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Solidarity rallies for Israel mark a ‘good week’ overall

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver



Mohammad Kabiya (left) of StandWithUs, an international Israel advocacy organisation, and community member Yossi Rabinowitz were part of the DEISI delegation to the Gauteng Provincial Legislature last week Friday to hand over a petition in solidarity with Israel. Two well-attended pro-Israel protests took place on the day – one in Cape Town, at the Houses of Parliament, initiated by the SAZF Cape Council, and the other in Johannesburg. The gatherings were the culmination of a very successful “pro-Israel” counter-offensive against the (annual) BDS-sponsored Israel Apartheid Week demonstrations at South African university campuses. Israel’s Christian friends – like DEISI – and those of other faiths, assembled with Jewish students in the two cities, proclaiming their passion for, and solidarity, with Israel. It was just not IAW’s week! See page 3.

Ground-breaking talks at diplomatic level between SA and Israel

Last week Thursday, the SA director of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation, Ambassador Jerry Matjile, and his counterpart from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, Ambassador Dore Gold, met in Pretoria for bilateral discussions. This was the highest level diplomatic meeting between the two countries in over a decade.

3

Israel emerges as campaign issue in three big Jewish states

Ahead of last Tuesday’s critical primary contests in five states, three of which - Ohio, Illinois and Florida - have substantial Jewish communities, Israel had prominently emerged as a presidential campaign issue. Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump has surged ahead, winning in Florida, Illinois, Missouri and North Carolina, with Ohio going to the state’s governor John Kasich.

6

Sweet sound of music kicks off Jewish presence in SA

This year represents the 175th year since the establishment of the first Jewish congregation in SA in Cape Town. The year’s celebration blasted off with a spectacular evening at the City Hall. Israeli conductor Omri Hadari was in charge of the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra, also featuring Israeli pianist Aviram Reichert.

9

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This Shabbat Zachor we remember all victims of injustice



Parshat Zachor Vayikra
Rabbi Adrian Schell
Bet David, Sandton

This coming Shabbat is called Shabbat Zachor - the Shabbat of Remembrance - one of the special Shabbatot leading up to Passover. In addition to the regular Torah portion, most congregations conclude with an additional reading of Deuteronomy 25:17-19.

These verses tell us to do something difficult - remember what Amalek did to us after we left Egypt, while we erase the memory of him. There it says:
Remember what Amalek did to you on your way out of Egypt. When they encountered you on the way, and you were tired and exhausted, they cut off those lagging to your rear, and they did not fear G-d. Therefore, when G-d gives you peace from all the enemies around you in the land that G-d your Lord is giving you to occupy as a heritage, you must obliterate the memory of Amalek from under the heavens. You must not forget.
Shabbat Zachor is always the Shabbat before Purim, because the villain of the

Purim story, Haman, is an Amalekite - a direct descendant of Amalek. One way to fulfil the idea of our additional Torah reading is the practice during the reading of the Book of Esther to make noise each time Haman's name is being read, in effect obliterating his name, while we still remember everything he did to us.
It is a very interesting coincidence that our Shabbat Zachor falls on the same weekend South Africa celebrates Human Rights Day. It is interesting for me that South Africa's Human Rights Day is connected with the commemoration of the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960.
It is a powerful reminder that human dignity is, unfortunately, something we cannot take for granted. History has shown that the rights of others are being violated too often and too easily. It was shown in the story of Amalek attacking the newly-freed Israelites, Haman who planned to kill all the Jews in Persia because of a personal vendetta, the Shoah, and also the apartheid regime that wanted to cement its power.
Last week we all could once again read about and witness the vicious actions of the BDS movement, running a so-called "Israel Apartheid Week" at many universities in South Africa.
Not only that the analogy of Israel being

an apartheid state is without any substance, it turns the idea of reconciliation upside down. Because the victims of apartheid, those who were killed or imprisoned, those who were marginalised and deprived of their human rights are once again reduced to objects for a mere political reason.
Again their human dignity has been taken away from them by people who have no interest in human rights at all, who don't care for the Palestinians or the victims of apartheid. The goal of the BDS movement is to wipe out Israel and the Jewish people no matter what, including the memory of the victims of the apartheid regime.
That is why we need to oppose those actions and why we cannot tolerate the abuse of the people who suffered under apartheid. Why we need to make it clear that there is a fundamental difference between the State of Israel, its pluralistic and democratic make-up, and the utterly unjust and to the core inhuman reality of the apartheid state which we all have overcome.
This Shabbat Zachor, this Human Rights Day, we remember all victims of injustice no matter where. We vow that we will be vigilant, and work towards a better future for the Jewish people, for this country, and for all humankind.
Shabbat shalom

Shabbat Times		
March 18 / 8 Adar II		
March 19 / 9 Adar II		
Parshat Zachor Vayikra		
Starts	Ends	
18:02	18:50	Johannesburg
18:15	19:32	Cape Town
17:51	18:40	Durban
18:10	18:59	Bloemfontein
18:13	19:03	Port Elizabeth
18:04	18:53	East London

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SA shuls plan full programmes for Purim

SUZANNE BELLING

Purim, a joyous festival, gives credence to the Jewish joke: "They tried to kill us, we won, let's eat." It is celebrated every year on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Adar.
The festival commemorates the saving of the Jews of ancient Persia from Prime Minister Haman's wicked plot to annihilate the Jewish people in one day.
In the 4th century BCE, the empire of Persia extended over 127 lands, with the Jews as the country's subjects.
The King of Persia was Ahasuerus, who had his wife, Queen Vashti, executed for failing to follow his orders.
Then he set up a beauty contest in search of a wife to succeed her. He became smitten with Esther, a Jewish girl, who did not reveal her religion.
The evil Haman decreed that everyone should bow to him, but Mordechai, leader of the Jews and Esther's cousin, refused, thus bringing the wrath of Haman down on him.
Haman was furious and persuaded the king to issue a decree to kill all the Jews on Adar 13.

Mordechai rounded up the Jews urging them to fast, repent and pray, while Esther invited the king and Haman to join her for a feast. During the feast, Esther revealed to the king her Jewish identity, leading to the hanging of Haman.
Mordechai was appointed prime minister in his stead and a new decree was issued which gave the Jews the right to defend themselves against their enemies.
On Adar 13, the Jews rose up against their enemies and on Adar 14, they celebrated their victory.
Today we mark Purim by the reading of the megillah, which recounts the story of the Purim miracle.
It is also customary to give gifts to the needy (matanot l'evyonim), usually money, send presents of food to friends (mishloach manot), hold a Purim feast and for children to dress up.
As Purim falls on weekdays this year - March 23 and 24 - the Johannesburg Jewish Helping Hand and Burial Society (the Chevrah Kadisha) has undertaken to distribute matanot l'evyonim if donations are given in advance.
Most shuls have activities planned for Purim. The Jewish

Report contacted a sample of the congregations to find out what they are doing.
The **Great Park Shul** is arranging programmes to suit everyone on March 23. For the children there will be an acrobatics display, drumming and lots of fun for the young ones.
This will be followed by the megillah reading and a family braai, Rabbi Dovid Hazdan, spiritual leader of the Great Park, told Jewish Report.
The following day there will be a megillah reading for women at a private residence. Call (011) 728-8152 for further details.
The **Great Synagogue**, the Gardens, Cape Town, will be holding a novel hamantashen bake on Sunday, March 13. The goodies will be delivered to charities the following day, says the shul's Tammy Cimring.
Hillary Murcia, of the **Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation**, says the shul is having a Chinese-themed Purim, with Chinese dances, games and fancy dress, especially Chinese costumes, on March 23. The megillah reading will be by Rabbi Dovid Wineberg.
Rabbi Levy Medalie, of the **Pretoria Hebrew Congregation**, says

the night of the 23rd will be a communal night at the shul.
The following day, there will be megillah readings at the shul, at **Crawford College** and at Jaffa retirement home. Later in the afternoon, a Purim party at the shul will take on a Hollywood theme, with Hollywood-style fancy dress and props in the shul depicting that which is synonymous with Tinsel Town.
Bet David and Beit Emanuel are joining forces for a Purim family carnival.
There will be activities for children of all ages including a jumping castle, face painting, a puppet show and hamantashen baking in the grounds of Beit Emanuel.
On March 23, there will be a family Purim service, including a Purim shpiel from the cheder class. This takes place at 17:00.
At 18:00 there will be a megil-



lah reading by Rabbi Adrian Schell and Rabbi Julia Margolis, followed by a Purim party and light supper. On Thursday, March 24, the festival morning service will be conducted by Rabbi Schell.
Rabbi Yoram Hadar of Johannesburg will be visiting the **Plettenberg Bay Hebrew Congregation** to read the megillah and the shul will be having a Purim party.
Rabbi Hadar will remain in Plett for Shabbat.
The Sydenham-Highlands North Hebrew Congregation is holding "Carnival Kids" with different rides for the children. Festivities and catered food will be served at Seeff Hall - all this will take place on March 23, according to youth director Gabriel Levy.
That night and the following day there will be megillah readings in the shul.

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Ground-breaking talks at diplomatic level between SA and Israel

ANT KATZ

Last week Thursday, the South African director-general of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation (Dirco), Ambassador Jerry Matjile, and his counterpart from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Israel, Ambassador Dore Gold, met in Pretoria for bi-lateral discussions. This was the highest-level diplomatic meeting between the two countries in over a decade and was at the invitation of the South Africans.

In a joint statement, Dirco and the Israeli Embassy said their “discussions focused on the relations between the two countries and the sides agreed on improving co-operation”.

The discussions were widely covered by Israeli media but did not invoke the interest of mainstream South African media until Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions South Africa (BDS-SA) began demanding clarification about the meetings over the weekend.

As a result, the Cape Times ran a sizeable front page article on Monday with the strapline: Baleka Mbete slams Israel while Dirco meets” under the headline, “Clarify Israeli co-operation”. In the article, however, the headline is not attributed as a quote to anybody.

Similar stories followed in other Independent Media publications.

Israel’s ambassador to South Africa, Arthur Lenk, told Independent in answer to their questions of explaining the nature of the meetings, that Israel did not “want to put words in the mouth of the SA government but our understanding was that there can be an exchange of information between experts. It’s not shocking because it’s what countries do. The more you have interests in common, the more you do (together).”

On Sunday, Matjila had referred questions from Independent Media to Dirco spokesman Clayson Monyela, who confirmed the meeting had taken place. “We have diplomatic relations with Israel but that doesn’t mean we won’t support Palestine,” Monyela said.

“South Africa has a big Jewish community and even some Christians go to Israel, which they see as holy ground.”

Following several years marked by a high degree of tension, the official visit left Jerusalem feeling positive that greater co-operation with South Africa and other African countries are possible.

Gold told reporters of his desire for a “normalisation of relations and for the establishment of a dialogue with South Africa as part of Israel’s policy to forge closer relations with African countries”.

The joint statement said: “The discussions were held in a positive atmosphere and a shared desire to deepen dialogue and friendly relations between South Africa and Israel.”

The two top diplomats were accompanied and assisted at the meeting by their respective ambassadors, Sisa Ngombane and Arthur Lenk, and other members of their staff.

The directors-general agreed that officials from South Africa and Israel will work together on national prior-



Directors-general Jerry Matjile and Dore Gold shake hands after fruitful discussions in Pretoria last week.

ity issues such as water, agriculture, trade, science and technology.

“The sides also discussed the situation in the Middle East,” said their statement.

The meeting comes after a public cooling of relations over the past several years, which pundits have attributed more to infighting in South Africa’s ruling ANC party over policy toward Israel than to any pragmatic or political reasons.

Trade and tourism between the two countries have been booming - generally with the balance being in favour of South Africa. In their joint media release, the two sides emphasised the importance of trade delegations in both directions.

Gold told SA Jewish Report on a visit to Soweto last week Friday that while the discussions had been cordial and fruitful, and that follow-up discussions would be held, the two sides still had much to learn about one another’s cultures and needs. That, said Gold, was why he had taken the opportunity to visit Soweto and the Mandela House Museum.

While recognising the importance of the meeting, Gold was at pains to tell Jewish Report that “there is still a great deal of work to do” before the countries can expect to see any changes on the ground.

Political pundits close to the discussions, both in Israel and South Africa, told Jewish Report that it was expected that there would be a number of delegations from South Africa headed for Israel over the next few months.

“Don’t expect to hear anything about these interactions in the public domain, however,” said one insider - “at least until after the local government elections.”

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Johannesburg and CT gather in solidarity



Photo: Mark Berman photography

The Cape town demonstration outside Parliament was organised by the Zionist Federation, Cape Council.

ANT KATZ

Two well-attended pro-Israel rallies took place last week Friday in solidarity with Israel and Jewish students. The Cape Town protest at Parliament had over 100 in attendance. A further 150-odd attended the Johannesburg march on the Gauteng Provincial Legislature where they handed over a petition.

The rallies were in support of the culmination of the SA Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS)’ week-long and well-fought annual campus tussle which pits Jewish students and their Israel Awareness Week against the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (Israel) group BDS, who hold their Israel Apartheid Week on university campuses.

While the students were holding their final events on the various campuses, the Cape Council of the SA Zionist Federation put together a solidarity demonstration at Parliament while Defend Embrace Invest in and Support Israel (DEISI) International and others delivered a petition to the Gauteng Legislature in downtown Johannesburg.

Israel Apartheid Week “was once again a dismal failure for BDS and the Palestinian Solidarity Front” on the UCT campus,” the Cape Fed’s Julie Berman told Jewish Report. “Christian Zionists together with members of the Cape Town Jewish community took a stand against anti-Semitism and racism.” Some 120 people gathered outside Parliament to show their support.

Olga Meshoe, CEO of DEISI International, led the Gauteng march. “I would like to say ‘toda rabah’ to all those who joined us,” she told Jewish Report. “DEISI believes that the gathering of blacks and whites, Jews and Christians, South Africans, Israelis and Americans in a public display of their solidarity with the State of Israel and her people sent a clear message to BDS.”

The anti-Israel lobbyists and their partners should be aware that South Africans “will not accept the false labelling of Israel as an apartheid state.”



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Time for a new Israel-South African relationship, urges Gold



ANT KATZ

Israel’s top diplomat, the director general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Dore Gold, was in South Africa last week at the invitation of his South African counterpart, Ambassador Jerry Matthews Matjila, of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation (Dirco).

Jewish Report accompanied Gold to the Mandela House Museum in Soweto, which Gold had insisted on visiting to honour the memory of Nelson Mandela. Gold remarked that wherever he went in South Africa, he continued to find “warm hearts. The people of South Africa want to partner with Israel. We are coming back to Africa and we are excited about the potential.”

Gold said that he had focused on the South African connection, particularly in response to initiatives from Dirco and President Jacob Zuma, who sent envoys to meet with him in Israel.

“We built on that,” Gold said. “The dialogue went extremely well. One felt an openness and a willingness to try new things that have never been tried before.” The trip was also an opportunity for both sides to describe their national narrative to the other in an effort to promote better understanding.

In this context, Gold especially wanted to visit sites

that were important for post-apartheid South Africa, including Soweto, Nelson Mandela’s home there, which is now a museum and where he signed the guest book.

“We Jews understand implicitly the struggle for freedom which Mandela led here. For us, Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jewish people,” said Gold.

Accompanying Gold to Soweto was Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein who told Jewish Report that Gold’s visit represented “such important symbolism to both countries”.

Gold also visited the symbolic Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, where members of the ANC plotted the overthrow of the apartheid government. A Jewish family involved in the Struggle had bought the farm, and Mandela - when hiding out there - played the part of their cook.

Gold also spoke to Jewish and Christian students at Wits. “We tried to send a message that it is time for Israel and South Africa to put aside their differences and to build a new relationship,” he emphasised.

“It is important for Israel to show that we have a strong respect for the struggle for freedom that was waged here,” he said. “This initial visit represents an important start, but there is considerable work still to be done,” Gold added.

Uri Davis spouts his usual venom on ‘illegal JNF’

SUZANNE BELLING

The brouhaha surrounding Dr Uri Davis - who on a speaking tour of South Africa last week, called upon this country to declare the Jewish National Fund an illegal organisation - may have a slightly different spin, but is nothing new to South Africans.

Author of the book “Apartheid Israel”, Davis told an audience in Freedom Park in Johannesburg that the Jewish National Fund of South Africa funded the development of the South Africa Forest and must be declared an illegal organisation. He said the SA Forest’s recreational facilities were funded by WIZO and that the trees were planted to hide the villages, mainly one called Lubya, from where Palestinians were forcibly removed.

Chairman of the JNF Isla Feldman said in response to claims made by Davis that with the partition in 1947, JNF bought the land which brought about the creation of Israel, including the kibbutz movement and the Hebrew University.

“The villagers of Lubya used to shoot Jewish convoys and try to ambush them. Then Haganah, in retaliation, attacked the village and, in the process, the villagers left,” said Feldman.

The Arab village was originally built on top of a Jewish village. The villagers who left became part of the Palestinian refugees and were active participants in harbouring Arab militants. At the end of the war, Lubya was part of the State of Israel.

Feldman said the village was basically

left uninhabited for 20 years and after the same period, trees were planted in the area, resulting in the forests there. There were plaques commemorating the villages which was the proof and debunked Davis’ attempts to erase the memory of the villages.

The forest incorporated a recreational area and a Christian faith site.

“Davis doesn’t want Israel to exist. His statements are outrageous and ridiculous,” Feldman said.

Describing himself as “a citizen of the apartheid state of Israel” and a “Palestinian of Jewish origin”, Davis is said to have renounced his Jewish faith in favour of Islam and is married to a Palestinian woman. But his religious affiliations are unclear.

Until 2009, he was an observer member of the Palestine National Council, the legislative body of the PLO, whereafter he became a member of Fatah’s Revolutionary Council. Fatah has maintained several militant groups since its establishment, including Force 17, Tanzim and Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades which have been involved in the murder of many Israelis and Palestinians, despite Fatah officially renouncing terrorism in 1988.

His attendance at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban in 2001 and his anti-Israel declarations at the time, was a contributing factor leading to the walkout of Israeli and American organisations and community members, who were among those who dubbed the conference the “Racist Conference”.



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Guptas to buy SA Jewish Report

OWN CORRESPONDENT

In a move that shocked the Jewish establishment last week, the Board of the SA Jewish Report newspaper announced the sale of this publication to the Gupta family.

Says non-executive Chairman Howard Sackstein: “The Guptas have a number of interests in media in South Africa including The New Age newspaper and ANN7, one of the most entertaining TV news channels in the world. They felt that the SA Jewish Report would fit perfectly into their stable of premium brand news outlets.”

The sale of the publication generated a massive R150 million for the newspaper. Vice-chairman of the SA Jewish Report, Benjy Porter, told the publication that negotiations had been “long, laborious and intense, but ultimately, over a hot spicy kosher curry, we got a great deal for the community.”

“We could either go to Mauritius with the money or we could put some of it back into good causes and invest in the future of the community, so we have decided to establish a chazonis training school with the profits generated,” Porter told the Jewish Report.

The chazonis school to be known as the “Bertie Lubner Academy for Liturgical and Cantorial Opera”, is named after one of the founding members of the SA Jewish Report newspaper and will be based at Beyachad.

“We have had to get the Zionist Federation to move out of the building to accommodate the Chazonis Institute”, says Lubner. “But they have agreed to move their offices to space allocated to them at Wits by Vice-Chancellor Adam Habib.”

The Chazonis Academy will be run by Jew-

ish Report Board member Herschel Jawitz who will be assuming the role of CEO and chief choir master on a part-time basis. “Chazonis and property are not so different, as we tell our estate agents: ‘You have to sing for your dinner,’” says Jawitz.

The deal was the mastermind of newspaper board member Dina Diamond who told the Report: “The Guptas and the Jewish community have always had close ties. When Mark Pamensky went to go and work for the Guptas we knew that a deal was close, and now with the protection of the Guptas, we know that we will have the full support of the government.

“Already the Guptas have secured the publication of government tenders in the SA Jewish Report which will generate an additional R10 million per month in revenue.”

Long standing Board member Herby Rosenberg was very instrumental in ensuring the complete editorial independence of the newspaper. “We wanted to make sure that the newspaper will remain completely independent, so we have appointed Iqbal Survé and Mohammed Desai to the Board. Their role is to ensure that all of our material is always balanced and fair,” says Rosenberg.

Vanessa Valkin will remain on as editor of the publication but each edition will also host a weekly supplement, once a month for the Muslim community, once a month for the Hindu community, once a month for the Catholics and once a month for the Zion Christian Church.

“We are so delighted to turn the SA Jewish Report into a proper inter-faith publication,” commented Valkin. “We see this as a model for sustainable media throughout South Africa. We are in discussions with Kathy Kaler to

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World News in Brief

Israel and Palestinians negotiating PA control of security in West Bank

JERUSALEM - Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) have been secretly negotiating a gradual restoration of Palestinian security control over West Bank cities, Israeli officials told Haaretz.

The proposal stipulates that the Israel Defence Forces would cease operating in Area A, which includes the larger Palestinian cities and villages, except for cases of extreme urgency referred to as “ticking bomb” situations.

The first Palestinian cities proposed for IDF withdrawal are Ramallah and Jericho, with other cities to follow if the plan succeeds. While talks about the proposed plan are currently stalled, they could still resume, officials said. “It will not come to fruition unless we also receive things from the Palestinians,” one Israeli official said.

Although the Oslo Accords call on the PA to control security in the West Bank, the IDF has been operating in Area A since 2002’s Operation Defensive Shield.

A source close to Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett, who is a member of the Jewish state’s security Cabinet, criticised the proposal because it outsources “the security of Israeli citizens to the Palestinian Authority”. (JNS.org)

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Pro-Israel camp wins the match

Last week was a good one for the pro-Israel camp in South Africa and it could have been bad. After all it was the now ubiquitous Israel Apartheid Week (IAW) on university campuses across the country.

But IAW did not get off to a very good start last Tuesday morning when two black mannequins were found hanging naked from trees on the Wits campus. The Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) had hung the mannequins with Arabic clothes, keffiyehs and tape over their mouths to highlight the oppression of the Palestinian people, they said, and the stifling of students who speak out on human rights issues.

But the PSC had a lot of apologising to do after the mannequins were found stripped of their clothes. As PSC conceded, it evoked “a historically grotesque experience of the lynching of black people under colonialism and slavery”.

Other hiccups on the part of Israel Apartheid Week organisers included articles on the Daily Vox new site by columnist and professor Steven Friedman who called BDS “incompetent” and another from Minhaj Jeenah, chairman of the Muslim Youth Movement Western Cape region, who said that BDS’ targeting of Woolworths and a few “airy-fairy” events were not doing justice to the cause.

When Daily Vox asked BDS to respond on their site, BDS called Daily Vox’s response “f***** malicious” and accused Daily Vox, historically a big IAW supporter, of having a “vendetta” against BDS director Muhammad Desai.

Embarrassingly for BDS, Daily Vox got hold of an e-mail trail between Desai and Prof Farid Esack, Head of Religious Studies at the University of Johannesburg, where Esack told Desai to get Daily Vox “off our backs”.

And then, as if things weren’t going badly enough, later in the week, an IAW protest outside the offices of Investec and Discovery in Sandton was cancelled (although the organisers said “postponed”) for unknown reasons. But one could guess it was due to insufficient support.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the “fence”, supporters of Israel Awareness Week, led by the South African Union of Jewish Students, produced a highly effective campaign of catchy posters, cleverly worded graffiti walls and social media postings with messages about fighting racism, #SeeIsraelForYourSelf and co-existence.

Also, rallies opposing racism, anti-Semitism and the targeting of Jewish-owned businesses, held by pro-Israel groups outside Parliament in Cape Town and outside the Gauteng legislature in Johannesburg at the end of last week, had huge turnouts from both Jewish supporters and Christian Zionists.

And then it got even better for the pro-Israel camp when the very first official visit in over a decade by an Israeli foreign ministry official was made to South Africa at the end of the week. Israel’s Ambassador Dore Gold met with Dirco (Department of International Relations and Co-operation) Director Ambassador Jerry Matjile in Pretoria to talk about greater co-operation on national priority issues such as water, agriculture, trade, science and technology.

BDS was unsurprisingly irked by the meetings and pushed off angry press releases, creating headlines in the local press this week demanding that Dirco clarify what these co-operation talks were about, and how it would affect ANC sympathies towards the Palestinian cause. Nonetheless, it was a very positive step forward for Israel in what has been a fairly frosty relationship between the two countries in recent years.

The tensions have been characterised by South Africa’s policy of discouraging visits to Israel by Cabinet ministers as a show of support for the Palestinians; the welcoming of Hamas terrorist leaders like Khaled Meshaal to South Africa despite angry reactions from Israel and Israel’s refusal of an entry visa for Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande to go through Israel on his way to visit some academic institutions in Ramallah.

Israel’s Ambassador to South Africa Arthur Lenk could also attest to the difficulties he has faced to gain access to the halls of power and to be made welcome at the Union Buildings.

This official visit at South Africa’s invitation and the hope for greater co-operation that will follow could be heralding in a whole new era. May the good times continue...

– Vanessa Valkin, editor



South African Jewish Report

Israel emerges as campaign issue in three big Jewish states



Republican presidential candidate Marco Rubio speaking at a news conference at Temple Beth El in West Palm Beach, Florida, last week Friday. Losing his Florida home state to frontrunner Donald Trump in Tuesday’s primary elections, Rubio has withdrawn from the race.

RON KAMPEAS
WASHINGTON

Ahead of this past Tuesday’s critical primary contests in five states, three of which - Ohio, Illinois and Florida - have substantial Jewish communities, Israel had prominently emerged as a presidential campaign issue. In a heated exchange in the Republican debate last week in Miami, front-runner Donald Trump was hammered by his opponents for saying he would be a neutral broker of Israeli-Palestinian peace. Trump defended his position as essential to achieving a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians.

“The policy Donald has outlined, I don’t know if he realises, is an anti-Israeli policy,” Florida Senator Marco Rubio - who has since withdrawn from the race - said at the debate. “Maybe that’s not your intent, but here’s why it is an anti-Israeli policy: There is no peace deal possible with the Palestinians at this moment.”

The real-estate magnate parried the criticism by noting both his love for Israel and the fact that his daughter Ivanka Trump had converted to Judaism when she married Jared Kushner, the scion of another real-estate family.

He said his promise of neutrality was essential to achieving a peace deal.

The Israel discussion was the most expansive one on the subject in any Republican debate this season, and it continued even after the debate concluded. Rubio’s campaign sent an e-mail blast immediately after with

the subject line “Trump Is No Ally to Israel”.

Last Sunday Rubio took aim at Trump: “We are electing the next commander-in-chief, and when the one leading in the polls will not take sides, imagine if he were president?”

On Sunday, Ohio Governor John Kasich, also needing a win in his home state on Tuesday (which he managed to do), said on Fox News that he now favours suspending the Iran nuclear deal. Until now Kasich, like Trump, had said the deal was a bad one, but that he would first consult with experts before suspending it. Kasich said his mind was changed by Iran’s recent ballistic missile tests.

Ted Cruz, the last of the four remaining contenders for the Republican nod, took his pro-Israel message to voters through social media, a campaign official told JTA, reminding them of his pro-Israel activism in the Senate.

Hillary Clinton, the front-runner in the Democratic race, had also been reaching out to Jewish voters ahead of Tuesday’s primary. But her message had emphasised not so much her differences with Bernie Sanders, the Independent Jewish senator from Vermont who has mounted an unexpectedly tough challenge for the nomination, but more the threat Trump poses to Israel.

A Clinton surrogate, Robert Wexler, a former congressman from Florida, in a weekend op-ed in the state’s Sun-Sentinel newspaper, warned that neither Sanders nor Trump has the understanding necessary to handle the Middle East, though he didn’t name either candidate. But Trump does have some Jewish backers. Philanthropist Jacob “Hank” Sopher ran a full-page ad in the Miami Herald last Sunday calling for Jewish support for Trump, describing him as “a man of integrity, a friend of the Jewish people, a friend of Israel”. JTA)



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Can we make sense of South Africa’s mixed messages?



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

“Today, if you are not confused, you are just not thinking clearly,” is a quote attributed to Peter Murphey, a Confederate officer during the US Civil War, but it applies to many South Africans trying to understand their country nowadays.

There are so many mixed messages about the society, government and economy. Do they herald the beginning of a new creative thrust of our “revolution”, or a one-way downward slide to becoming another failed African state?

Looked at through South African Jewry’s prism, the confusion is exemplified by contradictory attitudes to Israel. On one hand, we have the Speaker of Parliament, Baleka Mbete, telling an Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) event in Stellenbosch last week: “The Israeli regime, just like the apartheid regime before it, is obstinate and uncompromising.”

In the light of that, what should we make of the government last Thursday in the middle of IAW holding the highest level exchange between Israel and South Africa in a decade, in what seemed like a slight to BDS?

The meeting last week between the Director General of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation

Jerry Matjila and his Israeli counterpart, Dore Gold, exploring co-operation on water, agriculture, trade and technology, was described by people who were there as “upbeat”.

Adding to the confusion are statements by well-known Jewish commentators who support BDS’ goals and want it to succeed. Such as last week’s op-ed in the Daily Vox by Professor Steven Friedman, director of the Centre for the Study of Democracy at Rhodes University and the University of Johannesburg, slamming BDS-South Africa for failing to turn solidarity with Palestine into a mainstream movement in South Africa.

“This failure... is particularly astounding when we consider that the vast majority of black South Africans are sympathetic to the cause - if the realities of Palestinian life are explained to them.”

Or heroes of the anti-apartheid Struggle like Denis Goldberg - who was jailed for 22 years after being sentenced for anti-apartheid activism in 1964 in the Rivonia Trial - who said last year at a panel of Struggle activists examining its possible lessons for Palestine: “There is no doubt in my mind that Israel is an apartheid state.”

Apartheid, he said, is where a government enforces laws and policies that discriminate between people on the basis of race or religion. He added that in his view this applies to Israel proper as well as the West bank and Gaza.

Yet the strong support for Israel from African Christian groups tells another story, epitomised by a comment by ACDP

leader Kenneth Meshoe printed on a poster hung at Wits University by Jewish students: “The very idea that Israel is an apartheid state cheapens the word apartheid - it is an insult to every South African who endured the inhumanity and pain of it.”

Jews worry about growing hostility to Israel, particularly in Europe. But Dore Gold countered the perception of Israeli isolation when addressing Jews at Sandton shul: “There is actually an unprecedented rise in our foreign relations. Our Asian connections particularly are booming - with Japan, China and India”, which constitute billions of people.

South Africa is an angry society today, trying to understand itself. The governing ANC is confused. It is hard to know who really talks for it or the government, as the country teeters on the brink of economic disaster and social rebellion.

This is the sort of time when great leaders must arise to bring clarity, as Mandela did two decades ago. Sadly, such leaders are scarce today, not just in the country, but also among South African Jewry.

• Read Geoff Sifrin’s regular columns on his blog sifrintakingissue.wordpress.com

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World News in Brief

Iran fires missiles labelled ‘Israel must be wiped out’

Tehran - Iran last week reportedly test-fired two ballistic missiles inscribed with the wording “Israel must be wiped out”. The missile test comes in the aftermath of the nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, an agreement that Israel vehemently opposes due to Iran’s hostile attitude towards the Jewish state and its funding of terrorism by groups such as Hamas.

The Iranian Fars news agency published pictures claiming to show the Qadr H missiles being fired in Iran’s Alborz mountain range at a target some 1 400 km away off Iran’s coast.

“The 1 996 km range of our missiles is to confront the Zionist regime,” said Amir Ali Hajizadeh, head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards’s aerospace division, Fars reported.

“Israel is surrounded by Islamic countries and it will not last long in a war. It will collapse even before being hit by these missiles.” (JNS.org)



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Meet SA’s future investment ambassadors - courtesy Herzlia

ANT KATZ

A dinner table conversation between Herzlia English teacher Gail Simon and Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry executive council member Michael Bagraim resulted in what is slated to become a regular event due to its success. Simon had mentioned at a dinner they both attended that English higher grade learners had to do an oral on the future of South Africa. “The golden thread that runs through all

their talks is positivity,” Bagraim recalls Simon saying. Bagraim, a past chairman and president of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and now a DA member of Parliament, has for many years hosted incoming business groupings who are interested in investing or opening businesses in the country - one almost every week. Their tour includes a visit to Parliament and an address in the “Old Assembly” building, a world-renowned hangover of colonial architecture which is today used as a chamber for port-

folio committee meetings. Bagraim is the deputy shadow minister of labour and sits on Parliament’s Labour Portfolio Committee. “As an innovative change,” says Bagraim, he told Simon that he was hosting a party of 40 US businessmen the following week and “we decided to let them listen to pupils from Herzlia,” he told SA Jewish Report. The visitors were a mainly Mormon group of business graduates doing post-graduate studies with Professor Brad Winn at the Utah State University. They were all interested in opening businesses in South Africa or Africa, says Bagraim. Before taking up a fulltime position on the university faculty, Winn had done a stint as leader of the Mormon Church of South Africa. Herzlia’s Director of Education Geoff Cohen, told Jewish Report that the school and pupils were thrilled. “They did themselves and their school and families proud,” he said. “We arehoping to be asked to do this regularly.” “Each of the boys spoke for four minutes,” said Bagraim. “And each got a standing ovation from the Americans, that was longer than their talk!”



Herzlia matrices Robert Berman (speaking), Saul Levine (right), and deputy head boy Koena Nkhereanye address US investors in the “Old Assembly” of the Houses of Parliament.

This first meeting had been so successful that he and Simon had agreed to endorse a similar idea for all future visits starting from next week. Simon has decided to give grade 10 learners a chance this time. “Despite Herzlia being on holiday next week,” says Bagraim, “there was no shortage of volunteers to don uniforms and talk in Parliament.” Hopefully, it will turn them into investment ambassadors for South Africa as well, he mused.

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Community Columns

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Leon Levy’s inspiring legacy

At the 2015 SAJBD National Conference, we were privileged to honour Leon Levy for his lifetime of devoted and courageous service to the struggle for justice in South Africa. Among other historic developments paving the way to nonracial democracy, Mr Levy was centrally involved in the pioneering of independent trade unions, the Congress of the People and the Treason Trial. He is one of the many brave, principled South Africans who, at great personal risk and with much self-sacrifice, were instrumental in replacing an oppressive, racially discriminatory regime with freedom and equality. Only a handful of anti-apartheid veterans are still with us, and while we still can, we must make every effort to engage with them, listen to their stories and learn from their life experiences. This is particularly true of the “Born Free” generation, who never lived under apartheid, and for whom democratic rights have always been taken as a given. Later this week, the Board will be bringing Mr Levy up from Cape Town to speak to our Jewish day school learners about his experiences. For the young adults in the community, who will soon be taking their place as responsible citizens in society, it will be a rare opportunity to connect in a tangible way with our country’s past, and hopefully this experience will long be remembered. We can be very proud of the fact that so many of those who fought the apartheid system came from the ranks of the Jewish community. Rather than simply patting ourselves on the back for this, however, we should take

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Dore Gold and the South Africa-Israel partnership

Last Friday, Israel’s Foreign Ministry Director-General Dore Gold arrived in South Africa for a historic three-day visit. It was the first such visit by an Israeli diplomatic official of his rank in a decade, and it was surely galling to the local ‘Boycott Israel’ lobby that it coincided with the latter part of their “Israel Apartheid Week”. In the various meetings between Gold and his South African counterparts, it was agreed to strengthen co-operation between the two countries in water management, agriculture and technology, fields which are crucially important to South Africa’s national interests. We are encouraged to see that our government is no longer choosing to cut itself off from such beneficial partnerships simply to appease the radical anti-Israel lobby. Apart from the obvious lost beneficial opportunities for South Africa, such a policy would have (and has in the past had) no impact on Israel, done nothing whatsoever to advance peace prospects and would obviously not improve one iota the position of the Palestinians, the very people for whose sole benefit the BDS lobby claims to be acting.

• 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

More news on our website www.sajr.co.za

Wounded Syrians treated in Israel ‘overwhelmed with gratitude’

NEW YORK - “At first, they were afraid to be treated by Israelis, whom they were taught their whole lives are their worst enemies,” the deputy surgeon general of the IDF Medical Corps told The Algemeiner. “But once they began to accept our medical help, they became overwhelmed with gratitude and their entire attitude towards us changed.”

Colonel Dr Tarif Bader was referring to the many wounded Syrians who have crossed the border into Israel from their war-torn country to receive top-tier care, both at the IDF field hospital set up along the border and at official medical centres in the north of the country.

Since 2013, Bader said, the IDF had been administering the same advanced care to Syrians injured in the fighting between President As-sad’s forces (backed by Russia and Iran) and rebel groups as it did to Israeli civilians and soldiers.

This, emphasised Bader, is “without selection or prying into their ethnic background or side in the conflict” that has led to the death of an estimated 200 000 combatants and civilians over the past five years.

“But this is in keeping with what we teach our teams in the military medical academy: that their job is to treat all injured people, regardless of who they are, and the only thing they have to do in primary triage is to treat those with the most serious injuries first, including if they are terrorists,” he said.

Where the Syrians are concerned, however, “of course, we behave with caution. We don’t enter Syria or risk minefields in order to treat them; they come to us,” he said.

Asked whether this kind of indiscriminate care means that Israel could be treating wounded IS or other terrorists, Bader, a Druze who has

served for more than two decades in the Israeli military, said that it was certainly possible. “But IS tends not to be fighting in the areas closest to Israel. Most of the people we treat are not from Damascus or Aleppo, the cities where the bulk of the combat is taking place, but rather from villages near the border.” - The Algemeiner

Former Archbishop calls on government to halt anti-Semitism

LONDON - Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has called on the British government to combat the rise of anti-Semitism at British universities.

Lord Williams, who is now master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, revealed that he had been moved to write to Jo Johnson, the universities ministers, because of what he called the “muted” official response to Jew-hatred on campuses. According to the Sunday Times, Williams has been in contact with a Jewish student at York University, who has been the victim of anti-Semitism.

The former archbishop told Zachary Confino, an undergraduate studying law, that he had been “very shocked” by a series of anti-Semitic incidents. In a letter to Confino, he wrote: “It is truly appalling stuff but sadly seems not to be that unusual at the moment.

“It’s ironic that just as we are waking up to all sorts of ways in which ‘hate speech’ works, we should lose sight of one of the most ancient and poisonous forms of it, in the shape of anti-Semitic rhetoric.”

He added: “Anyone concerned (as I am) about Islamophobia here and elsewhere, needs to be scrupulously alert to the risk of scapegoating and demonising other religious communities, especially Jews; and anyone with even the least bit of historical sense ought to hear the echoes of past bigotry and violence towards Jewish people in Europe.” - Jewish Chronicle, London

Punishment for husbands who deny divorcing wives a ‘get’

LONDON - Husbands who deny their divorcing wives a “get”, could be stripped of their burial rights under measures approved by the United Synagogue (US) this week.

Stephen Pack, president of the United Synagogues, confirmed that its trustees had “accepted the London Beth Din’s recommendation to remove the relevant husband’s membership rights, including burial, until such time as he gives a get to his wife.”

For a number of years, the US has enabled congregations to deprive recalcitrant husbands of synagogue honours such as calling them to the Torah.

In recent months, the Beth Din has stepped up action by publishing name and shame notices against men who have refused their wife a get. In two instances, it called on synagogues under its jurisdiction to refuse entry to the men involved.

Without a get, a woman is considered an agunah, trapped in a marriage and unable to remarry according to Jewish law. If she has children from a subsequent relationship without a get, they will bear the stigma of mamzerut, (illegitimacy). - Jewish Chronicle, London

Call to strip former Nazi (92) of Canadian citizenship

TORONTO - Jewish groups are calling on Canada to strip Canadian citizenship from a 92-year-old man who was once a member of a Nazi death squad.

In a letter to Citizenship Minister John McCallum, the groups say it’s time to conclude to what has been a 20-year battle to deport Helmut Oberlander.

“As has been clearly established, Mr Oberlander was a member of one of the most savage Nazi killing units, responsible for the murder of more than 90 000 Jewish men, women, and children during the Holocaust,” states the



March 9 letter. “He is here illegally, was associated with a horrific and murderous enterprise for which he has neither demonstrated nor expressed any remorse, and he ought to have his Canadian citizenship revoked immediately,” it adds. - Jerusalem Post

IS gives women contraception to maintain supply of sex slaves

WASHINGTON - The Islamic State is using several forms of contraception to maintain its supply of sex slaves, the New York Times reported, citing interviews with more than three dozen Yazidi women who escaped from the militant group.

The newspaper reported that Islamic State used “oral and injectable contraception, and sometimes both” to ensure that the women did not become pregnant and could be passed among the fighters.

“In at least one case, a woman was forced to have an abortion in order to make her available for sex, and others were pressured to do so,” the paper said.

Islamic State militants consider the Yazidis to be devil-worshippers. The Yazidi faith has elements of Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Islam. Most of the Yazidi population, numbering around half a million, remains displaced in camps inside the autonomous entity in Iraq’s north known as Kurdistan. - Jerusalem Post



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Bishul Yisrael Kosher for Passover
(48 x 170g)

RASHI

Pink or Red Concord Light Wine
Mevushal Kosher
(12 x 750ml)



Regular Matzah
Kosher for Passover
and All Year Round (5 x 400g)



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PACK 3



KEDEM

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(12 x 946ml)



Light Meat Tuna Chunks in Brine
Bishul Yisrael Kosher for Passover
(48 x 170g)



Regular Matzah
Kosher for Passover
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375ml Vintage
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PACK 4



RASHI

Pink or Red Concord Light Wine
Mevushal Kosher
(12 x 750ml) OR

KEDEM

Concord Pure Grape Juice
Mevushal Kosher
(12 x 946ml)



Regular Matzah
Kosher for Passover
and All Year Round
(5 x 400g)



+ FREE

KEDEM
375ml Vintage
Balsamic
Vinegar

R999

FREE DELIVERY WITHIN GAUTENG

VALUE
PACK 5



KEDEM

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TA girls in a packing frenzy for Purim gifts

SUZANNE BELLING

The excitement at Torah Academy Girls' High School mounts as the girls start packing mishloach manot (Purim gifts) in aid of school funds. Prices range from R30 to R1 000 and include top branded luggage, food-stuffs, drinks and sweets. There is free delivery to your doorstep on "super" packages. Waving their masks and packing in earnest are Estee Zwick; Tali Abrahamson; and Sara Malka Fox.

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A festival of ethnic Jewish food at KDVP



HANNA BEN-MOSHE

King David Victory Park's shinshinot (young emissaries from Israel), Shlomit and Moriah, and the Hebrew Department, last week organised a festival of Jewish food from different ethnic groups that live in Israel today. Among the wide variety: were malawach (fried Yemenite bread), couscous, the Moroccan sfenj (Moroccan doughnuts) and dabo (Ethiopian bread), Russian potato salad, Israeli-Mediterranean salad, humus and techina and Eastern European vegetable soup with noodles, kneidlach and shkedei marak (soup croutons). Pictured are Jemma Sundelson; Shmueli Gischen; Leo Bogolubov; Daniel Barlin; Micaela Tucker; Hanna Ben Moshe; Gila Dove; Moriah Trock; and Hadas Ben-Yosef.

Eden kids 'socked it' in a fun way



OWN CORRESPONDENT

Eden School held a crazy sock day last week. All the kids came to school in different patterned socks and everyone had a good laugh! The children are encouraged daily to learn about

Yiddishkeit and good values. Helping others and doing chesed is one of the main ethics of the school. All the children felt part of something very special and had the opportunity to participate in the fun. As it is the month of Adar, the children also learnt of the importance of the mitzvah to be happy.

Linksfield High's Purim full of fun and laughter

YAKIRA COHEN

As King David Linksfield is on a mid-term break this week, Purim was celebrated last week Friday. It was very festive and exciting. The costumes were creative and interesting, following the grade themes: grade 8, my worst nightmare; grade 9, Hollywood; grade 10, in my next life I want to be; grade 11, stereotypes; grade 12, my favourite thing from my childhood. Everyone had fun making mishloach manot, followed by a hilarious assembly and costume competition, skits and musical interludes. Purim is always one of the most entertaining days of the school year, and this one was no exception. Pictured is Daniel Abrams dressed up as Mildred, a fictional old lady.



Getting into the spirit of Rosh Chodesh Adar

JENNY MILLER

Adar is the official "happy month", as is written: "As soon as Adar begins, increase in joy!" In a leap year, we have two months of extra happiness! The staff and children at Sydenham Hebrew Pre-Primary School wasted no time in getting stuck into some real fun activities for the learners. While everyone is very busy preparing for the upcoming chag of Purim, the children are also learning about the colours of black and white in nature.



Funky black and white crowns were created in honour of Rosh Chodesh Adar and the children celebrated by singing songs and dancing. Pictured proudly wearing their crowns are: Chase Cohen; Taylor Levitas; Sami Levin; Liat Cohen; Shaiya Crouse; and Chiara Riback.



ONE-ON-ONE with Rabbi Paysach Krohn

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

Guidelines for letters
Letters of up to 400 words get preference. Provide your full name, place of residence, and daytime phone number. We do not publish letters under noms de plume. Letters should preferably be e-mailed. Letters may be edited or shortened.

EDELSTEIN MUST GUARD AGAINST SELECTIVE MORALITY AND DOUBLE STANDARDS

Merlynn Edelstein (SA Jews for Free Palestine) would be more than surprised just how her organisation and “mainstream” Jewry’s views on the Israel/Palestine issue converge. Both would welcome a free Palestine; the method of achieving that goal probably differs as the “mainstream” camp supports a two-state solution but we have yet to hear how SAJFP would like to see a free Palestine emerge.

In a letter to this newspaper last week Edelstein expresses strong feelings about her views and the importance of alternative opinions being heard. I don’t believe anyone would take issue with this. Neither do I believe anyone would have an issue with her view of recognition of the 1948 borders.

Others have differing views of those borders, but both obviously recognise Israel’s sovereignty and I believe both have an unwavering commitment to Israel’s survival.

Edelstein’s main concern seems to be that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “purports to act in the name of global Jewry”. What he does as prime minister of the only Jewish state on Earth is speak for the people he represents, which happen to be predominantly Jewish, as does Zuma, Cameron or Obama (speaking for

their people).

SAJFP’s claim of ethnic cleansing is an interesting accusation and if Edelstein were to look up the term on Wikipedia, she would find scores of actual cases of ethnic cleansing, many in the Arab world, yet this source says about the Palestinians: “The cause of this displacement and its description as ethnic cleansing is disputed by scholars.”

SAJFP claims that the plight of the Palestinians in other Arab states is “central to our concern”, as they “advocate for the return of these refugees to their proper home”, and “Syria, Yemen and Islamic State do not claim to perpetrate atrocities in our name”.

Is that reason enough not to protest the slaughter of a quarter of a million people? At the same time SAJFP will “continue to campaign against discrimination and injustice” - but not against the murder and abuse of those invisible Palestinians of these other Arab lands - is this not selective morality and double standards, Edelstein?

**Allan Wolman
Rosebank**

IN WHOSE NAME DOES NETANYAHU, OR ZUMA FOR THAT MATTER, ACT?

A recent SAJFP (Jews for Palestine) letter in the Jewish Report claimed that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “acts in your ‘name’”.

It’s unrealistic of the letter writer to believe that Netanyahu represents all the Jewish people and then to get upset because one disagrees with his policies.

Netanyahu doesn’t act in “your ‘name’” any more than Jacob Zuma acts in my “name”. If Donald Trump wins the US elections I can bet that there are a fair number of Americans who will purport that he does not act in their “name”.

That’s why there are elections - for the

majority of people to choose who the leaders will be. Elections imply that not everyone agrees on who should win the election, but that the majority will prevail. We accept that there will still be dissenting opinion.

Obviously Netanyahu cannot consult with every Jew in order to shape his policies, nor do most people expect him to do so. Do you expect Netanyahu to consult you? So I accept that Netanyahu is not doing anything in your name (especially as a Diaspora Jew). Can you accept that too?

**Michele Engelberg
Johannesburg**

THE THOUSANDS OF MIGRANTS WILL BITE THE EU COUNTRIES IN THE BACKSIDE

Perhaps, or perhaps not, a visionary statement to the peoples of France, Germany, Belgium, Norway, Sweden and Denmark and possibly also the UK and the US regarding their “political correctness” and “humanitarianism” and their understanding of the saying: “There are none so blind as those who will not see.”

“Mene, mene, tekel, mepharsim”, freely translated as “Count your days for they are numbered” - Daniel 5 (25-28) which I believe applies to the welcoming of the hundreds of thousands of migrants and jihadists and their condemnation of the State of Israel. It will all come back to bite them in their collective backside.

**Jack Miller
Gresswold, Johannesburg**

SILENCE MIDEAST CRITICS BY RETURNING TO 1948 BORDERS

The letter from Merlynn Edelstein of the SAJFP in last week’s Jewish Report refers.

I would very much like to see the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians resolved by the return of Israel to the 1948 borders. But the borders before the 1948 war started was the land partitioned by the UN, and Israel was given all the land west of the Jordan River, that is between the river and the sea. After the war and the armistice was signed, Jordan had occupied Judea and Samaria which they continued to occupy for 19 years until Israel managed to reclaim the territory in the 1967 Six Day War.

In the 19 years that Jordan occupied Israeli

territory, no-one ever made a complaint in favour of Israel and certainly not the UN.

I would therefore suggest that all efforts be made to solve the Middle East problem by returning to the 1948 borders and that organisations such as SAJFP, J Street and like-minded organisations campaign for a just peace and “put their money where their mouth is”.

Maybe that way we will be able to settle the world’s troubles as Israel is the only country in the area with which these groups find fault.

**Dennis Kahlberg
Fairmount, Johannesburg**

ZANE COHEN IS TRYING TO REACH HIS RELATIVES

Zane Cohen who lives in Cape Town, is trying to get information on his grandfather, Louis (Lewis/Luis) Morris Cohen born in Poppelan/Papile, Zhager, Lithuania in about 1898 and any other relatives.

Louis Cohen came to South Africa, probably around the time of the First World War in 1914, and settled in a small town called Meyerton in the Vaal Triangle.

He had brothers and sisters who made the journey to South Africa – Herman, Micha, Meyer, Edie and Sal.

Louis married Sarah Mary Jane Farquhar and his children were Norman (Zane’s father), Lennon, his brother Stanley and a sister Irene.

Louis Cohen died in 1977 and is buried in a cemetery in Vereeniging.

Zane Cohen may be reached on cell phone 082-455-8150.



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‘Butterfly statues’ with SA roots adorn a fountain in far-flung San Diego

SUZANNE BELLING

Ex-pat South Africans, Barbi Dorfan and Helen Segal, have added to the public art space in San Diego with two outdoor mosaic projects, both of which are permanent exhibits.

The most recent work, mosaic statues inspired by the 1,5 million children who perished in the Holocaust, comprises three colourful figures reaching towards butterflies in the air above them. The statues are part of a refabricated fountain at a shopping centre in Torrey Hills, San Diego.

The owner of the centre, another former South African, Gary Levitt, who studied at Wits, was looking to revitalise the worn-out fountain at the focal point of the centre.

He was put in touch with his two “landsleit”, with Segal presenting concept sketches of the project to him, which he immediately approved. Months later, in November 2015, the vibrant, colourful statues were unveiled.

“Gary is so much about community and having a centre that is a community centre, not just a shopping centre,” Segal said. With that in mind, she designed her sketches to include three figures reaching toward butterflies flying above them.

“They represent the community,” Segal explained, “people aspiring to do something better, greater than they are.”

Dorfan went to King David, Victory

Park, as did her three daughters, Jessica, Samantha and Rikki, until their immigration to the States in 2010. Her husband Joel was raised in Bulawayo and moved to South Africa when he was 17.

She did a BSc in computer science at Wits and later studied at the Ravenna School of Mosaic in Italy.

Segal attended Woodmead High School in Johannesburg, studied art briefly at Wits, went to a kibbutz in Israel as an interim break from her schooling (after having had a car accident). “In Israel I met the man who would become my future husband. He was from the USA which is how I landed up here, graduating with a fine arts degree (summa cum laude).” Divorced for 10 years, she has two children Jason and Jenna.

The Butterfly Project in which the women became involved was founded at the San Diego Jewish Academy and is championed by Cheryl Rattner Price.

The project aims to memorialise the Jewish children who died in the Holocaust. Every butterfly symbolises a child who was lost and a voice that is gained. Members of the public were invited to paint butterflies in accordance with the project - an artistic, educational programme commemorating the children and honouring the survivors.

The Butterfly Project aims to teach tolerance using the lessons of the Holocaust to remember the past, act

responsibly in the present, and create a more peaceful future. By empowering students to take a stand against injustices, the Butterfly Project is a tool to launch and support anti-bullying programming.

The butterfly theme was carried over to their latest work at the Jewish Academy in San Diego, with some 2 000 butterflies painted by local schoolchildren around mosaic statues of the four matriarchs: Sarah, Leah, Rebecca and Rachel. The larger-than-life sized work represents the Unbridled Spirit of the Child.

Each figure represents a season. The statues are surrounded by a bench of butterflies. They worked on the statues with Israeli artist Sigalit Sherman.

“We really work well together,” Segal says. “We get each other artistically.”

Both Segal and Dorfan are originally from Johannesburg.

Segal is the daughter of Marcia and the late Mr Justice Geoffrey Leveson, while Dorfan, is the daughter Pearl and the late Richard Weinberg. Her mother now lives in Israel.

“Art is an international language. Here we are, two South Africans of the same age group, who didn’t know each other in SA. But we were brought together across the world and have become great friends through art,” said Dorfan.

Segal adds: “It would be an incredible thing if we could do a butterfly project installation in South Africa.”



Barbi Dorfan and Helen Segal with one of their mosaic statues. The butterflies are very much in evidence.

Science

John Torrence Tate Award-winner Neil Turok looking for African Einstein

MARGOT COHEN

South African-born Neil Turok (pictured) is the recipient of the 2016 John Torrence Tate Award for International Leadership in Physics from the American Institute of Physics. The award will be presented to him in November in Silicon Valley, California.

Speaking to the Jewish Report telephonically from the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo, Canada where he serves as Director and Niels Bohr Chairman, Turok says he is delighted at the recognition. “It came as something of a surprise,” he remarks.

Last week he was in Dakar, Senegal. Turok’s abiding interest is to promote science and maths education in Africa. The global gathering in Dakar was to support the call to meet the challenge of producing the next African Einstein. It was the largest ever scientific meeting in Africa, with over 700 participants.

Says Turok: “No-one can deny the contribution by

African science superstars? Africans have a huge interest in education. Even the poorest among them make huge sacrifices to educate their children. By 2050, 40 per cent of the world’s youth will be African. We must create opportunities for them.”

Turok likens the exclusion of black people from science to the denial of technical and scientific training to Jews in 19th century, when Jews were consigned to being pedlars and money lenders.

A self-confessed “Afro-optimist”, Turok founded the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) in Muizenberg, Cape Town, in 2003. It has since expanded to a network of five centres in South Africa, Senegal, Ghana, Cameroon, and Tanzania and has become Africa’s most renowned institute for postgraduate training in maths, with nearly 1 000 alumni.

For his scientific discoveries and for developing AIMS, Turok was awarded the TED Prize in 2008.

His research interests are related to the Big Bang. He is involved in testing fundamental theories of the cosmos.

Born in Johannesburg to political activists Ben and Mary Turok, Turok and his family went into exile in Kenya and Tanzania and then on to London. He was educated at Cambridge University and received a doctorate in theoretical physics from Imperial College.

He comes to South Africa, where his parents and some siblings reside, around three times a year. “Science is a unifying force for humanity that transcends culture, language and race and the other artificial boundaries that separate us.



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They have a calling to give succour to Jews in prison



SUZANNE BELLING

With some people, the goodness shines out of them. And so it is with Rabbi Michael Katz (co-director of Chabad House) and Shirley Resnick (manager of financial services, Chevrah Kadisha), whose work as prison chaplains in Gauteng brings them into regular contact with Jewish prisoners who are often their complete opposites.

“We all have our faults,” says Rabbi Katz. “These are people who have messed up in the financial or spiritual realm. But they are human beings - Jews - and they have lives, souls and families.”

According to both chaplains, who cover the Gauteng jails - Diepkloof in Soweto (dubbed Sun City), Kgosi Mampuru (formerly Pretoria Central), Leeuwkop in Kyalami, Sonderwater near Cullinan and Nigel - the prisons are overcrowded with terrible conditions (“although the women’s prisons are slightly better”, according to Resnick).

At present there are only about eight Jews in prison - “none of them women at this stage”, Resnick said she was pleased to report.

“This is the lowest figure ever,” says Rabbi Katz. “There are, among them two fraudsters, one imprisoned for drugs and one murderer serving life.”

Resnick says women prisoners for the most part comprised those guilty of fraud and drug trafficking. Under the apartheid regime they dealt with political prisoners and those supporting the End Conscription Campaign, said Rabbi Katz.

“But now the role of being a prison chaplain necessitates discretion. And once they are freed, they don’t want to be reminded of their time there.”

Correctional Services are attempting to upgrade the prisons “but in my humble opinion, they are fighting a losing battle. It is an impossible situation - there are 60 guys in a space meant for 20 and people sharing beds - terrible overcrowding. There are great people in the system, but there is the inability to cater for so many,” Rabbi Katz told SA Jewish Report.

Unlike movies and TV, “there is nothing glamorous about being in prison or visiting prisoners and although people have a fascination with this, seeing a prisoner reflects the lowest time of his life,” he said. Rabbi Katz became a chaplain like his father Rabbi Sidney Katz, zt”l, who handed over the reins to his son in later years.

Immediately one senses with both the rabbi and Shirley there is no censure, nothing judgmental,



Shirley Resnick.



Rabbi Michael Katz.

Photos: Suzanne Belling

only practical help and counselling.

It is not difficult to see how both male and female prisons open up to these tzaddikim and in turn receive counselling and practical help.

“I have never felt threatened; prisoners usually share stuff, they want the counselling and have become my friends,” says Rabbi Katz.

The prisoners all wear orange overalls, except in the holding cells when awaiting trial or sentencing, when they wear a different uniform.

The holding cells, if anything, have worse conditions than the prisons themselves.

“But I have never comes across any abuse,” says Rabbi Katz, although Resnick says there have been some problems with women.

Kosher food in South African prisons is not possible because:

- The numbers do not warrant it;
- Bringing in food from the outside presents a security problem;
- There could be jealousy from other prisoners regarding special treatment of Jews.

However, the Chevrah Kadisha makes sure that before Pesach, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, food parcels are given to the Jewish prisoners. “We do take additional food because there are suddenly extra people claiming to be Jewish,” Resnick says.

“We are not allowed to take in glass, bottles or jars, so everything has to be decanted into plastic containers.”

The Chevrah Kadisha also takes care of the prisoners’ families living at home. “If a Jewish inmate becomes ill, we will help with the medical aid and we assist with school fees for children. After serving their time, all prisoners are immediately referred to Jewish Community Services for psycho-social assistance.”

Rabbi Katz says he encourages prisoners to eat basic food like milk and bread, so there is nothing intrinsically unkosher. “A kosher diet to the prison authorities means no pork,” he says.

The chaplains have a roster of pro deo attorneys and advocates to help awaiting trial prisoners and to advise them on their legal rights.

“We continue with financial assistance when prisoners come home,” said Resnick. She describes her fellow chaplain as giving “chizuk and inspiration.

For the prisoners it is like being in Gehinnom - it is the mitzvah of pidyon shvuyim (redemption of prisoners) to keep them out of jail. But if they are incarcerated, it is up to us to give support.”

Prison chaplains in other parts of the country are Rabbi Kalman Green (Western Cape) and Shlomo Wainer (KwaZulu-Natal).



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Married with three children, Najma started her journey 20 years ago as a radio presenter. Against the odds Najma founded a community radio station and co-founded two others. Najma was faced with a new challenge when she was told that according to Islamic teachings women were not allowed to be heard on “air”. She did her own research and gained support from the community to prove that there was no basis to what some claimed as an Islamic rule. Najma became a voice for women through her platform on radio and television, a household name both locally and internationally. She pursued her career as a counselling therapist concurrently with being a radio talk show host and television presenter. As an active member of her community, she co-founded a drug rehab centre and served on the board of several organisations. As a counselling therapist and a trauma counsellor, Najma is also the director of “Forever Blooming”, an organisation she founded in 2005. This stress and trauma centre offers counselling services to individuals coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

She lives by the adage: What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us (RW Emerson).

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Friday (March 18)

- UZLC hosts Benji Shulman on “Israel Apartheid Week in Johannesburg”. Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 – 14:00. Contact: Gloria 072-127-9421 or (011) 485-4851.

- Bet David's Kabbalat Shabbat Service takes place at Bet David, Morningside. Time: 18:00 - 19:00. Enquiries: Sharon (011) 783 7117

Saturday (March 19)

- Bet David's Torah study and light breakfast takes place at Bet David at 08:45 – 09:45. No charge. The Shabbat morning service takes place at 10:00, followed by a brocha.

Sunday (March 20)

- JH&GC in partnership with the faculty of arts, Leeds University and the Ditsong National Museum of Military History, host a screening of the documentary “Hidden

Holocaust in the Dunes” at Ditsong Military History Museum, Saxonwold at 17:30. No charge. Book with shirley@jhbholocaust.co.za or (011) 640-3100/2148.

- Second Innings hosts Roz Basserabie on “Make the Most of Every Day - Turn an Ordinary Day into an Extraordinary Day”. Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres. Time: 10:00 for 10:30. Cost: R20 members, R30 visitors (incl tea and light refreshments). Information: Linda Fleishman (011) 532-9701.

Monday (March 21)

- JH&GC in partnership with the faculty of arts, Leeds University and the Ditsong National Museum of Military History, host a panel discussion on “Transnational Holocaust Memory, Human Rights and other Traumatic Pasts” at Ditsong National Museum of Military History, Saxonwold at 15:00. No admission charge. Book with shirley@jhbholocaust.co.za or (011) 640-3100/2148.

Tuesday (March 22)

- Cape Town Holocaust Centre hosts Professor Rolf Wolfswinkel (New York University) on “The Case of the Holocaust in One Country: The Predicament of the Jews of Holland”. Venue: Cape Town Holocaust Centre, 88 Hatfield Street, Gardens. Time: 18:00. Entrance free, but donations welcome. RSVP: (021) 462-5553 or admin@holocaust.org.za

Thursday (March 24)

- Umhlanga Jewish Centre is having a “Megillas and Margaritas”, celebrating Purim like Mexicans in Umhlanga. Time: 16:00 till late. At 16:30 reading of the Megilla. Venue: 81 Campbell Drive, Izinga Ridge, Umhlanga. Dress up theme: “M”. Mexican inspired food, cash bar, kids activities. Cost: R70/head. Kids under 10 R30. Booking: E-mail Angie at admin@umhlangajewishcentre.co.za or call (031) 566-3227.

News

Israel Advocacy Conference pulls together passionate Israel supporters

ANT KATZ

Last Sunday about 550 people - largely Evangelical Christians - gathered at the Killarney Country Club in Johannesburg for the fourth annual Israel Advocacy Conference of the interfaith group SA Friends of Israel (SAFI).

Notable political figures were there too (in their religious capacities), from senior members of the ANC and most other parties and faith groups, to some Hindus even who love Israel.

They came from four continents and from all over Africa, to learn how to advocate for, and share their love of, Israel.

Jamie Mighty, who resigned from the Wits SRC last year in protest over what he believed to be SRC funds being used improperly to support an anti-Israeli agenda, was a very capable MC.

The conference was opened by SA Zionist Federation National Chairman Ben Swartz, who founded SAFI prior to his becoming an officebearer of the Fed. Schwartz mentioned that SAFI's first conference had just 100 delegates.

Back then, Jews were under fire. But a very different story played out last week, as Israel Apartheid Week on South African campuses had been a `dismal failure, said Swartz. “On the Wits campus the ‘haters’ are on the back foot. They seemed to have been asking for forgiveness the whole week!”

Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein blessed the proceedings, saying that everyone was there because they shared the common Talmud values of justice, truth and peace.

Israel's Ambassador to South Africa Arthur Lenk said South Africa was far more isolated than Israel, which has security co-operation treaties with Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority. “We even have strategic relations with Saudi Arabia and most of the Arab countries. They don't think we are a problem,” he said.

Mark Hyman, co-chairman of SAFI, introduced American pro-Israel campus activist Winton Steward, a black Christian who grew up in the Deep South. Steward does work on American college campuses and shared many tactics he employs in his activities across the country.

Keynote speaker Ze'ev Ben Sachar from Jerusalem University said that Israel has endured both persecutors and protectors over the ages. He gave delegates some very interesting information to work with in their advocacy for Israel.

Local speaker Dr Bejani Chauke, who works at Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and acts as a political strategist for various ANC bigwigs, posed a simple question: “Is our diversity supposed to be an advantage or a hindrance?”

People learn to hate, he said, so they must be just as able to learn not to hate. Israeli and Palestinian leaders want to make peace but others come between them. Some see relations between South Africa and Israel as a threat to relations with the Palestinians. “I disagree,” he said. Another keynote speaker, Shahar Azari, executive director of pro-Israel group StandWithUs, spoke on “How to stand with Israel” and kept the audience spell-bound with his tactical approaches.

People say that Israelis only want security while Palestinians only want justice, “but think about how ridiculous that is”, said Azari. “Surely we both want both of these things?”



The Shemba receive a gift of lights



Israeli ambassador Arthur Lenk, with Mark Hyman



General happiness at the conference

WOLMAN, LILY

The unveiling of the tombstone in loving memory of our dear mother Lily Wolman, will take place on Monday, March 21, 2016 at 10:30 am at West Park Cemetery, Grave No W1070. Rosanne and Lorraine (Linky)

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