

Yom Hazikaron, April 21, Yeshiva College. Yom Ha'atzmaut, April 22, Yeshiva College. Some roads will be closed.

South african Jewish Report

www.sajr.co.za

The living must ensure that this never happens again

Photo: Yossi Zelig, Israel



The March of the Living is an annual educational programme which brings students and anyone else, for that matter, from all over the world to Poland to study the history of the Holocaust and examine the roots of prejudice, intolerance and hate. Since the first March of the Living in 1988, over 200 000 participants from 45 countries have marched down the same path leading from Auschwitz to Birkenau on Holocaust Remembrance Day. Many groups then travel on to Israel. The commemoration this year began in Poland on Monday and continues until April 27. The recurring theme is: "Lest we forget..." The killing of six million Jews by the Nazis during the Second World War is not only commemorated at the scene of the various death camps, but at events and marches all over the world. As the death camp survivors – 70 years on – get fewer and fewer each year, the baton has been passed to the younger generation to keep the memory alive and to ensure that such horrors will never happen again. Pictured are March of the Living participants at the Madjanek concentration camp on the outskirts of the Polish city of Lublin this week. See page 4.

BDS does its nut over Woolies' Pharrell Williams coup

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SA contingent of 22 adults and 44 students takes part in 2015 Auschwitz-Birkenau March of the Living commemoration.

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Why keep kosher?



Parshat Shemini

Rabbi Yossy Goldman,
Senior Rav Sydenham-
Highlands North Shul

An observant Jew was experiencing a crisis of faith. He decided to sneak into a non-kosher restaurant and have a fling. He orders “you know what”, and is pumping adrenalin big time, full of nervous anticipation of what that forbidden “white meat” really tastes like. Unfortunately for him, his rabbi was walking down the road behind him and saw him enter the restaurant. The rabbi was shocked. He waited outside to see what the congregant would order and when the waiter duly arrived and removed the tray cover revealing the swine in all its glory, decorated with the customary apple in its mouth, the rabbi rushed in and confronted the Jew: “How could you?!” he demanded.

The shamefaced Jew trying desperately to explain himself out of a corner replies: “Rabbi, this is such a fancy restaurant. You order an apple and they make such a fuss!”

This week’s Parsha, Shemini, introduces the Bible’s dietary laws. Animals must chew their cud and have split hooves, fish need fins

and scales, and a long list of forbidden fowl is enumerated.

To those of us in Jewish education, it is a continuing source of disappointment that so many Jews still believe the kosher laws to be outdated. After all, they reckon, in the desert our ancestors needed to protect themselves from trichinosis and all sorts of diabolical diseases, so some kind of dietary system was needed. But today, they argue, in an age of government inspection and modern hygiene standards, kashrut is archaic, anachronistic and quite dispensable.

How sad. The fact is that the kosher laws were never given to us for health reasons. If they happen to be healthy or provide good hygiene, that is purely a fringe benefit. It may well be one of the perks but it has never been the reason.

I often joke that if kashrut was for health, then all the rabbis should look like Arnold Schwarzenegger! And those who don’t keep kosher should look sickly. In fact, anecdotal evidence seems to prove the very opposite. Your average religious type looks rather scrawny (or overweight) and the non-kosher guys are the ones with the big biceps!

So let it be stated categorically: Kashrut is not for our physical health but for our spiritual

health. It is not for our bodies but for our souls. It is a Jewish diet to help Jews remain spiritually sensitive to their innate Jewishness.

While the Torah actually records no official reason for these laws, the rabbis and philosophers have speculated on their purpose. They act as a bulwark against assimilation, we are taught.

On a simple level, if we keep kosher, inexorably, we will remain close to Jewish communal life. We will shop in the Jewish neighbourhood, possibly find it more convenient to live nearby and generally mix in Jewish company.

A rabbinic friend of mine once asked a very high-profile Jewish businessman why he was about to marry a non-Jewish woman. Couldn’t he find a “nice Jewish girl?” His reply was very revealing: “I just don’t mix in those circles anymore, Rabbi.”

There is no doubt that had he still kept kosher he would have been compelled to mix in Jewish circles and his life choices might well have been very different.

On a deeper, more spiritual level, keeping kosher keeps our Jewish souls sensitive to things Jewish. This is clearly a mystical concept and completely imperceptible, but according to our Sages it is a fact. Just as too much red meat or fatty foods are bad for your cholesterol, non-

kosher foods are bad for your neshoma. They clog your spiritual arteries and prevent those warm, healthy Jewish feelings from circulating through your kishkes and your consciousness.

It’s very important to have a mezuzah on your door. It identifies your home as Jewish. But what really defines your home as a “Jewish home” - what your zaida meant when he said with pride: “My children run a Jewish home” - is the kitchen!

A kosher kitchen makes a Jewish home truly Jewish. It also extends a very warm and eloquent invitation to all fellow Jews: Here you are welcome. Here it is safe to come in and eat. Make yourself at home.

Your favourite diet may build healthy bodies but a kosher diet builds healthy souls.

Shabbat Times		
Parshat Shemini April 17 / 28 Nisan April 18 / 29 Nisan		
17:32	18:21	Johannesburg
18:03	18:53	Cape Town
17:17	18:06	Durban
17:37	18:26	Bloemfontein
17:35	18:25	Port Elizabeth
17:26	18:17	East London

Outrage at the slaughter of Yarmouk Palestinian refugees

The South African Zionist Federation, Cape Council, has expressed its sadness at the “brutal slaughter of over 1 000 Palestinian residents of the Yarmouk refugee camp, near Damascus, by an alliance of Islamic State and the Jihadist Al-Nusra Front”.

Through its chairman, Ben Levitas, the SAZF, Cape Council, condemned in a media statement “the perpetuation of the refugee status of the Palestinian people that are still, five generations after becoming refugees, being kept in ‘apartheid like’ refugee camps, cut off from being able to participate in the economies of the countries in which they find themselves.

“We call on all the countries housing Palestinian refugees, to close these apartheid relics, and to absorb these Palestinians into their societies, and to grant to them all the rights that are afforded to their citizens.”

Levitas said that the Yarmouk camp which at one time housed over 100 000 descendants of refugees, had during the past five years of the Syrian civil war, been whittled down to only 18 000 souls, as most of its residents had fled.

“Many of those killed recently, are from the weakest segments of society: women, the infirm, but they also include religious leaders, who do not subscribe to the extremist versions postulated by the Islamic State.”

He said the SAZF, Cape Council, was “appalled at the gratuitous destruction of property, particularly the ‘cleansing’ of historic monuments and of places of worship.

“We also censure the silence of all those, particularly the media, who are always quick to condemn Israel whenever it is forced to defend itself, for perpetrating alleged human rights violations, whenever Palestinians lose their lives as a result.

“The Syrian people and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who have been living in Syria, have suffered unbelievable brutality at the hands of their co-religionists, with scarcely a murmur in the media.

“This double standard, where Israel alone, is always held to a higher standard than any other people, needs to be exposed for the blatant anti-Semitism that it is.”

Release from the South African Zionist Federation, Cape Council.

Time of reflection and celebration

SAZF CORRESPONDENT

It was Mark Twain who said that “all things are mortal but the Jew” and the same can be said of the nation of Israel. The commemorations of Yom Hazikaron (Israel’s Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers) and Yom Ha’atzmaut (Israel’s Independence Day) are the costs we incur to ensure the continuance of Israel’s existence - the land of the “immortal” Jew.

Every year the South African Jewish community proudly unites in both celebration and commemoration for the State of Israel - a cause close to the heart of almost all of its members.

The South African Zionist Federation ask that people join them at Yeshiva College on April 21 at 18:30 for a moving Yom Hazikaron ceremony. Professor Shmuel Eidelman a former South African whose son was killed in the Lebanon War in 1982 and now does amazing work for the Rambam Hospital, will be speaking.

The following evening (April 22) is the Yom Ha’atzmaut celebration at Yeshiva College beginning at 18:00. Tickets are R50 for adults and R20 for children under 12. Tickets will be sold at the door from 17:00 onwards.

There be rides, food stalls and performances by Israeli singing sensations Gad Elbaz and Yoni Kellerman. Those who attend have the opportunity to win a ticket to Israel.



Yom Ha’atzmaut: Some roads will be closed

In order to facilitate parking and pedestrian traffic at the Yom Ha’atzmaut celebration, some roads will be closed on Wednesday, April 22 from 14:30 - 23:00.

The roads are: From the corner of George Avenue, along Long Avenue as far as Tanced Road; and from the corner of Summerway Road and Regina Street through Ridge Road until Corner Ridge Road and Lymm Street.

In a media release the Fed “apologises in advance for any disruption and inconvenience caused”.

The statement adds: “Access to your home and business will be available to you and your family and staff. However, for security reasons we require IDs and a full list of names of each person. Send this information to: sazfbeyachad.co.za. For enquiries, contact us on (011) 645-2510.

South African

Jewish Report

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BDS does its nut over Woolworths’ Pharrell Williams coup

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions South Africa, reacted with fury and indignation to an announcement by Woolworths SA, that American Grammy-winning hip-hop artist Pharrell Williams would team up with Woolworths as a style director.

BDS-SA, who calls itself a “human rights and Palestinian solidarity partner”, has been actively campaigning for a trade boycott against Israel and for Woolworths to stop stocking any Israeli products. The group said in a media release it had been “inundated with tweets” condemning the Woolworths-Williams link-up.

Williams, using his Twitter account, said last week: “Proud to collab (sic) with retailer @Woolworths_SA. Are you with us, South Africa? See you in September! #PharrellWithWoolies”.

BDS says that shortly after the tweet, members of the public replied to Williams alerting him to the #BoycottWoolworths campaign and calling on him not to collaborate with Woolworths “till it divests from Israel”.

Woolworths has repeatedly stated that it would, for the sake of its customers, source products from countries all over the world. It pointed out that it imported less than one per cent of its products from Israel. The company has dug in its heels and has refused to be dictated to by BDS-SA or any other group.

Williams, an eco-activist, in his



role of style director to Woolworths, will be involved in a series of projects focused on sustainability.

BDS-SA said it would be formally writing to Pharrell Williams, requesting that he postpones his Woolworths collaboration until the company divests from Israel. The BDS #BoycottWoolworths campaign is inspired by the 1980s anti-apartheid boycott movement against companies that traded with Apartheid South Africa.

“Given our history as South

Africans, we call for the boycott of companies, such as Woolworths, who continue to trade with Apartheid Israel. We trust that Pharrell Williams will heed our call.”

Williams has a mission “to change things for the good”. A school singing group will perform with him in a concert in Johannesburg for Woolworths customers. In the coming months schools will be able to submit their performances in the “My School Sing With Us” competition and Williams

will select the winning group.

Woolworths will also be launching a range of Bionic Yarn T-shirts in conjunction with Williams. Bionic Yarn is a thread made from recycled plastic pollutants reclaimed from the oceans. Williams and Woolworths are calling on young South African designers to create original, striking T-shirt designs “that raise awareness about the issues that affect the planet and a sustainable future”.

Woolworths has consistently flown

the flag as an eco-activist, playing an active role in conservation. In January Williams and global warming activist Al Gore announced that Cape Town would be one of seven host cities on seven continents for the Live Earth Concert on June 18.

Meanwhile, Williams was spotted ‘partying it up’ with fellow artist Jennifer Hudson at Cape Town nightclub, The Living Room, last weekend.

More on sajr.co.za.

Storm in a kosher coffee cup

OWN CORRESPONDENT

The first the management of KosherWorld in Glenhazel in Johannesburg saw of a “racial incident” at the coffee shop in its centre was when, last week Wednesday, a front-page photograph and article in The Star newspaper confronted them with what seemed to be a case of “racial profiling”.

Three patrons, by their dress code identified as Rastafarians, had visited the coffee shop when they were approached by a security guard asking them who they were.

One of the three, Emma Young, an African-American, told The Star that she had been having coffee at the coffee shop and using the WiFi with two companions, Mama Rootz and Baba Kenyaz, when a security guard walked up to them and asked them who they were.

“I told him I’d lived here for six months and I’d had coffee here before,” Young told The Star.

The security guard, she said, told her that “this is a Jewish neighbourhood, we don’t know you”.

Young said the security guard mentioned that he had received “a call from someone saying that there were Indians there wearing traditional clothes”. She let it go, she says, but “five minutes later, he came back, saying he had received another call asking why he was letting Muslims eat at their restaurant”, Young said.

The security guard then asked the three for their names so he could tell the caller (whose name is unknown to KosherWorld or the Jewish Report) that they were alright. “I was shaking with anger. I felt like I’m not safe here and I’d better get out,” Young said.

The management of KosherWorld, when it became aware of the incident, reacted swiftly by issuing an apology to the three patrons. KosherWorld invited them back for coffee “as our guests”. It stressed that everyone was welcome



The three aggrieved Rastafarians, at the KosherWorld Centre.

at its establishment.

KosherWorld had not been asked for comment by The Star.

“In common with Jewish communities everywhere in the world, South African Jewry needs to deal with mounting threats to its safety and security. For this reason, the community has implemented strict security procedures at all its installations,” KosherWorld said in a statement.

“Unfortunately, and inevitably, this does sometimes result in regrettable incidents of the above nature, where certain individuals (regardless of race or creed) feel that they have been unfairly discriminated against.

“KosherWorld wishes to stress that all patrons are welcome, and hopes very much that incidents of this nature can be avoided in future, while still maintaining the necessary levels of security to ensure the safety of all concerned.”

KosherWorld said it faced a real dilemma concerning safety at the centre: “We don’t want to under-react or overreact, but the public is obliged to exercise due caution and regrettably such incidences may occur.”

Some community members questioned how it came to be that The Star reporter and photographer had been on hand at the right moment to “immortalise” the incident and whether it perhaps had been a set-up.

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Passing on torch of remembrance to next generation

SUZANNE BELLING

Tali Nates, director of the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre, and Richard Freedman, director of the Cape Town Holocaust Centre, are among the leaders of the 27th March of the Living (2015), which began in Poland on Monday and will run till April 27.

The South African contingent comprises 28 adults and 44 students.

It is a two-part educational programme that brings participants to Poland on Yom Hashoah, with a march between Auschwitz and Birkenau and then on to Israel for Yom Hazikaron, Israel’s Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers, culminating in Yom Ha’atzmaut (Israel’s Independence Day).

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and the end of the Holocaust.

With a worldwide increase in anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, the focus will be on learning lessons of the Holocaust including fighting hatred, intolerance, racism and fascism.

To date, 220 000 young people have attended.

The March, originally intended for students, has snowballed to include adults. This year there are delegations from the US, Canada, the UK, Mexico, Panama, Greece, Australia, Morocco, France, Austria, Argentina, Brazil and South Africa.

The second part of the March of the Living will deal with the continuation of Jewish life through the rebirth which followed the genocide of Europe’s Jews. Participants will study in Israel and attend a special ceremony at Latrun.



The main leader of the March this year, as in previous years, is Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv-Yaffo, who is himself a child survivor.

Former participants in the March include Shimon Peres, Elie Wiesel, Oprah Winfrey, presidents, prime ministers, Jewish and non-Jewish faith leaders, parliamentarians and young people from across the globe.

Rabbi Lau says: “The appearance of anti-Semitism all over the world now makes it so important we don’t forget the days of the Holocaust. I believe that the March has a transformative effect. Jews who join the March from the Diaspora, return to their

countries a little more Israeli than they were when they left - better able to appreciate the State of Israel. Israelis return to Israel with a deeper consciousness of being Jews.”

Shirley Sapire, of the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre, told Jewish Report the organisers were proud to include Holocaust survivor Don Krausz in the local delegation.

In 1988, the leaders of the first group from South Africa to Poland were the late Professor Harold Rudolph, when he had completed his term as centenary mayor of Johannesburg, and the late Ronnie Mink, former vice-principal of King David Linksfield.

Dr Shmuel Rosenman, chairman of the March of the Living Board of Directors, pointed out in a statement: “With every passing year there are fewer survivors to tell their stories and so this year the March of the Living will focus on passing on the torch with participants becoming the witnesses for the next generation as we march under the banner ‘Every Witness becomes a Witness’.

“With the rising tide of anti-Semitism in Europe, this year the March takes on extra significance as we ask whether 70 years after the end of the Second World War the lessons of that tragic period of history have really been learned.”

‘Not working on dead stones, but on living hearts’

SUZANNE BELLING

A little known organisation in Europe - the Foundation for Penance and Reconciliation - has been restoring and maintaining Jewish cemeteries across the formerly Communist bloc countries and Western Europe for the past 30 years.

One of its founders, Pastor Kees Sybrandi, has now written a booklet in Hebrew about their work, and its release in Israel coincides with Yom Hashoah this week. Today there are 1 000 people involved in the Foundation, which includes a work group that tends to cemetery restoration for a week each year. Devout Christian Johan de Wolf chairs the work group.

In the booklet, Pastor Kees noted that along their travels, the restorers came across

suspicion and hostility from Jews who survived the Holocaust and had remained in Eastern Europe and other areas where work on the cemeteries was undertaken.

But witnessing the sincerity of the mission of this group, which repaired broken grave-stones, cleared up cemeteries and visited the death camps in the course of its efforts, all the while wearing kippot out of respect for Jewish tradition, these same distrustful people began to see them as righteous gentiles. Their work was even paid homage in the JNF’s Golden Book (of honour).

The booklet includes reactions from Jewish beneficiaries to their efforts. “It is wonderful what you are doing here. When you work this way towards reconciliation with the Jewish people, then you are going about it in the right way,” was one response from a Jew who



witnessed the Foundation in action.

A comment from a Jew “who barely survived the hell of two concentration camps” was: “I feel deeply touched in my innermost being when I see these people working.” Another comment was: “Oh, I am still broken by the War, but all Jews in the world should hear about this work of yours.”

Johan de Wolf and his wife Sofie were farmers in Holland, when they became involved in the maintenance work of Penance and Reconciliation (Boete en Verzoening in Dutch).

De Wolf told the Jewish Report that after working in a Jewish cemetery in Vught in Southern Holland, in the summer of 2005, a group reading of a chapter of Jeremiah from the Tanach inspired them to visit Israel.

“These three months opened our eyes and, in 2007, we started as volunteers for Bridges for Peace in Israel.”

The couple remained with this Christian

pro-Israel organisation until 2012 and landed up working with several South Africans who were part of it.

Although the Foundation for Penance and Reconciliation was officially founded in 1979, it really began some years earlier with a Christian prayer group in Poland who visited a Jewish cemetery. But the Jews they came across were very distrustful.

The prayer group even visited a nearby synagogue, bearing greetings from other Christians and a message of reconciliation, saying they were sorry for what had been done to Jews in the past by Christians filled with enmity towards the Jews.

Johan de Wolf told Jewish Report: “Once one of the rabbis, who visited us in the work week said: ‘I see the work is done without a hidden intention - you are not working on dead stones, but on living hearts’.”

The booklet has been endorsed by the chief rabbi of Holland, Rabbi Benjamin Jacobs.

THE LITTLE STEPS PROJECT



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“Every little step counts”

Günther Grass - a great writer despite ‘What must be said’



TAKING
ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

The death this week of famed Nobel Prize-winning author Günther Grass coincides with another round of arguments about Iran’s threat to Israel and the world, if it acquires a nuclear bomb. Grass plunged rather clumsily into this debate three years ago, provoking outrage in some quarters.

The big question hanging ominously over it all is: Should Israel pre-emptively bomb Iran’s nuclear reactors because of that country’s vow to destroy the Jewish state?

Israel has the capacity, and certain countries in the region would support it - reportedly even Saudi Arabia might provide an air corridor for Israeli bombers, since it shares Israel’s fear of a nuclear-empowered Iran.

Recent episodes in the Iran saga include Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s controversial speech to the US Congress last month and intense dislike between him and US President Barack Obama.

And most recently, the understanding reached by the US and other powers with Iran to limit the latter’s possibilities of achieving a nuclear bomb any time soon, in exchange for lifting of sanctions.

What has German writer Günther Grass to do with this debate? As an anti-war icon, he sparked controversy in 2012 by publishing a poem in the Deutsche Zeitung entitled “What must be said”, claiming Israel’s nuclear capability - not Iran’s - was the threat to world peace.

He warned against an Israeli strike on Iran and said Germany should stop supplying Israel with submarines. He was criticised in Germany, Israel and by Jewish organisations and declared persona non grata in Israel.

Grass is not a crazy extremist whose views can be dismissed out of hand. A respected supporter of the left-leaning Social Democrats (SPD), he has been a voice in serious political debates in Germany. He was recognised as that country’s most important post-Second World War writer after the 1959 publication of his novel, “The Tin Drum” - dealing with Nazism’s rise in his hometown of Danzig.

He received the Nobel Prize in 1999 for his works, including “Cat and Mouse”, “Dog Days”, “From the Diary of a Snail”, and “The Flounder and The Rat”. He is a great admirer of Israeli writer Amos Oz, who he has repeatedly proposed for a Nobel Prize.

In 2006, however, Grass revealed a more than 60-year-old skeleton in his closet

which shocked people - that he served with the Waffen SS during the Second World War. His devotees were outraged because of his carefully nurtured anti-war image, and because he hid his past for so long while achieving fame with his anti-Nazi rhetoric.

Grass responded that he wanted to use his memoir “Peeling the Onion” to explain his past. “What I accepted with pride in my younger years I wanted to keep quiet about after the war because of my growing shame,” he wrote.

When he published the poem “What must be said”, he was criticised even by people who admire his literary works, for his arro-

gance and simplistic assumptions about the complex Iran debate - which is even more complicated today as the Middle East descends into chaos, radical Islam’s influence rises and Israel’s security in that region requires ever more careful thought.

Israel has long been engrossed with this debate about a pre-emptive strike to foil Iran’s purported nuclear ambitions. Its political and defence analysts mull over the advisability and possible outcome of such an action, with its strategic and diplomatic dilemmas; heavyweights on the topic have taken contrasting positions.

Grass’ comments, coming from someone

who apparently knew not much more about the practicalities than the average follower of the world news, amounted to a sort of moral grandstanding, without sufficiently factoring in Israel’s existential plight.

Great writers, however, are often considered great not because you necessarily agree with them, or like them or their views, but because they throw new light on things or challenge accepted notions.

Ultimately, writers are not necessarily smarter than other people. What they have is the ability to write. Grass’ intrusion in the Iran question raised many hackles - sometimes that is a good thing.



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Jewish Report

Feed our children positive narratives

Teach your children the history of freedom if you want them never to lose it, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks wrote in a piece published in the London Times at Pesach a few years ago. He said that freedom was won not on the battlefield but in the classroom and the home.

At least three times in Exodus, Moses instructs his newly freed tribe of Jews to pass on the miraculous story to the next generation of escaping Egypt and the exciting journey to the Promised Land. “You shall tell your child on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what the L-rd did for me when I came out of Egypt’,” Exodus 13.8, is one of them. The ritual of the seder is primarily focused on teaching our children about our heritage.

Well, Passover has come and gone and this week we will again be teaching our children the very important message of remembering and honouring the tragedy of the Holocaust as a way of ensuring that it can never happen again. We, as parents or even grandparents, are constantly sending out both conscious and unconscious messages to our children about the world around them, and what it means to be Jewish in it.

For the children of Holocaust survivors, of whom there are an estimated 200 000 in the United States alone, their parents’ experiences have had a substantial impact. A predisposition to post-traumatic stress disorder, difficulties in separating from family and a mix of resilience and vulnerability, are all part of the psychological profile of the children of survivors. Psychologist Eva Fogelman has termed it the Second Generation Complex.

According to studies, some survivors could never discuss with their children the horrors they endured and so created walls of silence and an oppressive atmosphere at home. Others spoke too much of it and made their children feel guilty for the kinds of plentiful lives they would go on to lead. As a result, children of Holocaust survivors were found to be more prone to depression and anxiety through exposure to their traumatised parents.

This confirms the view of many psychologists that even when we don’t intend to, the way we engage with the world and how we perceive it, is transmitted to our children. What an intimidating notion. Indeed, when we parents, are running the most important public relations campaigns of our lives where the correct “messaging and branding” is vital.

South African Jewry is less directly connected to the Holocaust than some other Jewish communities. This is not due to lack of awareness of its enormity or gravity, but because the majority of us are descendants of Lithuanians who came to South Africa well before the Second World War years and generally prospered, while our European brethren were sadly suffering.

And while our parents may not have passed on an anxiety of the ever-present possibility of annihilation to us, we likely assimilated the view that the world around us was not safe. We became adults in a country tainted by violence and inequality and, many of us, with a parental message that South Africa’s future was tenuous (have your takkies on in case!).

Our own awareness of a sometimes traumatic past as a people and the current realities of rising anti-Semitism, Israel’s struggles and, more personally, trying to be Jewish in a modern world, are all difficulties we unwittingly pass onto our children.

This week our children may hear from us, or if they attend a Jewish school, then from their teachers too, about Hitler and the camps; they will light candles, they will be told to stand proud as Jews and to be hypersensitive to acts of anti-Semitism.

Cautionary messages and teaching our children that our freedoms today are hard-won, are essential in a world of excess and too many choices. But we should ensure that our children are also processing the very positive aspects of being part of this fascinating tribe of people who have thrived wherever they have settled.

The world is not only out to get us; we, as a people, have made an astounding contribution to our societies; we live in a great democracy in South Africa - are the kinds of fearless, constructive and hopeful narratives our children should absorb. Only then can they go out and build bridges, succeed, lead and, as Rabbi Lord Sacks says, be free.

– Vanessa Valkin, Editor

Photo: Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images



In meetings with Jewish leaders, President Barack Obama expressed concern over how he is perceived in the Jewish community.

Obama stresses to Jewish leaders and donors how much he cares

**RON KAMPEAS
WASHINGTON**

Jewish leaders expected President Barack Obama to sell them hard on the Iran nuclear deal, but instead, participants in two White House meetings on Monday said he offered a softer pitch on how deeply he cared for Israel and the Jewish people.

“He tried to explain that he understands Jewish trauma, history, the Jewish feeling of being alone in a bad neighbourhood,” said a participant in the first meeting, which was attended by 15 top officials from Jewish organisations.

Another described the meeting as “intense”. This participant added: “There was an openheartedness, there were some deep reflections by the president.”

Sources said the second meeting, for Jewish fundraisers for the Democratic Party, had a similar cast.

“He said: ‘I consider it a moral failure if something happened to Israel on my watch’,” a participant in the fundraisers’ meeting said. “He said: ‘I feel like I’m a member of the tribe’.”

JTA spoke to six participants in the meetings, both of which were off the record. None agreed to be identified because of ground rules set by the White House. Additionally, representatives of a number of groups, gave JTA descriptions of the meetings. The accounts did not differ.

All six participants used “therapeutic” to describe the tone of the meetings.

Obama’s tone - at times anguished, according to participants - signals his concerns about how his presidency, heading into lame duck territory, is perceived in terms of his relationship to Israel and to Jews.

He raised these concerns in an interview with The New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman posted on April 5 on the newspaper’s website.

“It has been personally difficult for me to hear the sort of expressions that somehow we don’t have, this administration has not done everything it could to look out for Israel’s interest,” Obama told Friedman. “And the suggestion that when we have very serious policy differences, that that’s not in the context of a deep and abiding friendship and concern and understanding of the threats that the Jewish people have faced historically and continue to face.”

The worries come in the wake of a crisis in US-Israel relations, focused mostly on disagreements over the Iran nuclear talks, but also fuelled by lingering resentments over the collapse last year of the US-brokered Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and the difficulties that Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have in communicating with one another.

Jewish voter approval of Obama is at 54 per cent, Gallup reported last week, just eight points above the national average of 46 per cent. Jewish approval of Obama has routinely run 10 - 15 points higher than the national average throughout his presidency.

Earlier this month, the major powers and Iran announced the outline of a deal that would exchange sanctions relief for restrictions aimed at keeping Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. Congress was considering legislation that would require its review of any deal, and Obama had said he would veto it.

Last week, Secretary of State John Kerry held a meeting with

Jewish leaders from the same organisations attending the White House meeting, asking them not to lobby in favour of the legislation.

However, Democrats and Republicans in the Senate by Monday afternoon were close to a compromise on the legislation that would address White House concerns and Obama told the second meeting with Jewish leaders that his concerns about the bill were allayed.

It’s not clear what the compromises were, but Democrats were seeking to remove from the bill determinations for the contents of a final deal, which is due by June 30, and instead confine the bill to mandating congressional review of any deal. Senator Bob Corker (Republican Tennessee), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told MSNBC on Tuesday morning that a deal had been reached and that the bill was ready for a committee vote to take place that afternoon.

A number of the more conservative organisational leaders attending the first meeting, among them Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, and Allen Fagin, the Orthodox Union’s CEO, challenged Obama on the particulars of the Iran deal, including concerns that the sanctions relief went further than merited by the restrictions on Iran’s nuclear activity.

The meeting with the fundraisers became more of a strategy session on how Obama could better his messaging to Jewish-Americans, Israelis and the wider American community. Advice included being more communicative with Congress, which has regarded the White House as insulated, and engaging directly with the Israeli public, which is still reeling over the bitter exchanges prior to Netanyahu’s speech to Congress in March. The address was arranged without consulting the White House.

Along with Obama, National Security Adviser Susan Rice attended the first meeting. The second meeting included Vice President Joe Biden, who for decades has been close to the pro-Israel community, and Valerie Jarrett, one of Obama’s closest advisers.

Organisations represented at the first meeting, included the World Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, J Street, the National Council of Jewish Women, B’nai B’rith International, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the Jewish Federations of North America, the National Jewish Democratic Council, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations and the Israel Policy Forum, as well as representatives from the Reform, Conservative and Orthodox streams.

The second meeting, with 14 invitees, included major Democratic givers and fundraisers, including Haim Saban, the Israeli-American entertainment mogul who has been critical of Obama’s Middle East policies; and Democratic donors associated with AIPAC, including past presidents Amy Friedkin and Howard Friedman, and with J Street, including Alexandra Stanton, Lou Susman and Victor Kovner.

Not all of the Jewish leaders at the first meeting were won over by the president’s appeal for understanding.

“People who come in with an anger and a dislike still walked out with an anger and a dislike,” said a participant who was sympathetic to the president, but asked tough questions. “But a little guilty.” (JTA)

Sporadic lightning flashes that illuminate the way



**BARBARIC
YAWP**
David Saks

One of the recent debates in the letters’ pages of the Jewish Report has revolved around the question of miracles in Judaism, particularly those relating to the Exodus and a 40-year sojourn in the wilderness.

One correspondent asserted that the Biblical narrative lacked veracity, since there was no way such a large number of people could have survived in the desert (while also denying that the departing Israelites could have been so numerous).

Those responding have pointed out that, as the Torah itself frequently emphasises, there was nothing natural about either the redemption from slavery or the subsequent period of wandering. Rather, the natural order underwent various crucial changes at the behest of the A-mighty Himself, to which the entire Jewish people were direct witnesses (and beneficiaries).

There nevertheless exists strong resistance to the idea that this formative period in Jewish (and world) history did not come about by natural means. Frequently,

one finds attempts to find more prosaic, everyday explanations for the miracles that purportedly occurred, such as that Krias Yam Suf (splitting of the Red Sea) might have been simply a matter of incoming and outgoing tides which our primitive ancestors took to be a Divine phenomenon, or that what really occurred was a timeous tsunami (possibly caused by the volcanic eruption that destroyed the Mediterranean island of Santorini, estimated to have taken place around that time).

None of these alternative explanations are really plausible. For one thing, the details of the Red Sea parting as recorded in our tradition, make it clear that what happened was of a supernatural nature. Moreover, it was something the entire Jewish nation experienced at first hand.

It was not as if Moses came along and said: “Follow me, o my brothers, for behold, the L-rd caused the waters to split before me...” The event is claimed to have been experienced at first hand by an entire nation. Could such a thing have been fabricated long after the fact? While not an outright impossibility, it is highly improbable.

It would entail, for a start, convincing every Jew that such events had actually happened to their forebears, even though

none would have heard of any such thing from their own parents and grandparents. Once they had compared notes with one another, and learned that in no family did such a tradition exist, they would surely have concluded that those telling them about it were speaking nonsense.

Remember, too, that the whole Exodus narrative has never been approached as a vague tradition assigned to an undesignated time in the distant past. Rather, its central events - the date of departure, the splitting of the sea and the Revelation at Sinai six weeks after that - are pinpointed to the day (even the approximate time of day).

Would the purported inventors of such a tradition really have gone so far as to locate their

Miracles and Divine visitations are invariably said to have been experienced by a single individual or, at most, a handful of people who never in turn passed on their experiences to their children

whole imagined scenario so exactly in historical time? On the contrary, it would have been far more logical for them to have kept the details vague, so as to forestall uncomfortable questions.

Moreover, the Torah account makes it clear that the Jewish people began commemorating the events of the Exodus from the very first year after it happened, and were indeed instructed to do so in the years to come.

This means that those making up the whole account not only sought to convince the masses that their ancestors had experienced a series of miracles (which none of their own forebears had told them about) and that these each occurred on a specific day of a specific month of a specific year, but that these had been commemorated on those very dates in each subsequent year before the practice was inexplicably discontinued at some unidentified point in time.

What seems to me to be the clincher is that if, despite all these objections, it was in practice possible to fabricate a tradition of mass revelation long after the fact and persuade everyone else that it actually happened, then not only the Jews would have done it. Rather, one would find similar accounts of supernatural events with multiple witnesses in other

religions.


It is, after all, obviously much more convincing to allege that many people (and how much more so an entire nation) were privy to acts of Divine revelation rather than just a single individual.

In fact, in no other religious system does one find even an attempt to make such a claim. Miracles and Divine visitations are invariably said to have been experienced by a single individual or, at most, a handful of people who never in turn passed on their experiences to their children. All this demonstrates that at the very least, something extraordinary must indeed have happened to our ancestors all those years ago.

Interestingly, Judaism nevertheless advises us not to place too much emphasis on miracles. As I see it, they are like occasionally lightning flashes that momentarily illuminate the way forward during a long, hard journey in the dark.

They show, unmistakably, where one has to go, but actually walking that path when all one has is the fading memory of that brief revelation is when the hard work begins.

Judaism is not about blind faith, but about remaining faithful to the mission that was revealed to our forebears and of which we are the heirs.



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Kardashians put the spotlight on a harsh reality

DINA DIAMOND

Love them or hate them, credit has to be given to the Keeping Up With the Kardashians reality TV stars, Kim and Khloé Kardashian for helping create public awareness of the 1915 mass killings of Armenians by the Turks, in what Pope Francis recently called “the first genocide of the 20th century”. Pope Francis made this controversial statement during a mass to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Armenian atrocity at a mass at St Peter’s Basilica last Sunday.

“In the past century our human family has lived through three massive and unprecedented tragedies.” Francis said the other two genocides were “perpetrated by Nazism and Stalinism”, before pointing to more recent mass killings in Cambodia, Rwanda, Burundi and Bosnia.

The reference to Nazism and the Holocaust immediately awaken feelings of loss and horror that have defined Jewish history ever since. The account and global recognition of the Armenian genocide is not just another story in the annals of history, it is a painful past with which Jews can identify and truly empathise. The Armenians were a minority, previously with no home of their own, hated and marked for barbaric extermination for no other reason than for who they were.

The Kardashians’ father, paternal grandparents and paternal great-

grandparents, are all of Armenian descent. The reality stars visited the land of their ancestry last week.

The most moving images emanated from the stars’ visit to the Armenian Genocide Memorial at Tsitsernakaberd in Yerevan to pay their respects and honour the 1,5 million Armenians killed by the Turks in the First World War. Kim posted pictures of her trip on her Instagram account using #NeverForget - a phrase often associated with the Holocaust by Jews the world over.

One of her followers echoed this sentiment, posting: “It was the 20th century’s first genocide and had an enormous influence on the perpetrators of the Nazi Holocaust. It needs to be remembered.”

Turkey still fiercely resists calls to recognise the killings of the Christian Armenians as genocide. It disputes the actual number of Armenians killed and puts the figure at around 300 000 to 500 000. The systematic efforts to exterminate the Armenian people are also denied and writers who have drawn attention to the massacre have been prosecuted, including Nobel laureate, Orhan Pamuk. Again a parallel can be drawn with the present-day Holocaust deniers, although it was one of the best documented events in history.

Over 20 countries have officially supported the view that a genocide occurred and France has passed a bill outlawing denial of the atrocity as it

has with the Holocaust.

There are also many prominent written accounts of the Armenian genocide.

In a book by Henry Morgenthau, the US Ambassador to Turkey at the time, he recounts the ten-step plan engaged to rid Turkey of all Armenians.

Morgenthau’s writings are further quoted in a book entitled Holocaust: A History, by D Dwork and R J van Pelt. “The German vice consul who also commanded a joint German-Turkish special guerrilla unit, noted that non-Turks either would be forcibly Islamised “or otherwise they ought to be destroyed”.

A German newspaper correspondent, Harry Sturmer was so affected by what he witnessed that he wrote: “The genocide of the Armenians was the meanest, lowest, most cynical, most criminal act of race-fanaticism that the history of mankind has to show - it embarrassed every German.” After this statement, he resigned his post and went into voluntary exile in Switzerland. It is a wonder what he would have written had he witnessed an even more brutal, more barbaric, more extensive inhuman act of indescribable ruthlessness by the Germans in the Second World War perpetrated against the Jews.

The public acknowledgment and statement by Pope Francis of the events as a genocide, is a significant move and the first for the head of the



Kardashian sisters at Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan.

Roman Catholic Church. His Polish predecessor, Pope John Paul II, first endorsed the term in a signed statement in 2001.

Francis referred to the tragedy as a “senseless slaughter”, stating that it is important to keep the memory of the genocide alive. He added: “It seems that humanity is incapable of putting a halt to the shedding of innocent blood.

“It is necessary, and indeed a duty, to honour their memory, for whenever memory fades, it means that evil allows wounds to fester,” Francis said. “Concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it.”

As could be expected, Turkey did not take kindly to the Vatican refer-

ring to the deaths of the Christian Armenians as a “genocide”. It immediately recalled its ambassador to the Vatican and its foreign minister commented on Twitter, “Religious offices are not places to incite hatred and revenge with baseless accusations.”

Armenia will commemorate the event on April 24, eerily close to Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Memorial Day. Along with a history of discrimination and persecution, another commonality that Jews have with Armenians is their little section of Jerusalem: one of the four quarters of the Old City of Jerusalem is the Armenian Quarter, the other three being the Muslim Quarter, the Jewish Quarter and the Christian Quarter.



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The letters page is intended to provide opportunity for a range of views on any given topic to be expressed. Opinions articulated in the letters are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, staff or directors of the Jewish Report.

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

THERE’S NOTHING WRONG IN ASKING PEOPLE TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES

By chance I was at KosherWorld last week Wednesday evening and saw a man and woman dressed as Rastafarians. The woman’s laptop was perched on a ledge and she was standing and typing away which seemed odd to me. Now I realise she was probably reporting “in real time” to a Johannesburg daily. Had she come on a mission with her laptop?

I greeted her innocently; she had an African-American accent and she said something to the effect of “being in Africa”. I shared some humour with her about being welcome here.

I recognised a CSO official and was glad about his presence in the Jewish area.

I was glad that the Rastas had ventured into this part of Johannesburg, which is known to be culturally Jewish. Some craftworks are sold during the daytime at KosherWorld and I thought they (the Rastas) might be involved with that.

I participate in guard duty at my shul once a month on Shabbat morning. The other week a (recognisably to me) Jewish woman walked past us and the team leader messaged me to follow her up the stairs. I did and asked her: “Are you new here? I’ve not seen you around.” Without emotion, she told me her name and said that she sometimes came to this shul.

I am delighted that South African Jews have established a community security programme and that we are not living with our heads in the Kimberley Hole. It’s obvious and no longer unspoken, that Jews are being intensively targeted again on the planet - physically, verbally,

emotionally and fatally - and by Jews too.

There is nothing to apologise for. This is how 20th and 21st century Jews respond to the threat to life, imagined and real. It is called “Pikuach Nefesh”. You save a life or you prevent a death and you go to any lengths to do it.

For example, Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein initiated the Glenhazel Active Patrol which has virtually eliminated the danger, if not the fear, of people being murdered and brazenly robbed in this area. Well done, to the Chief Rabbi!

It’s what you’d call an adaptation - erring on the side of survival and life preservation - rather than playing Russian roulette.

There is nothing to apologise for. If people want to come to a Jewish neighbourhood, event, or synagogue these days, be prepared to be questioned or asked to show your identity document. With anti-Semitism as it is, there is no risk to accommodate and no need to feel any shame.

It’s not an insult. You too may come to be protected from the person who has indeed come to do harm.

Jews and non-Jews may be subject to the same process where it is deemed to be necessary by those who have the experience and intuition. This may be called discrimination. And so?

To take offence is to seek personal victimhood and martyrdom and to justify the vilification of Jews.

Sivan Price
Johannesburg

MAKE IRANIAN AYATOLLAHS AND HENCHMEN A CASH OFFER FOR NUKES

Last month, the Iranian mission at the United Nations wrote an “explanatory note” to the International Atomic Energy Agency protesting that resolutions by the organisation had questioned Iran’s nuclear aims. The document asserts that “nuclear material in Iran has never been diverted from peaceful purposes”.It’s time to call Iran’s bluff that their nuclear programme exists only to provide for its people’s electrical needs. We should calculate Iran’s annual savings from its nuclear power plants and offer to just give them that sum - in exchange for handing over every scrap of nuclear material and infrastructure.

Given the deep Saudi apprehension about a nuclear Iran, that oil-rich nation could certainly afford to hand over the necessary cash.

But, of course, Iran will not accept such an offer - which is precisely the point. Calling the bluff of the Islamic Republic of Iran will clarify to doubters and peaceniks everywhere that the ayatollahs and their henchmen are hell-bent on attaining a weapon that would threaten

Israel for starters, and eventually the rest of the region and even the United States.

It wouldn’t be the first time nations have used cash to pacify others.

A decade ago, for example, Pakistan was handing out cash to leaders of Afghani tribes to turn them away from supporting al-Qaida. And the 1978 Camp David Accords that brought peace between Egypt and Israel may not have lasted without the billions of dollars in annual foreign aid the United States has been paying to both sides ever since.

If a few billion dollars would obviate the biggest current threat to global stability - the Iranian nuclear problem - it would be well worth it. The plan doesn’t aim toward an actual cash-for-nukes exchange. Instead, it just might expose Iran for what it is: a dangerous, aggressive regime hiding behind a fake goal.

David Benkof
Senior political analyst at the Daily Caller
St Louis, Missouri

LOOKING FOR INFO ON KARL KALMANN SILBERMANN

David Lewin of “Search and Unite” in London is researching the family of Karl (also known as Kalmann) Silbermann, son of Salomon and Fanny.

Karl was born on February 14, 1921 in Pforzheim, Germany. He emigrated from Germany to South Africa together with his parents (Salomon and Fanny Silbermann) in the mid-1920s. At some stage - it is unclear when - Karl/Kalmann then migrated to Palestine/Israel. It is not clear whether this was still in British Mandate time or after 1948. His first child was born in Israel in 1953.

“Can any of your readers tell us anything about their life in South Africa?”

Kalmann Karl Silbermann died in Tel Aviv in 1998. His wife was Edith, born in Czechoslovakia on August 23, 1929. They had three children, Shalom Shuli, born March 27, 1953 in Israel; Chaya Avital, born March 2, 1956 in Israel); and Eran Mendel, born September 24, 1972 in Israel.

David Lewin’s address is 156 Totteridge Lane, London N20 8JJ - England.

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Letters

SA JEWISH REPORT 11

RASTAFARIAN KOSHERWORLD INCIDENT SMACKS OF A SET-UP

The Star newspaper must be complimented on its journalistic integrity for featuring as a front-page story on Wednesday April 8, an incident at a kosher coffee shop smacking of alleged racial profiling.

And again, compliments to the reporter and cameraman who both just happened to be at that coffee shop when this incident took place; such coincidences are commonplace among investigative journalists...

Or perhaps the reporter and cameraman were simply staking out those premises, expecting such breaking news worthy of front-page exposure? But what a news scoop worthy of yet another front-page story the following day! What journalistic excellence that The Star would devote two consecutive front-page stories, together with those subliminal photographs, to such an incident!

Now, while those vigilant reporters were busy staking-out

the kosher coffee shop, they missed a violent xenophobic attack two weeks prior at a Rosebank cinema on three young men wearing Jewish skull caps. Quite understandable that violence against Jews wearing their yarmulkes would hardly warrant a mention in that newspaper or be conveniently tucked away on one of the inside pages.

If one were cynical, could your readers be blamed for suspecting those front-page exposures being a “set-up” by these three aggrieved people, together with the reporter, simply in order to embarrass the Jewish community, two days running, superseding news such as ISIL’s carnage or the bombing of Sanaa in Yemen by Saudi forces killing innocent women and children?

Allan Wolman

Rosebank, Johannesburg

TEN COMMANDMENTS NOT AS COMMENDABLE AS THE MAGNA CARTA

Some 3 400 years ago Hashem delivered to our Jewish forefathers the Torah which we are assured by our rabbis is an accurate description of the events handed down unchanged for millennia. It is self-evident that the events described which even today we regard as gospel, took place according to the moral standards of the times and have no relevance to modern circumstances.

Obviously we do not today need an instruction as to how to treat our slaves and in war our leaders would never enjoin their commanders to massacre our enemies or to “kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman known a man by lying with a man, but all the young girls who have not known man by lying with him” to keep for themselves; in short, an invitation to debauchery. (Numbers 31:17 - 20).

It’s a common notion today, to think of the Ten Commandments as a standard of virtue. What is not said of the Ten Commandments, is its insistence on absolute obedience and what the penalties were for disobedience. Actually there was only one penalty under Mosaic law: death! (Numbers 15: 30 - 31 and Numbers 15: 35 - 36).

Three Commandments warn us to be faithful to Hashem or else, while only seven enjoin us how to conduct ourselves

with regard to our parents and neighbours (eg, don’t murder, steal, mess around with your neighbour’s wife, property etc) and are simple matters of natural justice which even the most primitive societies do not require to be cast in stone.

As standards of conduct to be admired, I suggest The Ten Commandments do not hold a candle compared to say The Magna Carta or The American Declaration of Independence.

In short, the Torah as a standard by which we should conduct our lives, today is woefully obsolete.

Whereas Hashem has remained studiously silent for these past 3 400 years in response to our assurances of loyalty and requests for help in the face of the disasters which have befallen us for 3 000 years, I suggest that it’s high time that Hashem issues a second edition of the Torah in accordance with today’s standards of virtue and behaviour. I therefore request the rabbis to do everything within their power to endeavour to ensure that this comes about.

Martin Frack

Fairvail, Johannesburg

COFFEE SHOP BROUHAHA SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN ARTIFICIALLY STIRRED

I refer to an article in The Star of April 8, “Coffee outing leaves bitter taste”. The only one showing disregard for other people and their situation highlighted by security concerns is Emma Young. This is made clear by her response and by her trying to create a problem for the community when there is no problem.

The matter could have been settled within two to three minutes had she just co-operated with security and answered some simple, legitimate questions in light of current security threats and Islamist extremist terror all over the world.

What should the community do - sit back and allow Islamist extremists to do as they wish and never question when there is doubt? In Garissa in Kenya, a day before the slaughter of 148 people at a university dormitory by al-Shabaab militants, the local community and survivors of the attack reported seeing strangers who were unknown to them in the town campus.

Jews and Christians (and probably moderate Muslims) have had enough of being targeted by Islamist extremists. It’s time to legitimately question people who are not known to the community in which they live, irrespective of race or religion. It’s not racism or apartheid, but simply common sense. By asking questions and getting answers, massacres like the one in Garissa can be prevented from happening here.

With all the major issues that this country faces, how does this story become front page news? Where is the front page article in The Star about three Jewish teenagers who were assaulted three weeks ago at The Zone in Rosebank?

It seems that double standards are at play here. Why didn’t The Star, a supposedly objective publication, report on the injustice, anti-Semitism, racial profiling and criminal assault of these three kids?

Is it any wonder that the community is on high alert when this is what is going on around the corner in Rosebank, where Emma Young was sipping her cappuccino and The Star literally stirs the storm in a coffee cup by focusing on a legitimate security question and does not decry the Rosebank incident, nor publish the pictures of the attackers who police are searching for. But

they somehow manage to organise an entire photo shoot for coffee drinkers.

Young should have the decency and respect to understand that SA itself is unfortunately riddled with crime, compounded by religious fanatics calling for Jewish blood.

Any unknown person would have been questioned, regardless of race, gender or creed. She should show appreciation for those who are looking out for her and the rest of the community, keeping her safe and allowing the cappuccino to flow.

Andrew Diamond, Johannesburg

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AND THEREBY HANGS A SORRY (MATZAH) TALE

I read with interest in your issue of March 20 how prices of Pesach goods at Norwood Hypermarket went through the roof,

This is my story:

In 2004 we visited Port Elizabeth just about the end of Pesach and happened to notice Pick n Pay selling matzah much cheaper than in Durban where we live. When we came back to Durban, I visited our Pick n Pay and enquired why our matzah was more expensive than in PE. I was told it was the transport from Johannesburg!

In 2005 I called Norwood Hypermarket. Their price was R15,99; Cape Town R14,99; PE R17,99 and Durban R18,99. This was when I duly sent an e-mail to Raymond Ackerman enquiring why there were such differences in prices. I got a call from the buyer in Westville (KwaZulu-Natal).

After giving him the rundown, he said he would get back to me within the hour and true to his word, he did. He said they had not done their homework and the price would be reduced to R15,99. Unfortunately that buyer is no longer in Westville.

2007 - Saw Durban’s price at R11,99.

2009 - We were now introduced to Rakusens which was selling at R17,99 and Mosmarks at R19,99. Both PE and Cape Town were selling it at R19,99 while Norwood was selling it at R16,99.

2010 - Norwood R16,99; Musgrave (Durban) R17,99; while Bedford (Gauteng) had Mosmarks at R21,99.

2011 - saw Oudtshoorn at R18,99 and Westville (KZN) at R29,99.

2012 - Musgrave (Durban) was R17,99.

2013 - Cape Town R27,99; PE R27,99; Musgrave R22,99, then reduced to R17,99.

2015- PE R46,99 (I think they might have given me the incorrect product.) Cape Town (Sea Point) R22,90; and Gardens in Cape Town, R25,99.

Musgrave in Durban, on March 19, charged R22,80, then on March 28 as a “week-end special”, it was R22,00.

This is just the matzah prices, not to mention matzah meal. Both these products are Pesachdike. If you are happy to pay the fancy prices for all the fancy cakes, chocolates, etc, then so be it. But matzah and matzah meal is another story altogether.

If we are being ripped off with just this one item, what about all the others?

Chana Morris

Durban

Read the South African Jewish

Report online www.sajr.co.za

It’s that time of the year again,

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2015 Sports Quiz

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Thursday, 18 June 2015

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18:00 for 18:30

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KD Schools learners shine in councils

GABY COHEN

Seven learners from King David Schools have been elected to the prestigious executive councils of the Johannesburg Junior Council (JCC) and the Johannesburg Mini Council (JMC).

Deena Katzen from King David High School Linksfield is the new JCC Mayor for 2015. These King Davidians were elected from 40 schools in the Greater Johannesburg area.

The JCC and the JMC encourage and empower student representatives, through leadership and development programmes, to focus on community service, cross-cultural interaction and charitable giving to communities in Johannesburg. The objective is to create responsible, engaged leaders.

Pictured are Bradley Mervis (grade 11, KDHSVP), JCC chairman; Josh Pimstein (grade 7, KDSPL), JMC chairman of the Welfare Committee; Gila Taurog (grade 7, KDSPL) JCC secretary of the Smile Committee; Deena Katzen (grade 11, KDHSL) JCC 2015 mayor; Jayna Goldstuck (grade 11, KDHSVP) JCC vice chairman; Shai Aarons (grade 11, KDHSL) JCC manager and chairman; and Channing Haefner (front) (grade 7, KD Sandton) JMC chairman of the Smile Committee.



Photo: Shira Jacobs

And a marvellous time was had by all

CINDY KREE

Last week learners from the Hirsch Lyons Boys’ High School in Johannesburg hosted a fun outing for 30 children from Alexandra Township, northeast of Johannesburg. Children, from grade 2 upwards, regularly attend the Alexandra Aftercare Centre which is run by the Union of Jewish Women together with the Lutheran Church.

The 30 senior high school boys loved spending time with the 30 primary school learners from Alexandra, and the young children basked in the one-on-one attention they received from the “big” boys. The small kids also thoroughly enjoyed the fun-filled afternoon on the Hirsch Lyons School campus, where the soccer field, basketball court and table tennis tables were hives of activity.

The tables groaned under the weight of a great variety of art activities and one of the best results of their creative efforts was a pile of colourful spiral mobiles ready for them all to take home. The learners were also involved in catching and bowling competitions and the spirit and atmosphere were wonderful.

Hirsch Lyons’ life orientation motto is “to make a difference” and this certainly shone through. It is also applicable to the UJW whose efforts are focused on “tikkun olam” - healing the world.

Andy Goldman, who organised the event with UJW, noted the enthusiasm that characterised the Hirsch Lyons boys, as well as the love and care they exhibited towards the children of Alexandra.

• For more information contact UJW on (011) 648-1053, info@ujw.co.za or Facebook: Union of Jewish Women Johannesburg.



Photo supplied

The children from Alexandra Aftercare and Hirsch Lyons Boys High School interact.

YC debating teams shine bright

RONIT JANET

This year has been a very successful one for Yeshiva College public speaking. Each year the school enters a boys’ and girls’ team into the open competition of the Speech and Drama College of South Africa.

The teams of four work hard with their coaches to come up with innovative and creative ways of exploring their selected topics. Hours are spent writing and practising for the event.

Out of 4 000 high school participants, Yeshiva senior teams won the competition for the second year in a row. The junior teams were runners-up.

Yeshiva College said it was extremely proud of its debaters for their achievements and was also most grateful to the coaches who prepared, trained and motivated them.



Photos supplied



The boys’ and girls’ debating teams of Yeshiva College again did their schools proud.

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WIZO Johannesburg imbued with lots of enthusiasm for 2015

SANDY KRAMER

WIZO Johannesburg’s 101st AGM last month marked the “changing of the guard” of the WIZO Johannesburg executive. Lee Joffe and Andrea Wainer were elected new co-chairmen. Syd Lowenthal, auditor of WIZO Johannesburg, supervised the voting procedures and announced the incoming executive committee. Besides new co-chairmen Joffe and Wainer, Cindy Polakow, Shoshi Shachar and Andie Schwartz were elected as vice-chairmen, and Janine Rabbie and Yente Super as honorary co-treasurers.

Tribute was paid to the WIZO women who have worked tirelessly to improve the lives of women and children in Israel. Appreciation was also expressed for the generosity of the community.

Rabbi Alex Carlebach from Chabad Lyndhurst opened the proceedings with a Dvar Torah. He spoke about the role of women, especially WIZO women, and their influence in uplifting and improving the conditions of underprivileged women and children in Israel.

Daphne Kuhn, owner of the Auto & General Theatre on the Square, had the audience spell-bound with her talk on the Jewish influence in South African theatre.

The chairman’s report covered the many and varied functions and educational programmes that WIZO undertakes.

The highlight of the year was the Biennial Campaign, featuring Dr Bernd Wollschlaeger, the son of a Nazi, who converted to Judaism.

Nava Gone, outgoing chairman of WIZO Johannesburg, paid a fitting tribute to Sandy

Kramer who is leaving WIZO after 12 years of service.

The treasurer reported that in spite of the decline in the economy, WIZO Johannesburg had managed to achieve its target.

Kramer, the executive administrator, ended the proceedings with the following quote: “Day will move on and live his life. So will I. We will be okay. Someday, perhaps in the far and distant future, we’ll find each other again.” - Marie Lu.



Lee Joffe and Andrea Wainer, new co-chairmen of WIZO Johannesburg.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Incumbent on young to pass on Shoah memories

Yom Hashoah is one of the main events on the Jewish civil calendar, and organising the annual ceremony in the main centres countrywide, is an important part of the Board’s mandate.

For me, it is both moving and inspiring to see how these solemn gatherings are respected and supported by our community, even in centres where the Jewish presence is now very small.

This week, ceremonies once again took place in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein. What lent special poignancy to this year’s ceremony was that it marked the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, and other remaining Nazi death camps.

The practice in recent years has been to bring out a Holocaust survivor to be the keynote speaker on these occasions. As I have stressed before in this column, the opportunities for us to hear at first hand from those who experienced those horrific events, are fast diminishing.

Even those who were young children during the war years, are now well advanced in years and the day is not far off when none will remain to give testimony to what they experienced. It is incumbent on the present and future generations to take responsibility for passing on their stories when they are no longer among us.

It must always be borne in mind that the term “survivor” in the context of the Shoah does not only mean those who fell directly into Nazi hands. Those who survived by going into hiding would also fall into that category, as would those who were protected or escaped to other countries through, among other things, the heroism of such diplomats as Raoul Wallenberg and Chiune Sugihara.

There were also those who were able to get out of Europe in the nick of time, such as



Above Board
Mary Kluk
National Chairman

through the Kindertransport. The latter involved the relocation to the United Kingdom of some 10 000 Jewish children from Germany, Poland and elsewhere in the months leading up to the war. In terms of the arrangement with the British government, the parents had to remain behind and the local Jewish community had to bear all costs involved.

This year, we brought out as our keynote speaker Hugo Marom, one of those whose lives were saved through the Kindertransport. Born in Brno, Czechoslovakia, he and his brother, Ruby, arrived in London on the last transport before war broke out. Their parents, like those of nearly all other Kindertransport children, died at the hands of the Nazis.

One can but imagine the trauma and dislocation they must have felt, transplanted to a country where they had no friends or family, where they did not speak the language and whose inhabitants for the greater part did not want them.

What is inspiring about Hugo Marom is that notwithstanding these harsh experiences, he went on to build a successful life for himself, serving with distinction in the British and Czech Air Forces and thereafter becoming a pioneer of aviation in the newly-created State of Israel.

We are very grateful to him, as we are to all those survivors who have addressed us over the years, for undertaking this arduous and emotionally demanding visit, one involving not only speaking to our community, but engaging extensively with the media as well.

For our part, we can only take to heart the message he had to share and to resolve in turn to pass what we learned from him on to the next generation.

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

This column paid for by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

First South African to attend Masorti European board meeting

The Shalom Masorti Congregation in Johannesburg recently sent executive chairman Adele Gluckman (pictured) to a triennial board meeting of Masorti Europe, which was held in Israel.

The focus of the meetings was to discuss the challenges to European communities of virulent anti-Semitism and attacks on Jews and Jewish centres in Europe.

Gluckman told the meeting about the strict security that is enforced at all Jewish establishments and suburbs in South Africa, and about the well-organised structures that facilitate this, such as CSO and CAP, who keep South African Jewry safe at all times.

Shalom Masorti Congregation said in a media release it had been affiliated with Masorti Olami from January 2003, but due to the congregation’s close connection with Rabbi Chaim Weiner, Av Beth Din of Masorti Europe, Gluckman had been invited to participate in the board’s monthly Skype meetings and had been invited to attend one of their European meetings either in London, Paris or Jerusalem.

She decided that Jerusalem would be the perfect city to connect with Masorti rabbonim and lay leadership. She joined community leaders from Spain, France, Hungary, Ukraine and England. After spending a day together studying and attending lectures at the Fuchsburg Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem, they visited the New Herzl Museum and attended a programme with heads of the Israeli Masorti movement at the Schechter Institute.

Anyone who is interested in finding out more about Masorti may contact Gluckman at masortishalom@mapped.co.za



World News in Brief

Most Americans doubt Iran’s nuke deal commitment

WASHINGTON - A strong majority of Americans believe that Iran is not likely to uphold the rules of the framework nuclear agreement announced on April 2, a new survey has found. An NBC News poll, conducted in conjunction with SurveyMonkey, found that 68 per cent of 2 052 respondents believe that Iran is either not too likely or not at all likely to abide by the nuclear agreement, compared with 25 per cent who said Iran would honour it. Additionally, the survey found that 53 per cent of Americans believe the Iranian nuclear programme represents a major threat to the US, compared with only 37 per cent who consider it a minor threat and 8 per cent who said it was no threat at all. (JNS.org)

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Young Israeli ice hockey team carries big expectations

ILAN HERRMANN

The national ice hockey team of Israel is taking part in Cape Town in the IIHF (International Ice Hockey Federation) Division II Group B World Championship. The competition started on April 13 and ends on April 19.

Opposition comes in the form of South Africa, China, Bulgaria, Mexico and New Zealand.

Israel is currently ranked 32nd in the world and has almost an even record between victories

and defeats. This won't be the team's first time in South Africa and they will fondly recall this country as the place where they recorded their biggest ever win - 26-2 - against Greece in 2011. In 2013 the team took gold in the Division II Group B tier, beating far more experienced and better ranked opposition along the way.

"The players are very motivated and the team atmosphere is positive," says veteran and highest ever capped Israeli player Yefgeny Gusin, who is president of the Ice Hockey Federation of

Israel and team leader.

When asked how he expects the team to fare, Gusin played down expectations, pointing out that the squad is very young with the bulk of the players having just graduated and some having just completed their IDF service.

"We are in a phase of transition in Israeli ice hockey. We're moving from the old guard, players that served the national team for the past many years, towards a view to building a side that will lead us into the future. That said, we are determined and hopeful that we can return home with a medal too."

Gusin, a Russian-born immigrant to Israel, represented the Israeli team as goalkeeper for 22 years and has been instrumental in advancing the sport in Israel which amazingly boasts some 1 200 registered players. "Most are young kids and most are Israelis or children born in Israel from immigrant families."

While there has been a growth in numbers of participants of the sport to the extent that the Israel Ice Hockey Federation has tripled its number of registered players in the last five years, the same could not be said of its facilities.

There is just one full-size ice rink in Israel, the Canada Centre. It is located in a small city called Metula in the country's northern-most region that hugs the border of Lebanon and is about a 3 1/2-hour drive from the centre of Israel. Besides that, there are two smaller rinks and that's all.

Interestingly, the Metula rink hosts an ice hockey school where Jewish and Arab children learn to play hockey together, guided by Canadian Jewish coaches.

More recently a campaign has been underway to raise funds to build a full-size rink somewhere more accessible.

"If we can actually have a rink in the centre of Israel, we can substantially increase the popularity of hockey, its development and the overall

skill level," says Tal Avneri who has played defence man for the Israel side.

On the current senior team's style of play, Gusin warned that the Israeli players were generally not as physically forceful as some of the bigger players and teams out there. "We tackle each game individually with strategies applied against the opposition on a team-by-team basis."

Overall, the Israel team focuses on speed and intelligence of play and has a strong emphasis on teamwork.

When pressed for which players to look out for, Gusin said: "We will have to wait and see who shines in the tournament."

Due to budget constraints the Israeli side were unable to have a pre-tournament training camp which is so vital to developing team camaraderie and working techniques, especially before big events such as this one in South Africa.

Gusin bluntly says that more is needed to be invested in the game if Israel wants to raise the bar of its ice hockey. "We need to complement the incredible enthusiasm of our young players with the opportunities to achieve. And I know we can achieve."

Some of the players will have family at the rinks on match day, who have come to support their boys, while many back home will be watching and rooting with live screenings of the games on TV. Gusini expects there will also be support from the locals in the Cape Jewish community at the Grand West Ice Rink in Goodwood, waving the blue and white flag.

This is a milestone year for Israeli hockey as it celebrates 25 years of development of the sport. If Gusin has his way, Israel will have even more reason to celebrate by carrying some silverware back with them to Israel.

It's that time of the year again,
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2015 Sports Quiz

DATE: Thursday, 18 June 2015

TIME: 18:00 for 18:30

VENUE: The Polo Room, Inanda Club, 1 Forrest Road, Inanda, Sandton.

DRESS: Smart Casual

COST: R12 500 per table

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