“Jewish youth arrive at college without having experienced a meaningful encounter with Israel,” said Anya Friedman Hutter, a student at the University of Pennsylvania and one of the heads of Habonim Dror’s year-round programming in Philadelphia.

“Jewish teens, we realised, lack the educational tools to think personally and critically about Israel with a sense of responsibility.

“We ultimately planned a two-part programme,” Hutter said. “First, the participants met each other and explored their connection to Israel. Then we explored different ways to relate to Israel through funny fictional characters.” - Philadelphia Jewish News

Moses inspires seder in the Tankwa Karoo

OWN CORRESPONDENT

A group of young Jews from South Africa, Israel, Zimbabwe and other countries went back 3300 years to the time of Moses in the desert - at the remote Tankwa Karoo near Sutherland in the Northern Cape, where they held two seders and “gifted” other participants with the festival of Passover.

Part of the AfrikaBurn festival, which originated in the United States, where the biggest of its kind is held, the South African event is the next largest in the world, according to Elisha Goshen, a physician from Jerusalem, who studied



Photos supplied



Jarryd said a group had travelled ahead the week before, in order to build the kosher for Passover “kitchen”. All the children of group members tried to pitch in and help. According to Goshen and Lake the second seder was a great success, the Xodus camp invited everyone on the “Playa” at AfrikaBurn to share the seder experience. Lake said: “This was the 10th year of the annual event. One third of the people were from overseas - Israel and all over the world.” It was the first time that there was a kosher camp, “Soup and kneidels by the meidels” were on offer the whole week, giving all the campers the opportunity to experience traditional and kosher Passover foods.

under the talmudic scholar Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz. The idea was to build a temporary city based on 11 major principles that include inclusivity, giving and sharing of knowledge. Each encampment in the city, of which the kosher camp “Xodus” was one, chose its own theme. “We chose Pesach,

keeping everything very basic. We brought with us a fridge, freezer and generator in a trailer and I contributed kosher lePesach spirits from Israel. “We dressed up, there was a lot of art and music and participants were very friendly, with a feeling of closeness. At the end of the festival, all the temporary structures were burned and the land was restored to its former pristine condition. “It was fascinating and there was an energy. It was beautiful,” said Goshen, who made the most of his

trip to South Africa, touring Cape Town, the Garden Route and Johannesburg. The seders were reminiscent of the time of Moses insofar as everything was done very fast, and preparations were basic, like the Jews having to get out of Egypt in a hurry – but this group left from Cape Town, not Egypt! According to Goshen and Jarryd Lake, one of the other participants, during the first seder the camp was hit by a sandstorm and had to be transferred to one of the trailers.

Opinion and Analysis

Israel is counting its blessings *Continued...*

>> Continued from page 14

formidable. Helpfully, Israel receives more than \$3 billion of US military aid every year, allowing it to maintain its advantage. The countries are now negotiating a new defence assistance package reportedly shaping up to be the largest ever.

Israel’s yeshiva student population is 300 times bigger than in 1948

When Israel’s first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, exempted fulltime yeshiva students from Israel’s military draft, the pass applied to just 400 charedi Orthodox young men studying Torah all day. But Israel’s yeshivas have been fruitful and multiplied. Today, more than 120 000 yeshiva students skip the army, according to the religious pluralism advocacy group Hiddush.

Charedi Jews make up nine per cent of Jewish-Israeli society, and their numbers are growing. According to a March study by the Pew Research Centre, 91 per cent of them have more than three children, while half of secular Jews have two or fewer.

The draft exemption has been a heated political issue in Israel for years, with many Israelis calling on the government to “equalise the burden” of military service. The centrist Yesh Atid party became Israel’s second largest in 2013 by promising draft reform. Its legislation passed in 2014, but was defanged last year after Israel’s most recent election, which swept charedi parties back into power and sent Yesh Atid into the opposition.

The number of women in the Knesset has tripled

Women fought alongside men in Israel’s pre-state battles and the War of Independence. But when the first Knesset convened in 1949, just 11 of the body’s 120 members were women - less than 10 per cent. One of

them was Golda Meyerson, who would leave her mark on the world as Golda Meir, Israel’s first female prime minister.

While no woman has followed Meir to Israel’s top post, more women than ever are members of Knesset. Women, who make up a majority of Israel’s population, are still underrepresented. But the body now includes a record 32 women, more than a quarter of Israeli lawmakers. That’s compared to the 19 per cent of the US Congress that’s female.

Ben-Gurion Airport welcomes 16 million travellers a year

As the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has festered, Israeli fears of international boycott have risen. But you wouldn’t know it from Israel’s main link to the outside world, Ben-Gurion Airport. Fifteen million travellers passed through the hub in 2015, up from 10 million in 2010.

Tourism did drop three per cent from 2014 to 2015, which Israel’s Tourism Ministry attributed to the 2014 Gaza War. But the war also showed the importance to Israelis of international travel. Some of the war’s tensest days came in late July, when many flights to Israel were cancelled due to missile threats, severing some links between Israel and the world. (JTA)

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Suzanne Weil, doyenne of events management, passes on



PETER FELDMAN

Suzanne Weil (pictured), the doyenne of PR and events management in South Africa, who sadly passed away at the age of 60, on May 7, after a long illness – she succumbed

to colon cancer as did her mother before her - was a guiding light in my professional career. I was a friend and colleague for over 15 years and during that time I learnt to understand the brilliant mind behind her image, a single-minded, creative soul who never saw obstacles and always came up with a plan in the end.

Even during her painful illness she maintained a brave face.

Suzanne was hard-driving and knew how to get a job done. She was always brimful with ideas whether working on the Miss South Africa Pageant, The Cell C Take a Girl Child to Work campaign, the SA Breweries Kick-Start initiative or the many events for the Shanduka Group. I worked with her, writing media releases, when she organised the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards as well as on many other ground-breaking campaigns.

She was adored by the media because she was always able to create a special exclusive angle for them. This was her life and she excelled at it - meeting people and sharing her cheeky sense of humour with them.

Despite her diminutive size, she was a larger-than-life personality whose presence was always felt and she would often call a spade a spade when assessing the viability of a campaign and a few felt the brunt of her sharp tongue.

Among her many career highlights, her company was responsible for staging the late Nelson Mandela’s 80th birthday event which attracted international stars, such as Stevie Wonder, and VIPs from around the world. She knew the rich and the famous, but at heart she was always willing to help those in need. She was also involved with her team in the PR for the Kick-Off Concert just before the Fifa World Cup in 2010.

She worked with many Jewish charities, too, and was always willing to give of herself for a good cause - and there were many who came to her doorstep.

She opened a new world to me. From being a journalist writing reviews and hunting down entertainment stories, I found myself in the fast-changing PR and marketing orbit where Suzanne taught me the intricacies of operating a top-notch PR and Events company and how to put together strategies and implement them. She could be brutally honest at times.

It’s ironic that Suzanne lost her beloved mother, Gertie Awerbuch, in November last year.

Suzanne Weil will be sorely missed by all who knew her. She leaves her husband, David and daughters Stephanie and Cazza (Caroline), brother Michael and sister Barbara.

Louis Shill, Cabinet minister and business icon, passes on

MICHAEL BELLING

Louis Shill, who died last week in Cape Town at the age of 85, was South Africa’s second Jewish Cabinet minister and a visionary, innovator and pioneer in the financial services world.

Born in Witbank, Shill qualified as an accountant and by the time he was 30, was a director of four public companies. Later he headed seven companies listed on the Johannesburg Securities Exchange.

He was one of the founders of Liberty Life in the 1950s, before starting the unit trust industry in South Africa in 1965 with Sage Fund. It began with assets of only R5 million. Today local unit trusts manage assets in excess of a trillion rand and are the major vehicle for investments in this country.

Shill assisted financial regulators to formulate the Unit Trusts Control Act, as well as the Property Trust Act in the property trust industry, which he also pioneered through the Pioneer, Fedfund and CBD funds.

He went on to found a major insurer, which later became Sage Life (now part of the Momentum group).

Sage had significant shareholdings in many other companies, including Rand Merchant Bank and Sandown Motors, which Shill helped develop into a large business.

Shill also facilitated the entry of Sol Kerzner into SA Breweries by purchasing his shares and holding them until he could take them up.

Among his other business interests were the former Allied Bank and Allied Building Society, which formed part of the major banks merger that led to the establishment of Absa Bank, in which Sage had part control.

He was, in the words of a former colleague, years ahead of his time in the personal financial planning field as well, including an important role in investment banking and the start of hedge funds.

Shill was a Sunday Times Businessman of the Year some 30 years ago.

In the early 1990s he was appointed minister of housing under FW de Klerk, the first Jew to hold a Cabinet post since Henry Gluckman in the 1940s (there have subsequently been two Jewish ministers in the ANC government).

Shill’s wide experience in property and construction made him eminently qualified for the position, in which he spent much of his time working on a blueprint of the future of housing development in South Africa, shortly before the first democratic elections in 1994.

His extensive philanthropy was conducted

through his foundation, which supported a multitude causes. One small Jewish example was the restoration of the Witbank Jewish cemetery several years ago after it was desecrated.

He was tall and slim and had a commanding presence in any company, yet he cared deeply about people and took a real interest in the wellbeing and health of everyone who worked from him, from the lowest to the highest.

Shill had wide interests and extensive knowledge in many areas, from sport to motorcars.

His art works, accumulated over a lifetime, were one of the major private collections in the country. He had an outstanding eye in spotting new talent.

Shill is survived by his wife, Mavis, his children Monique Burton and Tracy Sareff and their families.

Louis Shill, former Cabinet minister and financial services giant.



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What's On

SA JEWISH REPORT 19

Friday (May 13)

• UZLC hosts Wendy Kahn, director of the SAJBD, on "Hate Speech". Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 - 14:00. Contact: Gloria (011) 485-4851 or 072-127-9421.

Sunday (May 15)

• Jewish Genealogical Society of SA hosts Jerry Wasserman on "Anecdotes of my Life" - encompassing Humansdorp and Germiston. Venue: HOD. Time: 19:00. Cost: R25 (incl tea and refreshments). RSVP: Hannah (011) 485-2188.

• Second Innings hosts Gavin Tunks, artist, interior designer, business mentor, on "Insights Into Nelson Mandela". Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden

Monday (May 16)

• UJW Adult Education Division hosts Daniel Kagan, an expert in the world of books, on "Printed Books and Bookstores - the Future". Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 09:30. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW offices: (011) 648-1053.

Tuesday (May 17)

• WIZO Women Inspired hosts futurologist Clem Sunter, popular author, raconteur and analyst. Venue: Beyachad, Raedene. Time 19:30. Cost: R125. Booking: Joceline 082-441-4375; Leslie 083-456-

Wednesday (May 18)

• UJW Adult Education Division hosts Dr Lorraine Chaskalson, former lecturer dept of English at Wits, on her second lecture on Hamlet. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 09:30. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW offices: (011) 648-1053.

• Chevrah Kadisha Social Services' Enrich 2016 presents "Wealthy Ever After: Improve Your Relationship with Money" with Gary Kayle at the Jewish Life Centre in Strathavon. Time: 19:45. Cost: R50 (incl light refreshments). Booking: Sharon (011) 532-9616 or enrich@jhbchev.co.za

News

A ‘Promised Land’ with a distinct Ethiopian flavour



Journalist Anat Saragusti; Martin Luther King III; Israeli singer Idan Raichel; President Reuven Rivlin; and former MK Pnina Tamano-Shata.



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ANT KATZ

“Continue what you are doing, not just for us, but for all human-ity,” was the message from Israel’s President Reuven Rivlin when he hosted Martin Luther King III, son of civil rights leader Dr Martin Luther King Jr on Sunday. The occasion was the 2016 Un-sung Hero Award from the Drum Major Institute, a civil rights organisation led by King.

Attending the meeting to receive their awards were Israeli performer Idan Raichel, former MK Pnina Tamano-Shata (the first Ethiopian-born female MK), and journalist Anat Saragusti. The recipients were recognised for their activism on behalf of Ethiopian Jewish immigrants to Israel.

President Rivlin congratulated the recipients and spoke of the importance of the vision and leadership of King’s father, and of the resonance of his dream for communities around the world. “In his last speech, on April 3, 1968, one day before his assas-sination, your dear father said - and I quote: ‘We as a people will get to the Promised Land together!’” said Rivlin.

Martin Luther King had “taught us a great and important lesson; the Promised Land is of course an actual place,” said Rivlin. But, at the same time, it is also a vision, a dream, and also a responsibility, he added.

“It was this old dream of the Promised Land that kept the fire burning in the hearts of the Jews of Ethiopia for so many years - for centuries. It was that fire, that deep faith, that dream,

that brought them to Israel, to Jerusalem.”

The president noted that for many of the community, mod-ern Israel did not exactly fit the dream, “but thankfully the Israeli community of Ethiopian origin is strong. It is a community with the power to create new dreams and visions, and picture their own new Promised Land built here in the actual Promised Land of Israel,” he said.

Martin Luther King III thanked President Rivlin for his warm welcome and said: “It seems to me the message of Martin Luther King Jr still resounds loudly in our nation and throughout the world. And perhaps is needed even more so now today than back then.

“I think the world is crying out for a message of hope and healing.

Singer Idan Raichel told King: “Each one of us in our own mis-sion is trying to continue the dream of your father and your organisation to create the bridges between cultures and bring hearts together.”

Former MK Pnina Tamano-Shata, accompanied by her moth-er who had brought her to Israel as a child of three, spoke of her honour at receiving the award. “I believe there is an important rela-tionship between the Jewish and African American communities that we need to strengthen.”

Journalist Anat Saragusti said that during his term in office, President Rivlin had “raised the flag of diversity”, and that it was “very inspiring to have a president who works to promote equality...”

Maccabi soccer juniors soar with the Eagles



The under-16 and under-18 Maccabi SA soccer teams with the Selwyn Segal Eagles. The Eagles display the new kit they were given during a training a session at Discovery Soccer Park.

JACK MILNER

When Maccabi South Africa relaunched earlier this year, they made it clear that the organisation is not just about the Maccabi Games in Israel every four years; the focus is placed on the youth, but not just on sport.

Social responsibility and creating ways to make these youngsters stronger members of the Jewish community is also part of the tikkun olam programme - acts of kindness to repair the world. With this in mind Maccabi SA's under-16 and under-18 soccer squads, along with their respective coaches, Rui de Sousa and Daniel Costa Gil, met up with the Selwyn Segal Eagles at Discovery Soccer Park to train with them, play some games against them and also provide them with some new kit.

The Selwyn Segal Eagles is a team from the home made up of people who live there as well as some staff members. "They approached us to help them," explained Alain Nathan, sports

director for Maccabi SA. "They don't get many opportunities and they got to leave with some great experiences and with two new kits."

When the Maccabi players were first approached, the idea received a lukewarm reception. "However, we e-mailed all the parents about the project and all the boys turned up - so the message clearly had some resonance," said Nathan. "I don't think they really knew what to expect, but the boys really took it to heart and were very patient with their players. They were absolute stars."

"I didn't ask them afterwards but one would have hoped the experience also affected them emotionally and made some sort of impact on them. We would like all our junior teams to do some sort of outreach activity before next year's Maccabiah - maybe even two."

Maccabi SA was represented by 22 players in the two age groups. The training session also included two five-a-side matches where the Maccabi players and Selwyn Segal Eagles mixed

to form combined teams.

The Selwyn Segal Eagles' players had a great day and were delighted later on when they were presented with new soccer kit by Ashley Kotzin, MD of Forwardzone.

Susan Shroeder, head of life enrichment and head occupational therapist at the Selwyn Segal Home, thanked Maccabi SA and the sponsor. "The members of our team and spectators all came back overflowing with excitement and joy."

Michael Sieff, CEO of the Chevrah Kadisha, also thanked Maccabi SA and the players. "It is a mark of Maccabi's great sportsmanship and generosity that they so graciously shared the field with them."

After their time with the Eagles, the teams had a full training session. As far as their preparations for next year's Maccabiah are concerned, Maccabi SA has taken a unique approach, entering the under-18 team in a local league.

"They are currently playing in the Soweto

Football Academy league which is played on a Sunday," said Nathan. "We're using Balfour Park as our home ground and last week they played their first match and drew with a team from Lenasia. They will play in the league until November."

"They are also getting fitness training and support from some Premier Soccer League staff. The guys are taking this preparation very seriously."

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Be careful, an Israeli 'Hawk-Eye' is watching!



JACK MILNER

The French Tennis Open begins on Monday June 23, where they will be introducing Play-Sight, an Israeli concept which offers an even more advanced option than the Hawk-Eye camera system currently in use at Grand Slam tennis tournaments.

PlaySight, developed by former Israel Air Force engineers, records footage via five strategically-placed cameras and then slices and dices it for instant analysis. The technology uses auto-tagging software to track every "event-based decision", similar to a flight simulator.

"There are a lot of similarities between pilots and tennis players," says PlaySight CEO Chen Shachar. "Individuals in both pursuits operate without coaching for long periods of time under physical and mental duress."

The company announced it had raised \$3,5 million from high-profile private investors including world number one Novak Djokovic

and Billie Jean King.

Use of this footage is changing the way coaches train their students. "I've stopped talking during lessons," says Gilad Bloom, a coach and former ATP Top 100 player who recently installed the system at The Club of Riverdale in the Bronx, New York.

"I let them hit a few balls and then we go and look at the screen. They say: 'I'm not bending my knees.' I tell them: 'I know; I've been telling you that for three years!'"

Bloom says the system is also able to eliminate bad calls. "Imagine, in a few years, when every point at every tournament, from juniors to college to club tennis, can be replayed by a line judge with an iPad," he says.

Some 50 facilities in the US are using PlaySight, and Shachar expects his company to instal 100 systems in the US this year and to go international "in earnest" next year. Former world No 1 Stefan Edberg, Roland Garros Stadium and London's Queen's Club have all installed the system in their facilities.