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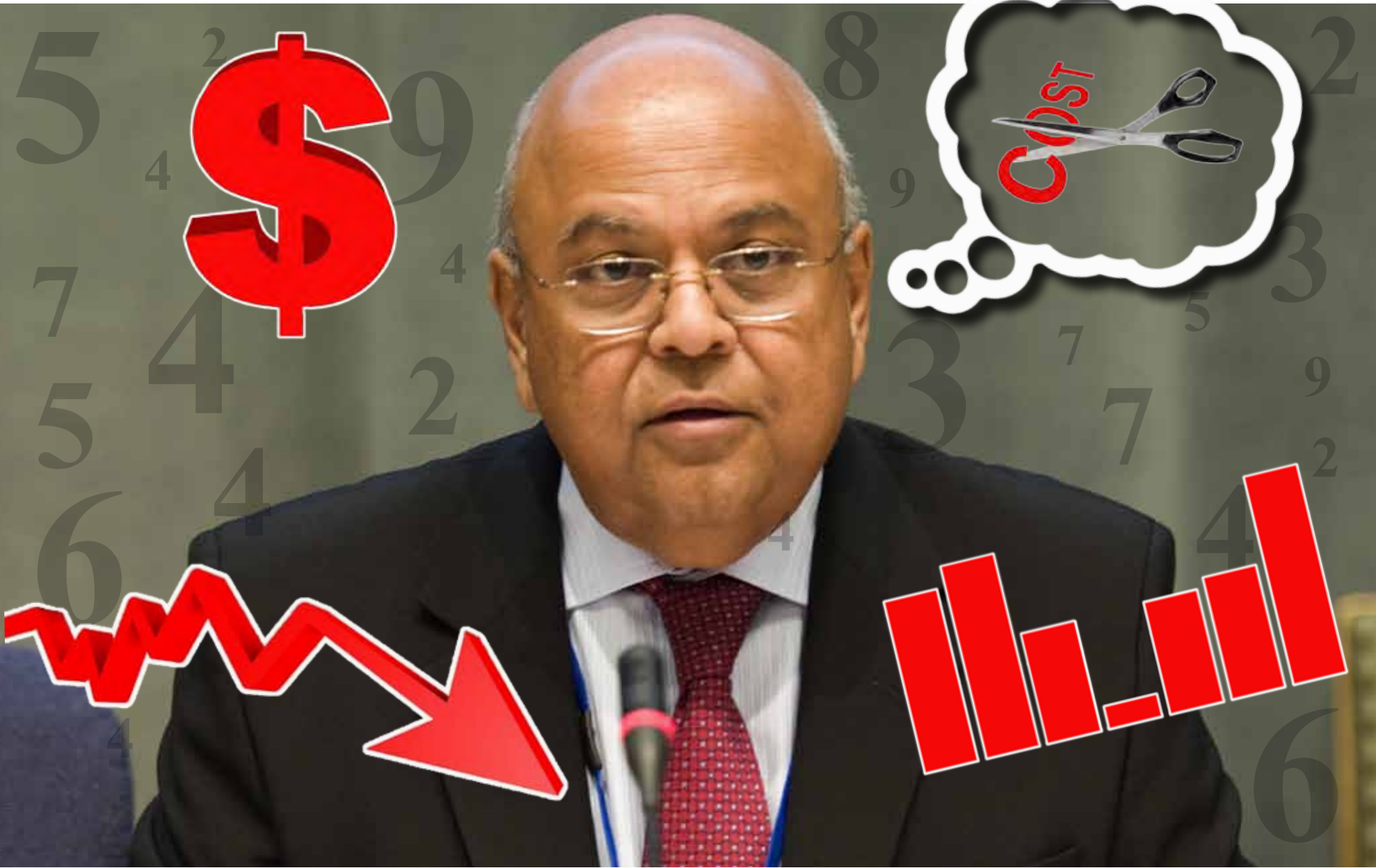
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Between a rock and a hard place



Pravin Gordhan (pictured), the amiable and well-respected minister of finance, has an unenviable task ahead of him when he delivers the country’s budget in Parliament next week Wednesday. Gordhan who was hastily “recalled” to the position after President Jacob Zuma had first booted out Nhlanhla Nene and then made the catastrophic appointment of Des van Rooyen for a weekend, has very few options for manoeuvring left to him. Increasing revenue through raising income taxes is a given and cutting government expenditure is likely too - say the experts. South Africa’s economy is in dire straits. The bottom has fallen out of commodities and on top of it all, the severest drought in nearly a century has brought many a farmer to his knees and will force the country to import maize, to feed the hungry. In all fairness so is the global economy struggling, with China battling to sustain a reasonable growth rate. It’s an important budget speech we are awaiting next week. See page 3.

Memory of Marion Falk celebrated with a Sefer Torah

Last Sunday, Yeshiva College learners, parents and family of the late Marion Falk, welcomed a brand new Sefer Torah in her memory, at the Boys’ High School. Marion was with Yeshiva Nursery School for 35 years, first as a teacher and then as principal.



A belt-tightening budget on the cards for Gordhan

Raymond Goss of Investec SA says this will be the most critical budget since the formation of our democracy in 1994. David Shapiro says this speech will highlight that the path to rebuilding our economic muscle is no longer a laughing matter.

Democracy in SA is alive and well, says Chief Rabbi

At the State President’s SONA this year, Chief Rabbi Goldstein had the honour of sitting among the judges and speakers of provincial legislators. ‘Parliament shows me that we are a free and robust democracy,’ he said on his return to Johannesburg.

Ombudsman forces climb-down by Star, Cape Times

The Press Ombudsman, on behalf of the SA Press Council, last week upheld a complaint of incorrect reporting against The Star newspaper, lodged by the SAJBD and SAZF. The complaints concerned two reports by The Star’s Foreign Editor Shannon Ebrahim.

For a ‘quickie’ Jewish wedding, call Rabbi Mel Hecht

Rabbi Mel Hecht of the Graceland Wedding Chapel is the go-to guy for idiosyncratic Jewish weddings and funerals – rites that would make sense nowhere else, but ring true in Las Vegas, a town built by the Jewish mob.

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We can but aspire to the role of a Kohen



Parshat Tetzaveh
Rabbi Chaim Willis
Aish Hatorah

In Tetzaveh, G-d commands Moshe about the laws concerning the clothes of the Kohanim and their initiation ceremony.

There is one major difference in this parsha from all other parshot in the Torah. Despite all the laws in the parsha coming (as with the rest of the Torah) through Moshe, Moshe’s name is never mentioned. The parsha starts: “And you command” and continues in that way for the entire parsha.

The Sages explain why. After the Golden Calf, when G-d was ready to withdraw His support from the Jewish people, Moshe challenged the A-mighty: “And now if You would but forgive their sin! - but if not, erase me now from Your

book that You have written”. Moshe told the A-mighty in so many words that “I and the Jewish people are a package deal. If You don’t forgive them, don’t involve me either!” The A-mighty listened to Moshe, and the process of forgiveness started.

That moment can be considered Moshe’s greatest act in the Torah. Because he was willing to give up everything for the Jewish people (and that is what G-d wanted from him), he merited the highest level of connection to G-d that any human being ever experienced:

“You will see My back, but My face may not be seen.” Seeing G-d’s back - metaphorically a level of realisation of the specialness of G-d that no other human being ever received - was the reward for standing up to G-d.

Yet the rabbis say: “The curse of a wise man, even on condition, comes true”. Even though G-d forgave the Jewish people, Moshe’s curse, that he would be wiped out of the Torah, came true in Parshat Tetzaveh.

But why that parsha, and not another parsha? We can understand that, if we understand the role of a Kohen.

The Kohen was our representative to do the service in the Temple. As the representative of the Jewish people, he needed to demonstrate the zealotness and holiness that is necessary in the service of G-d.

The rest of the Jews could see from watching the Kohanim how they should take the service of G-d seriously in their daily lives. That is why even the clothes the Kohanim wore are a part of Torah - even their clothing needed to show to the rest of us “kavod and tiferet”, “honour and beauty”.

One of the requirements of a Kohen is that he does everything exactly according to the rules. A Kohen who does a sacrifice according to his own way, destroys the sacrifice. G-d gave us a Torah based on His greater wisdom. The follower of halacha needs to learn from the Kohanim the value of zealous obedience to

achieve the end goal of a relationship with G-d. But we learn from Moshe that sometimes you can’t be a Kohen. Sometimes G-d wants you to argue with Him, like Avraham did with Sodom and Moshe did over the Golden Calf. But that is only for people on the greatest level of wisdom and humility. For the rest of us, we can aspire to the level of a Kohen.

Shabbat Times		
Parshat Tetzaveh February 19 / 10 Adar 1 February 20 / 11 Adar 1		
Starts	Ends	
18:15	19:19	Johannesburg
18:15	20:09	Cape Town
18:15	19:12	Durban
18:15	19:30	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:40	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:29	East London

KASHRUT ALERT

A few weeks ago, the kashrut division of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues informed the community of a number of cheese products which displayed the Beth Din logo without authorisation, made by a company called “KEE Wings” and distributed in airport lounges across the country.

That company now employs a full time mashgiach and is now sourcing kosher cheeses for five products in its range, which are now certified kosher (Milchik, not Chalav Yisroel) under the Beth Din of Johannesburg.

The company has been authorised to put the logo on the following products in its range: Cheddar; Camembert; Blue Mould Cheese; 6 Month Matured Cheddar; and KEE Belle.

It is important to remember that the company still produces non-kosher cheeses as well, which will not display the Beth Din logo. Only those cheeses with the logo can be now eaten.

Car occupants shout obscenities at Jewish pedestrians

A vehicle earlier this month threatened to run down six identifiably Jewish men in suburban Johannesburg minutes after its driver shouted an anti-Semitic epithet at them.

The men were walking home from the Ohr Somayach Jewish Centre in Glenhazel when the vehicle with four occupants, drove past them. The driver made offensive hand gestures and shouted “f---ing Jews”!

A few minutes later, the vehicle returned and veered toward the men.

The incident was reported initially on February 10 on the website of the Co-ordination Forum for Countering Anti-Semitism, or CFCA, though it occurred last month. It was later confirmed to JTA by David Saks, associate director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

“Anti-Semitic verbal abuse in South Africa commonly takes the form of people shouting obscenities from passing vehicles at community members walking to or from shul,” Saks told JTA, noting that there were on average 10 such incidents per year. “It is unusual, however, for the perpetrators to combine verbal abuse with acts of intimidation against the people they are targeting, in this case by making as if to drive into them.”

Saks said there were no details on the car registration. (JTA)

Memory of Marion Falk celebrated with a Sefer Torah

OWN CORRESPONDENT AND STAN SMOOKLER

Last Sunday, Yeshiva College learners, parents, friends and family of the late Marion Falk came together to welcome a brand new Sefer Torah in her memory, which will now take its rightful place in the Boys’ High School Beit Midrash.

The sound of dancing and singing resonated throughout the suburb of Glenhazel as the crowd of close to 1000, together with the Torah, made their way to Yeshiva College.

The chuppah covering the Torah, was made by Marion’s family and friends and was adorned with words which her family and close friends used to describe how they felt about Marion and the way she lived her life.

It began in Tanced Road at Nicole and Naphtali Mandelberg’s home and was danced down to Yeshiva College under a chuppah to Naphtali’s brass band.

Rabbonim, including Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein,



Marion Falk's children Nicole Mandelburg, Karen Shore and Doron Falk.



Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein and Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Avraham Tanzer under the chuppah which was specially made for the occasion by Marion Falk’s family and friends.

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A belt-tightening budget on the cards for Pravin Gordhan

RAYMOND GOSS, Head of Wealth Management, Investec, South Africa, looks into the budget crystal ball.

Newly-(re)appointed Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan will present the National Budget to Parliament on February 24. He will know that the appalling events that led to his appointment make this the most critical budget since the formation of our democracy in 1994.

His announcements will be closely monitored by the nation as well as the rating agencies. This will be an austere budget, providing for an increase in taxation, while reducing expenditure.

It will focus on the restoration of confidence and a commitment to a policy of fiscal discipline within the context of South Africa’s challenging economic future and will continue

to build on the sombre tone set by President Jacob Zuma during his State of the Nation address.

The Minister will be correct to point out the cyclical challenges facing South Africa as emerging markets have fallen out of favour on the back of a collapse in commodity prices and slowing demand from China.

Perhaps left unsaid, but no doubt the elephant in the room, will be the structural issues that have come to plague our economy - the result of a series of government and parastatal blunders that have drained our financial resources.

This budget matters because our growth has stalled, because we are on the verge of losing our investment grade status, because the cost of servicing our debt will become unaffordable and because our social grant programme, so essential in a country with the

largest wealth imbalance in the world, will be in jeopardy.

Government must commit itself to focusing on growth and service delivery. As a country we can no longer afford waste based on poor policies, poor implementation, cronyism and corruption. We should not lead the world in burgeoning public sector employment and cumbersome government departments who introduce bureaucratic red-tape and regulations which serve only to stifle human talent and drive away essential skills. The Minister will need to closely monitor government’s desire to own and manage mega capital projects, such as the proposed nuclear reactors, as it has clearly demonstrated its inability to con-



trol costs and meet acceptable delivery targets.

Minister Gordhan will be aware that, starting in 2003, South Africa experienced a golden cycle of growth based on a strong currency, capital investment, jobs and increasing revenue. He will want to set the foundations from which we can once again grow and will look to unlock the potential of all participants in the economy.

Whether he will go as far as cutting debt via the privatisation of key assets, such as the blatantly mismanaged South African Airways, Eskom and the Airports Company of South Africa, may, unfortunately for now, be a bridge too far.

Wage war on the state’s waste

DAVID SHAPIRO

Like so many other concerned South Africans, I made a point of watching the State President address the nation last week Thursday evening. It was a distressing event. Not because of the EFF’s annoying filibustering, but rather because it was utterly clear from President Jacob Zuma’s halting delivery that he neither authored, edited nor necessarily rehearsed the speech.

Nor was it clear that he sufficiently grasped the gruelling economic and political situation in which the country finds itself. While endless jokes about the presidency draw sniggers and jeers, Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan’s budget next week Wednesday will highlight that the path to rebuilding our economic muscle and regaining the world’s respect is no longer a laughing matter. It is not whether taxes will go up, it is a question of by how much.

The fall in commodity prices, the impact of low oil prices on producer nations, a slowdown in world trade, the decline in the rand, the drought in the country and a laundry list of self-destructive issues at home that include energy shortages, labour discord and corruption at the highest levels of government, have weakened the nation’s tax base.

Treasury could probably moderate tax increases, filling the gap between revenue and expenditure with further borrowings. But the higher our debt levels, the greater the portion of future tax collections will be required

to finance interest payments, slashing amounts needed to fund education, health, policing, and other essential services vital to the generation of growth and jobs in the economy.

In an economy over-burdened by worrisome unemployment, rising interest rates and feeble growth prospects, the minister is conscious that increasing tax rates beyond a certain point becomes counter-productive.

Taxes discriminate against the productive in favour of the non-productive. This is especially relevant in South Africa with the current administration’s woeful standards of governance and tardy record of maintaining the country’s infrastructure and delivery of essential services.

And if ever government needed to encourage the industrious at home to yield more, it’s now. The heavy falls in global stock markets since the beginning of the year underscore dwindling confidence in the outlook for world growth, raising doubts that the radical stimulatory measures, introduced by the world’s leading central bankers over the past eight years to overcome the aftereffects of the Great Financial Crisis, will achieve their goals.

The uncertainty has been intensified by turmoil in the oil markets where



tumbling prices have increased concerns about the impact diminished revenue receipts will have on the stability of producer countries such as Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Venezuela. China too is proving no help to world trade as it transitions from a chronic devourer of raw materials to an economy pushing services and domestic consumption.

Our desperate economic circumstances provide Minister Gordhan with limited latitude to overload an already stretched tax base. He has no alternative but to wage war too on the extravagances and waste that have crept in to government services, sanctioned by years of inattention and imprudence.

According to the Auditor General, every year, billions of rands of taxpayers’ monies are misappropriated, unaccounted for or allocated to hopeless projects. This behaviour can’t continue with impunity, especially in times when the fiscus is scratching for every cent. But our problem is that we’re relying on the team that led us into the swamp to guide us out.

We’re all in for some pain, but how we share it is optional. So, only when ministers swop their X6s for Toyotas and their Paul Smith suits for EFF overalls, will I believe we’re finally making progress.

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News

Cancelled conference: BDS tries to make M&G complicit

ANT KATZ

On Monday the local arm of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions issued a media statement regarding a water conference the Mail & Guardian was due to host, which implied that M&G cancelled it to protest against the attendance of Israeli Ambassador Arthur Lenk.

The BDS statement also inferred that the organisers and sponsors had pledged to never again include the Ambassador in an event.

BDS-SA said it “welcomes news of the cancellation of an upcoming water conference that was to be hosted by the prominent SA weekly, the Mail & Guardian, which would have had Israeli Ambassador Arthur Lenk as a panellist”.

But M&G’s CEO, Hoosain Karjieker told SAJR that the conference should never have been cancelled as it had never been approved in the first place. Their procedure is that events are proposed by a special department and sponsorship is sought. Only if and when this is secured, he explained, does the M&G plan for the event or supplement. In the case of the water conference in question, “there was not sufficient sponsorship”.

Because it had been at the beginning of the year, explains the CEO, it slipped through the cracks.

Says Karjieker: “This was conflated around the issue of the Ambassador” which was neither an issue, nor the reason. “It happens from time-to-time that a sponsor isn’t secured and/or a sponsor pulls out and a project doesn’t get off the ground.”

The M&G had no knowledge of the BDS statement until Jewish Report had brought it to their attention, said Karjieker.

He was emphatic that the cancellation was in no way due to the planned attendance of Ambassador Lenk, nor had the M&G ever given consideration to not include the Israeli Ambassador in any future events. “How can BDS make a pledge like that on our behalf?” he asked.

BDS hadn’t stated it, SAJR explained, only implied it. Having used the M&G and Israeli Ambassador in their subject line and introduction, readers were left with the impression that the “organisers” meant the M&G.

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Community Voices

Zuma’s State of the Nation address - an underwhelming experience

SUZANNE BELLING

The State of the Nation address by President Jacob Zuma in Parliament last week Thursday evening, despite the pomp and ceremony surrounding the event and the R3,6 million spent on it was a disappointment for many South Africans, as it failed to answer questions on key areas of concern. Most people approached by the SA Jewish Report felt somewhat let down, while others were embarrassed at the hour of disruption preceding the speech.



Darren Bergman, DA Member of Parliament, said “The only two differences between the State of the Nation and a fairytale is that a fairytale has a beginning, a middle and an end and the tale is more convincing.

“How many more times will our president prove himself to be out of touch with reality before the party wakes up and recalls him. We needed to hear new ideas and not the same plans rehashed into new wording.

“There was definitely a hint of business influence and no doubt this will be brought out in the budget speech later on.

“We live in a moment whereby citizens need to be assured and know that their government knows and understands the issues at heart and have decisive plans to counter them. This was a moment

lost.”

Bergman says he hopes the budget speech will inspire more confidence “and that we will see some glimmer of leadership coming through this lacklustre executive. Let’s hope.”



Strategic consultant **Arnold Basserabie** told SA Jewish Report: “After a spate of unwarranted bickering, our State President eventually managed to deliver his SONA on Thursday evening.

“It was clear that whoever drafted the address was acutely aware of the serious problems facing our economy, and the address succeeded in stating many important steps that needed to be taken to stabilise and re-energise the economy.”

Yet Basserabie says the question remains as to whether and how soon the government actually starts to implement these. It is vitally important that the stated good intentions are translated into concrete actions.

“If this is not done, our economic growth will continue to be extremely weak, investors will turn further away from SA and our government, particularly Mr Zuma, will lose further credibility.

“Democratic South Africa has possibly never been in as much need of competent leadership as it is now. I anticipate that Minister Pravin Gordhan will deliver a solid budget on February 24, which will

be positively received by investors and rating agencies. They will, however, be looking to see if the government follows through on the budgetary objectives and abides by its constraints. If they do, this will augur well for our chances of rebuilding our economy and creating much-needed jobs. “

Basserabie made two final points:

1: Zuma’s address was “obviously heavily influenced by the business community (and rightly so). I haven’t seen any reference to the views of the trade union movement - I’m sure that these will be canvassed, and hope that they will understand and support the vital importance of contributing towards the need to grow our economy.

2: “We should not expect many results in the short term, but taking the right steps in a concerted manner, may significantly improve our national mood and the attitude of local and foreign investors.” This would lead to positive results for all in the country.



Gil Oved, group co-CEO of the Creative Counsel, was in the gallery experiencing SONA first hand. He said: “The experience of sitting in Parliament is entirely different from watching it on TV.

“While I won’t comment on

my political views, I will say that seeing it all in action, makes me immensely proud of our thriving democracy.

“Having walked towards Parliament through a multitude of peaceful but loud protests and then entering Parliament to see such a mix of backgrounds and cultures and views, I feel inspired and optimistic about our country’s future prospects.”



Rabbi Ben Isaacson, a card carrying member of the ANC during the Struggle, is bitterly disappointed. “It seems as if the right to freedom of speech is disappearing.

“When people disagree and are thrown out of Parliament, it reminds one of dictatorial regimes that have arisen in Europe.

“Also, it is an absolute shame that it is the ANC that is responsible for the economic downfall and demanding of the people that they should bear the brunt of this.”

Rabbi Isaacson feels that when questions arise as to whether the president of the country should also carry out his financial obligations, “we are really in a bad way.

“It is quite clear to me that Madiba and his brave comrades would have been ashamed of the conduct of the ANC in Parliament. I am including the ANC Youth League which has deteriorated into a howling mob of anti-Semites.”



Eta Smith, of Johannesburg, disagrees. Talking about Pres Zuma, she says: “The man lies to himself. He has no intention of paying back the money (on the Nkandla improvements).”

She felt the actions of the EFF were a “total disgrace” and was concerned about what the world will think.

“The President spoke about saving money, but didn’t refer to spending money – and he is the one spending it.”



Businessman **Greg Hirschson** said: “Same old, same old.” Two options, he feels, would change the situation – either a “regime change” or “an organised tax revolt”.

“As the old saying goes, ‘you have got to get them by the b**ls, then their hearts and minds will follow’,” he adds.

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Democracy in SA is alive and well, says Rabbi Goldstein

ANT KATZ

As is the case every year, religious leaders are invited to the opening of Parliament and the State President’s annual State of the Nation (SONA) address. This year, however, Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein was singled out to sit among the judges and speakers of provincial legislatures, Michael Bagraim, MP, told Jewish Report.

In an interview on his return from Cape Town, Rabbi Goldstein told SAJR that it was nice that the Jewish community was represented (in Parliament) by such talented people.

About his special seating honour, Rabbi Goldstein said that it gave him “a better perspective” than he was used to from the visitors’ gallery.

“Parliament shows me that we are a free and robust democracy,” he said, whether one agreed with the tactics of the parties or not. “It is a free democracy when members of Parliament and the media can challenge the President in such a bold fashion.”

Rabbi Goldstein says that he was pleased that the constitutional institutions of freedom and democracy have held up so well. He quoted, as an example, that the opening of Parliament occurred in the same week that the Public Protector’s report on Nkandla was before the Constitutional Court.

“We have an independent judiciary, a free press, and working Chapter Nine organisations which are all holding government to account for the people of South Africa,” he said. When a society has strong institutions like these, said Rabbi Goldstein, “it has incredible potential as there is proper accountability.”

He said South Africa had been a “remarkable success story - in the 20 short years since the end of apartheid, where there was no freedom, no accountability and no democracy. We have endured the firing of a deputy president, the recall of a sitting president, the arrest and conviction of a police commissioner and now a Constitutional Court battle over the Nkandla report,” This all went to show that when our country’s institutions have been tested, he said, they come out strong.

The two sitting Jewish MPs, Bagraim and

Darren Bergman, had hosted the Chief Rabbi at their party’s cocktail party just before the SONA by President Jacob Zuma.

“Both Darren Bergman and I were extremely proud to see that the Parliamentary Speakers Office had arranged a VIP seat for the Chief Rabbi on the Parliamentary floor, next to the judges and just five metres from DA leader Mmusi Maimane,” Bagraim told Jewish Report.

Bagraim said he was “very pleased that the Israel/Palestine issue had not been on the President’s agenda at all,” that “for the first time the President did allude to the business community and to the fact that South Africa has to become more business friendly”.



Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein flanked by Jewish MPs, Darren Bergman, left, and Michael Bagraim.

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World News in Brief

Iran says supporting terrorist groups is state policy

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hossein Jaber Ansari says it is Tehran’s policy to support terrorist groups, Iran’s Tasnim New Agency reported.

The Iranian government sponsors terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah, which are both sworn to Israel’s destruction.

“Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution [in 1979], the Islamic Republic of Iran has declared that supporting the Palestinian nation and the Palestinian Resistance Movement (Hamas) is among its fixed policies and has continuously taken some measures on this path,” Ansari said.

Ansari’s statement follows media reports that a senior political member of Hamas claimed the group has not been receiving support from Tehran since 2009.

Senior Hamas leader Kalil Abu Leila told the Tasnim News Agency in early February that Iran has always supported the Gaza-ruling Palestinian terrorist organisation.

“We appreciate Iran for the support it has provided for the resistance,” Leila said. (JNS.org)

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Jewish Report is a paper for all streams of Judaism



south african Jewish Report

The Reform movement had a major victory in Israel after the Israeli Cabinet recently made the decision to allocate a part of the Western Wall for Progressive prayer services. Locally, however, the Reform movement has felt side-lined by the South African Jewish Orthodox community. This is magnified by the fact that approximately 90 per cent of

South African Jews are affiliated to Orthodox/traditional congregations and the Progressive/Reform movement accounts for the rest. What a stark contrast to other countries like the United States where - according to statistics gathered by the widely accepted Pew Research Centre - a mere 10 per cent are Orthodox (although that refers to those who are strictly Orthodox), while the Reform movement is the largest group at 35 per cent of the Jewish population. This newspaper experienced the frustration felt by local Reform leaders after we published letters that attacked the Reform movement. One letter writer likened Reform Judaism to a “manmade pond with no depth where the décor could be changed at will - you just need to find a minister and

pay him enough to redecorate/justify everything you want to do”. The letters compared Progressive institutions to churches, the rabbis to ministers, and questioned the rabbinical qualifications of Reform rabbis and the value of their path of study. The letters also blamed Reform Judaism for high rates of assimilation and argued that it was losing steam because its people were marrying out. Progressive communities here were justifiably alarmed by these views and I do not blame them. After a letter by a vocal Reform member, which would have countered some of the attacks on their denomination, was erroneously overlooked for publication in last week’s issue, we received a slew of new, angry letters from Progressive members including from two rabbis.

In their correspondence appearing in our letters section this week, Reform communities have expressed their displeasure both with the writers of the letters and with the Jewish Report itself. The omission of last week’s letter was certainly not intentional and it appears this week. One Reform rabbi mentioned to me that in her community there was a perception that the Jewish Report refuses to publish letters from their members and that we had also failed to directly approach the Reform movement for a response. For the sake of clarity. We do not as a policy make requests to people to write to us in response to other letters - it is an open forum for discussion and we completely welcome and embrace debate.

We publish almost everything we get because we do not receive enough letters! The only exceptions are when the correspondence is incoherent or libellous. So, in response to the feeling of being slighted, Progressive readers and leaders, may we say that it certainly was not our intention. And we emphatically thank you this week for your energetic and impassioned responses and for not letting things just be. An ideal system is one which does not censor freedom of expression and one where there is vigorous and healthy debate. I hope other readers will take example from their fellow Reform Jews and engage with us. We are every Jew’s paper and we want to hear from you.

– Vanessa Valkin, Editor

Justice Antonin Scalia’s ‘Jewy moments’

RON KAMPEAS
WASHINGTON

It’s a matter of dispute as to whether “Jew-friendly” Antonin Scalia, who died last Saturday, was the American Supreme Court’s most conservative jurist. Some think Clarence Thomas deserves that title, while others say Samuel Alito may soon claim it. Scalia was, however, the conservative jurist likeliest to stir passions with his acerbic, slashing style apparent both in his opinions and his speaking appearances. Conservatives adored him as a truth-teller upholding the Constitution, liberals derided him as an ideologue trashing the founding document. That also was generally reflected in Jewish reactions to Scalia: Orthodox Jewish groups praised many of his parsings of church-state separations, non-Orthodox groups critiqued them. A typical instance of divided reactions was in 1992, when he referred to Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum, the Satmar rebbe who had fled Nazi-occupied Hungary, in his dissent to the ruling that said New York State had overreached in creating a separate school district for the Hasidic enclave of Kiryas Joel. “The Grand Rebbe would be astounded to learn that after escaping brutal persecution and coming to America with the modest hope of religious toleration for their ascetic form of Judaism, the Satmar had become so powerful, so closely allied with Mammon, as to have become an ‘establishment’ of the Empire State,” he wrote, mocking the majority’s assertions that New York State had violated the Establishment Clause. Other interactions between Scalia and Jews and Judaism were less predictable. Here’s a roundup:

Scalia argued against making compliance with the Arab boycott illegal

As an assistant attorney general under President Gerald Ford, Scalia in 1975 told Congress, which was then considering anti-Arab boycott legislation, that the practice of denying Jews travel visas to Arab countries did not contradict US anti-trust laws because the scope of such denials was narrow. “There is a question whether a boycott of this sort, which, in effect, requires an American company to choose whether it wishes to have certain types of business relations with Israel or to have dealings with the Arab countries, has



Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia speaking at Agudath Israel’s annual dinner at the New York Hilton, June 1, 2008. (Menachem Adelman)

a sufficient impact upon US foreign commerce to come within the Sherman Anti-Trust Act,” he said. “The act only proscribes activity which has a ‘material adverse affect’ upon our foreign commerce.” Scalia also argued that the refusal to hire Jews to do the work was not in of itself discriminatory; the companies could argue it was against their interest to hire someone unable to obtain a visa, whatever the reasons were for that inability. Scalia was arguing administration policy and was not yet a judge, when his opinions would be his own. **Scalia overruled the FBI, allowing a civil rights rabbi to buy his first computer** Rabbi Arthur Waskow, who founded Philadelphia’s Shalom Centre, wrote in an e-mail on Monday that he remains amazed that Scalia was one of three federal appeals court justices who in 1986 upheld a lawsuit that he and eight other activists had brought against the FBI a decade earlier for violating their right to assembly through wiretapping and other illegal means. “When the FBI appealed, we won again. The DC Circuit Court of Appeals’ unanimous decision in 1986 included then Judge Antonin Scalia - a fact that astonished me then and still does,” Waskow wrote three years ago, recounting the case. “The damages I received were \$8 000. With \$2 000 I bought my first computer, for use in The Shalom Centre’s work. To each of my two children I offered a \$3 000 grant to support them for a year if they chose to do political activist work of their choice.” Waskow’s son, David, used the money to

advocate for tenants’ rights, and his daughter, Shoshana, worked for a year at a shelter for battered women. **Jews were anything but trippy when Scalia ruled against the use of a hallucinogen** Scalia wrote the majority opinion in a 1990 ruling against a Native American church that used peyote as part of its sacrament. A number of Jewish groups had backed the church in friend-of-the-court briefs. “We have never held that an individual’s religious beliefs excuse him from compliance with an otherwise valid law prohibiting conduct that the state is free to regulate,” Scalia wrote. The effort to overturn the court’s ruling through legislation, in this case the Religious Freedom Restoration Act first passed in 1993, was the rare occasion when there was wall-to-wall Jewish organisational agreement on a church-state issue. **Scalia was a big fan of Aharon Barak, Israel’s famously liberal chief justice** Conservatives attacked Justice Elena Kagan during her 2010 confirmation process for the Supreme Court over her admiration of Aharon Barak, the long-time president of Israel’s high court who spearheaded an activist role for Israel’s judiciary. Kagan said her expression of admiration in 2006 was a matter of courtesy in introducing Barak when he visited Harvard, where she was dean of the law school, and applied to a country where there was no constitution, so there was no comparison to the role of a US Supreme Court justice. Scalia did not directly speak on Kagan’s

behalf, but those who knew him made it clear at the time that he also admired Barak, and that he had defended Barak from conservatives who decried his activism. “I mean they don’t even have a constitution over there,” he once told the late journalist David Twersky. **Scalia was a big fan of the female Jewish justices on the Supreme Court** Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote this week of her shared love of opera with Scalia and called him her “best buddy”. David Axelrod, President Barack Obama’s top political adviser in his first term, said on Monday on CNN that Scalia made it clear in 2009 that if Obama was going to appoint a liberal to the court, it should be a “smart” one. Concerned that Axelrod was not getting his drift, he named his preferred candidate: “Send us Elena Kagan,” he said. And whereas Ginsburg was a fine opera companion, Scalia preferred taking Kagan hunting. He also had the jump on her in terms of supreme judicial use of the word “chutzpah”: He used it in a 1998 decision, apparently the first such use, whereas Kagan used it in a 2011 dissent. **Scalia was a big fan of Jews, period** Supreme Court justices are sparing in when and where they speak outside the court’s confines; they dread opportunities for their remarks to be taken out of context. Scalia was no different. Yet he appeared to enjoy appearing in Jewish forums, addressing Agudath Israel of America, Chabad, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and the Conservative movement over his career, some of the groups multiple times. Together with fellow justices Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer, who is also Jewish, he inaugurated the National Institute for Judaic Law in 2002. Only one incident appeared to end on a sour note: Sammie Moshenberg, who then directed the Washington office of the National Council of Jewish Women, remembers Scalia cutting short his appearance at the 1999 JCPA plenum. She had just asked him a question about diversifying the court’s staff. He said he preferred the “best and brightest” for his staffers; she countered that the standard did not preclude women and minorities. “Immediately Scalia turned on his heels and said ‘no more questions’ and left,” she recalled. (JTA)

Could Zuma go to jail, like Ehud Olmert?



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

The cynicism of politics and self-serving public officials was given a welcome slap in the face in the past two Tuesdays in South Africa and Israel. In both countries, democratic values and the rule of law triumphed despite the ducking and diving of sleazy politicians.

This week, former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert entered Maasiyahu Prison in Ramla to start a 19-month sentence for bribe-taking and obstruction of justice. And in South Africa last week, democracy was victorious as the Constitutional Court sat to determine the status of actions recommended by Public Protector Thuli Madonsela, regarding irregular state expenditure on President Jacob Zuma’s private homestead Nkandla.

Israel’s democracy is far from perfect, with concerns about the current government’s intrusion into areas of human rights, including freedom of speech. But to its great credit, its legal system has sent both a former prime minister and president and Moshe Katsav - to prison for financial or sexual criminality respectively.

In other places, this has happened only after a revolution or coup. Even the United States pardoned former President Richard Nixon for “any crimes he might have committed against the United States while

president”, rather than jail him.

Israel has had many corruption scandals. Olmert’s first finance minister, Abraham Hirschson, was jailed for embezzlement; former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was tainted with money-laundering and bribery accusations; current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has had two corruption investigations and a third is under way; former Prime Minister Ehud Barak was the subject of a money-laundering investigation; Interior Minister Arye Deri went to prison for bribe-taking; three Shas ministers were convicted; and leaders of Avigdor Lieberman’s Yisrael Beiteinu party are under suspicion of corruption.

South Africa can be proud of its Constitutional Court judges, particularly Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng, who were unrelenting in their probing questions to lawyers for Zuma, the Public Protector, the Speaker of the House of Assembly, opposition parties and corruption monitoring NGOs, thereby reasserting constitutional supremacy.

The high point was when Zuma’s counsel, advocate Jeremy Gauntlett, conceded that the public protector’s recommendations are binding on Zuma and that her report cannot be subverted by the report of the police minister which, at Zuma’s bidding, exonerated the president from having to pay back money for Nkandla improvements.

The impeccable proceedings raised the intriguing prospect of Zuma’s impeachment for violating his presidential duty to uphold the Constitution.

Corruption is a complicated thing to root out in any society. Comparing different countries is never truly objective. If many public officials are investigated and indicted, it may indicate a corrupt country or, on the contrary, that law-enforcement is operating well.

Nevertheless, some indicators can give a reasonable picture. How do South Africa and Israel rank in public sector corruption relative to other countries?

The 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International shows 68 per cent of countries worldwide have serious corruption. Denmark, Finland and Sweden are the least corrupt of 168 countries. Israel ranks 32, and South Africa 61. The most corrupt countries are Somalia and North Korea.

Sending a head of state to jail is incredibly difficult to achieve, even in democracies, because of the power the position gives incumbents to manipulate politics and law, for example through appointing cronies to positions of authority.

Could Netanyahu go to jail if shown to be guilty of corruption? Could Zuma, with his long list of failed attempts to indict him trailing behind him, be forced to have his day in court on Nkandla and other charges?

Fortunately, South Africa’s judiciary still exhibits significant independence, as we saw last week.

Gutsy judges hold the fort. We must fight to keep it that way.

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Anti-Semitism a growing scourge in Europe

ANT KATZ

European governments are scurrying to conduct surveys to benchmark anti-Semitism so that they can monitor it on an ongoing basis.

Jewry in Europe has been reeling under systemic and fast-growing anti-Semitic violence for a number of years, both in the number of incidents and the violence of the attacks. And, as fast as the European countries are conducting polls, the Israeli-based Co-ordination Forum for Countering Anti-Semitism has been collating them.

Among the more interesting polls published on the subject this year, is one from France which shows that over 50 per cent of Frenchmen believe that Jews are themselves responsible for the rise in anti-Semitism.

France has been seeing record Jewish emigration to Israel and the US for two years. The French Judaism Fund asked internationally recognised pollsters IPSOS to conduct a large survey on “Living Together”, which was carried out over 18 months, starting July 2014.

The main results of the survey - on the way in which Jewish and Muslim communities in France see themselves, and are seen by others - was published at the end of January.

The overall results indicate a lack of confidence in France. A third of French people “believe a racist

state can be justified”. One out of 10 Jews says he or she has personally been victim to physical assault. As for Muslims, 41 per cent say they were personally exposed to comments or insults.

Ariel Goldmann, president of the French Judaism Fund, said he “hesitated” to publish the survey to the public and that he waited until the end of the campaign. He explained: “This survey does not blame and not generalise. It is a measure for illnesses that damages us as Frenchmen.”

This 18-month-long study is big on both substance and scope. It bracketed the attacks on Charlie Hebdo and Hyper Casher, and IP-SOS examined the French in every respect - from religion and racism, to anti-Semitism, terrorism, etc.

Another feature of this study is that it gives the right of speech to Jews and Muslims. This is unusual as France refuses to divide the population by ethnic-religious categories. IPSOS’ Bryce Teinturier decided that “the best way to act” in order to get the “less slanted” sample, was to “start with the definition of the interviewee himself, no matter what criteria he uses for this: religious, culture, family...”

Another government-commissioned report on discrimination in education in the Netherlands identified anti-Semitism as a persistent problem in some Dutch schools.



Anti-Semitic incidents in Europe far outstrip those in the US.

In the Netherlands, the findings appeared in a 55-page report titled “Two Worlds, Two Realities - How Do You Deal with it as a Teacher”, which was published earlier this month by the Dutch-Jewish journalist Margalith Kleijwegt at the request of the Dutch Ministry of Education.

The report, which is based on visits to schools and conversations with dozens of teachers since January last year, says teachers sometimes feel powerless to change the deep-seated biases and violent attitudes of some pupils, including against Jews.

One female teacher of high-schoolers in Amsterdam told Kleijwegt that following a programme about democratic values and against discrimination, a female

pupil of Moroccan descent stood up and said: “If I had a Kalashnikov [assault rifle], I’d gun down all the Jews.” She then made shooting gestures and sounds.

Shocked, the teacher tried to make the learner empathise with the Jews.

“I wasn’t getting there,” the report quotes the teacher as saying. “I asked her to imagine a five-year-old Jewish girl who lives here. What would she have to do with Israel’s policies? Unfortunately, there was no place for empathy. The pupil didn’t care about that girl. She had only one message: “The Jews should die”.

In parallel, the report also found racist behaviour directed at Muslim children by some classmates, particularly following the arrival in

Europe of hundreds of thousands of migrants from the Middle East last year.

“Anti-Semitic behaviour is a recurrent problem in some schools,” Kleijwegt wrote. “Some see it as a provocation [by pupils], others fear it goes deeper: That pupils receive anti-Jewish attitudes at home.

“The same applies to the growing group of Dutch pupils who say foreigners should rot and die. Is this provocation? Do they receive it at home?”

In the report, Dutch Education Minister Jet Bussemaker, wrote that the document “shows a reality that is inconvenient and sometimes painful” but must be confronted and dealt with “in accordance to democratic values”.

Ombudsman forces climb-down by Star, Cape Times

DAVID SAKS

The Press Ombudsman, on behalf of the SA Press Council, last week upheld a complaint of incorrect reporting against The Star newspaper jointly lodged by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and the SA Zionist Federation (SAZF) in November 2015.

The complaint concerned two reports by The Star’s Foreign Editor Shannon Ebrahim that appeared on November 19 and 23. It was contended that the articles constituted “a serious (and possibly deliberate) misrepresentation of the facts concerning a matter of much sensitivity, namely whether or not South Africa has undertaken to arrest senior Israeli military leaders at the behest of the Turkish government”.

The complaint was lodged in the names of Jeff Katz and Ben Swartz, respectively national chairmen of the SAJBD and SAZF.

In terms of the finding, The Star was found guilty of a Tier 2 (serious) breach of Section 2.3 of the Press Code for stating its conclusions as fact, namely that:

- South Africa would enforce Turkey’s warrants of arrest should the Israeli command-

- ers set foot in this country;
- following the arrest of any of the four charged with war crimes, South Africa would grant Turkey’s request for extradition; and
- Turkey has welcomed South Africa’s decision to enforce the arrest warrants.

Ombudsman Johan Retief also upheld complaints against the Cape Times for similar reports by Ebrahim on the same subject. These included complaints from SAZF (Western Cape) Chairman Rowan Polivin and community member Sidney Kaye.

Both newspapers were directed to publish the finding on the same page as the first story, as well on their websites, with the texts being subject to the Ombudsman’s approval and which had to end with the sentence, “Visit www.presscouncil.org.za for the full finding”.

In addition, the ruling required that the headline should reflect the content of the text. The Star has since complied with the ruling.

The Cape Times, however, was requested “for the sake of fairness and justice” to reprint the finding after originally publishing

it under the headline, “Complaints against Cape Times dismissed”.

In the same issue in which the ruling appeared, the Cape Times carried a piece entitled “Global phenomenon of funded lobby ready to go to war for Israel”, a conspiracy theory-laden article by Philip Giraldi from the rabidly anti-Israel blogging platform UNZ Review.

A secondary aspect of the complaint was that Ebrahim had displayed unwarranted anti-Israel bias, particularly in her one-sided account of the 2010 Mavi Marmara incident, in which nine Turkish nationals were killed in a confrontation with Israeli commandos who boarded the ship.

The complaint also objected to Ebrahim’s terming of the 2008-9 Gaza conflict as a “massacre” by Israel of 1 400 Palestinians. Retief took the view that his office was “in no position to decide on the merits of the contextual arguments in question” and would not make a decision on the issue.

He also remarked that he was not convinced by the argument that the word “massacre” of necessity referred to the slaughter of innocent people. Accordingly, this aspect

A secondary aspect of the complaint was that Ebrahim had displayed unwarranted anti-Israel bias...

of the complaint was duly dismissed.

In a joint statement, the SAJBD and SAZF said that while they respected the Ombudsman’s reasons for adopting this approach, this in no way effected their original contention that the articles, in addition to being blatantly false from a factual point of view, were overtly and inappropriately biased against Israel.

Swartz said that the finding had fully vindicated the original objections raised by the SAJBD and SAZF when the articles first appeared.

The Star’s response on that occasion had been to pour scorn on their claims, but in the end, it was the newspaper that had been forced to back down.

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Are our schools ready to take on 21st century learning?



JOSEPH GERASSI
EXECUTIVE HEAD OF REDHILL SCHOOL

Recent research reflects concerns over traditional pedagogy as a viable response to 21st century learning. Globalisation and gigantic advances in information technology have brought about changes in society and in particular, in the nature and needs of the workplace.

Consequently, the competences and skills required to live functionally and to succeed in the modern competitive workplace, have changed. In his book, *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative*, Sir Ken Robinson, international adviser on education, wrote: “We not only need a higher percentage of our kids graduating from high school and college - more education - but we need more of them with the right education.”

He is referring to an educational model that is less standardised and prescriptive. “Right education”, for Robinson, is that which is sufficiently flexible and innovative to prepare learners to meet the needs of a dynamic, innovative and global 21st century post-industrial environment.

Indeed, and as Robinson asserts: “Mass systems of public education were developed primarily to meet the needs of the Industrial Revolution and, in many ways they mirror the principles of industrial production.

“They emphasise linearity, conformity, and standardisation. One of the reasons they are not working now is that real life is organic, adaptable and diverse.” In short, the thinking underlying classic school pedagogy predicated upon the demands of a labour economy requires urgent revision.

The majority of South African schools reflect standardised models of linear learning within highly structured physical and didactic spaces. They are inherently designed to produce and reinforce the uniformity, conformity, discipline and hierarchical asymmetry that the [capitalist] labour economy of the 19th and 20th centuries required.

The needs of this century’s knowledge economy can no longer be met by 19th and 20th century pedagogy. Indeed, the competencies enabling success in the workplace increasingly require creative and lateral thinking, critical and problem-solving proficiencies, effective communication and collaborative skills that enable effective team work.

It is within this context that schools and educators need to urgently reconsider, re-evaluate, revise and/or revolutionise their conceptualisation of what successful teaching is all about.

Many of our schools might have 1:1 laptop programmes, but are they merely replacements for traditional textbooks? School libraries might be called media centres but do they simply perform traditional services?

The changes that we see at some schools are often cosmetic and rarely represent a meaningful change in curriculum, pedagogy or assessment. How many of our teachers are, for example, “flipping” their classrooms or implementing project-based learning?

How many of our schools have simply substituted the word STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) education for traditional maths and science classes. Are we simply using 21st century terminology to mask essentially 19th and 20th century programmes and practices?

Success, for our learners, will not necessarily be measured by test scores or even university degrees. Rather they will be measured by how successful they are when they get out into the real world.

Their success will rely on their ability to be creative, innovative and entrepreneurial. They will need to be good problem solvers and be comfortable to collaborate within teams across cultural, ethnic and religious divides.

Schools need to ensure that all of their learners achieve excellent test scores, but more importantly, they will need to demonstrate the skills and dispositions required to participate and succeed in a highly competitive workplace. What will it take for this change to occur in our schools?

At the very least, educators who have commonly taught in a formal structured lecture-style environment, need to be encouraged to enable far more active learner engagement and learner responsibility in their classrooms. They need also, to be persuaded to embed technology purposefully into their teaching and to work with a pedagogy that enables them to facilitate, mediate and guide learning rather than lecture.

Our learners are ready and willing to take on the 21st century but are our schools ready to make the necessary changes to enable them to succeed beyond the traditional matric examination?

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Shani Krebs introduces this new art gallery

SUZANNE BELLING

The son of Hungarian refugees, Shani Krebs, in spite of his loving family, had a difficult childhood and, while serving in the former SA Defence Force, started experimenting with drugs, which later became his way of life, supplying Johannesburg partygoers with marijuana, Mandrax and cocaine.

After the new democratic dispensation in 1994, at the age of 34, Krebs flew to Thailand where he was arrested for drug trafficking.

He was sentenced to death, which was later commuted to 100 years. He survived one of the harshest prisons in the world - dreadful food and dirt - but later became a “respected” member of the prison system.

He strived to stay off drugs after years of addiction, but also brought to the fore his spiritual side and his Jewish faith which he found through his art.

His sister Joan tried to find a way of having his prison sentence shortened or to have him transferred to a South African prison.

Eventually he was granted amnesty on December 15, 2011, returning as a free man to Johannesburg in May 2012, having served 18 years - the longest serving Westerner in a Thai prison - in Bang Kwang Prison.

Krebs came back to his changed country as a changed man. On the speaking circuit, he lectured to youngsters about the dangers of drugs and also wrote a book “Dragons and Butterflies” about “the remarkable story of a man who reached absolute rock

Krebs came back to his changed country as a changed man. On the speaking circuit, he lectured to youngsters about the dangers of drugs and also wrote a book “Dragons and Butterflies

bottom but had the fortitude to rise up again”.

Krebs’ talent as an artist flourished in his newfound life.

Last week Thursday saw the grand opening of The Art Gallery on 6th in Parkhurst, Johannesburg.

Curator Justin Abel helps to run the gallery and both men have exhibits of their own work (25 each) plus those of other artists on show.

“It is mostly naïve art,” Abelman told the SA Jewish Report. “The gallery actually opened its doors three weeks before the official opening attended by some 300 people. “The positive energy, coupled with the creativity of the artists, combined to make the opening exhibition a huge success,” Abelman said. “It was magical.”

Krebs and Abelman will each conduct art classes at the gallery. Call 078-665-9456 for information about exhibitions and times.



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Feature

The miracle that saved the life of Moshe Meyer

SUZANNE BELLING

For Moshe Meyer (his Hebrew name - he does not want to disclose the name he uses in South Africa), Yom Kippur 1973 was a day on which he was miraculously inscribed for life through his prayer book.

He says he is telling his story now to help renew the faith of Jews in miracles and to bolster belief. It has previously been related by Rabbi David Shaw at the Sandton Shul, also on condition of anonymity.

Born in Israel, Moshe came to South Africa as a small child and eventually served in the South African army. Because he felt it was his duty also to serve in the Israeli army, he returned to Israel.

He became part of the Sayeret Matkal, the elite unit attached to the office of the Israeli Chief of Staff, whose soldiers are on call all the time. Its former members include Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

On the day the Yom Kippur War began, Moshe had returned home to Moshav Orot on the road to Ashkelon. Sitting in shul, congregants heard planes warming up at a nearby airfield and the wail of air raid sirens.

He rushed home, switched on the radio, hearing some call-up signals, but his came by telephone and he prepared to go to war. All his equipment had been checked before Yom Kippur, so he was ready to leave at a moment’s notice.

He rechecked everything when he arrived at the pick-up point, especially for his siddur, which he had been given as a barmitzvah present by his late great-uncle Hershke. It was there, in the left breast pocket of his shirt, where he always carried it.

“It gave me a feeling of reassurance that his neshama was around me,” Moshe said. “We were extremely close.”

His unit moved up north to the Golan. Not long after their arrival, enemy helicopters landed behind a nearby hill. Moshe’s unit

moved forward under heavy fire, engaging the Syrian troops who had landed with the helicopters.

“Halfway up the hill, their fire began hitting us as we continued moving forward, running and shooting, without stopping for cover,” he said.

“Grenades came flying at us and I hit the ground, but was up again after reloading my weapon.

“As we broached the top of the hill, we started throwing grenades, putting an end to their attack.”

The area was full of boulders and trenches. About 25 Syrian commandos lay dead.

“Every now and then, we could see a movement and a head pop up as we would open up.”

One of the Israeli officers, Gidon, gave a sharp cry. He had been hit in the stomach and collapsed. A medic was called and two soldiers pulled Gidon into cover. Sadly, Gidon died two days later.

“I moved back with them to give covering fire, if necessary. A soldier asked me if I was okay. I asked why and he pointed to my badly torn shirt which was spattered with blood, my blood. I looked down and saw my pocket was torn and had a hole in it.

“I had felt something bump me, but gave it no further thought as I was on such an adrenaline high.”

He felt his pocket. The siddur was still there, but he felt something hot in it - a bullet. The metal cover of the siddur had broken in the corner and cut him.

“I stopped and started crying. The soldier said Hashem must love me. I realised this was a nes (miracle).”

Moshe still has the siddur - with the hole that ended on the word “peace”, on page 437, in the Hallel.

He later returned to South Africa, where he is involved in security. He has served in the CSO since its inception.



The siddur of life... and the bullet which penetrated it.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies



Above Board
Jeff Katz
National Chairman



South African democracy passes a crucial test



The tumultuous events of the past few months lent an additional degree of importance to this year's State of the Nation (SONA) address. Among those who will have been listening especially carefully, were the business and investment community. Here, a definite positive was the President's recognition that business and the free market are essential in achieving growth.

Clearly, the business community's warnings and suggestions as to how to create the correct investment support infrastructure have been taken on board. In general, the problems facing the country were acknowledged and not played down. One felt that Government has heard the concerns of various constituencies and is serious about taking action to address them.

SONA took place in the very week in which the President was obliged to appear before the Constitutional Court over Nkandla and, before the eyes of the nation, make a string of significant concessions.

It was a dramatic climb-down after many months of evasion and denial. Far more important than the amount that will ultimately be paid back, is the public demonstration that no-one in South Africa is above the law and that our democratic institutions, from a vigorous political opposition through to a free press, robust civil society and independent judiciary, are able when necessary to call to account government at the highest level.

Coincidentally, even as these events were unfolding on the local front, a former prime minister of Israel, Ehud Olmert, was beginning his prison sentence for corruption.

Superficially, this might be indicative of something being profoundly wrong with

both countries, but in fact, the opposite is true. The measure of a country's political health is not the complete absence of high level corruption which is a completely unrealistic expectation, but that there exist the legal means as well as the political will to deal effectively with corruption when it does surface. Last week, both South Africa and Israel passed this important test of democracy.

Ombudsman ruling a victory for accurate reporting

We were satisfied by the Press Ombudsman ruling regarding the complaint jointly laid last year by the Board and SAZF against The Star. This substantially upheld our objections, namely that two news reports had grossly misrepresented what South Africa's official policy was concerning arrest warrants issued by Turkey against four IDF commanders.

The complaint on the same issue lodged against the Cape Times by the SAZF (Western Cape) was also upheld. Our press statement on the ruling can be viewed on our Facebook, while for the full finding, visit www.presscouncil.org.za.

Generally speaking, we do not look to be adversarial with the media, preferring rather to maintain amicable and effective channels of communication through which to address differences when they do arise (usually through the paper concerned publishing a counter view).

In this case, however, we felt that the breach of accepted journalistic standards by the reporter concerned was sufficiently egregious to warrant making an approach to the Press Council.

The outcome has reaffirmed that while media independence is non-negotiable, the media itself must strive to uphold appropriate standards of accuracy and fairness in its news reporting.

- *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

News

Shimon Peres to speak in Johannesburg

ANT KATZ

Israel's most senior living statesman, Shimon Peres, immediate past-president, twice former prime minister and Nobel Peace Prize laureate will be in Johannesburg for one night only, to deliver a speech for the IUA/UCE.



During his lifelong service to Israel, Shimon Peres has held every position of note in Israel's government.

Peres (92) is the last of Israel's founding generation. He was first elected to Israel's Parliament, the Knesset, in 1959 - a post he would hold for a record 48 years. Having recently retired as Israel's president he shows no sign of slowing down in his quest for peace.

Peres' unique brand of oratory excellence, his intellect and wit are all as sharp as ever. He is credited with creating the initial agreement that led to peace with Egypt and was a key actor in the peace negotiations with Jordan.

He was also in charge of the peace process with the Palestinians that led to the creation of the Oslo Accords, earning him a Nobel Peace Prize.

As Israel's 9th president, appointed in 2007, Peres acted as a visionary statesman, vigorously taking the start-up nation to the global community.

The historic event will take place on Sunday February 28. Tickets are R200 for adults and R100 for students and pensioners. To book, call Lisa on (011) 645-2503 or lisak@beyachad.co.za or Miriam on (011) 645-2531 or miriam@sazf.org for venue and other details.

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SPACEWORKS

PROGRESSIVE JEWS ARE AS AUTHENTIC AS ORTHODOX JEWS

I would like to respond to Eli Knight’s letter in last week’s Jewish Report, on Progressive Jewry. As Moses is about to climb Mount Sinai to receive the Decalogue, the Israelites gather at the base of the mountain and affirm their commitment to fulfilling G-d’s commandments.

I like to think of the Torah as ancient Israel’s mission statement. G-d and Moses both knew the Children of Israel needed a document that stated the purpose of the people and pointed them towards their destiny.

It had to be a statement broad enough to encompass a variety of interpretations, yet compelling enough to be shared by everyone.

The variety of opinions concerning the Torah today testifies to the sheer power and success of this most influential document. The Torah formed the Israelite people - a disparate people with competing agendas - into a unified nation with a shared purpose. Having a shared purpose defines community.

For us Progressive Jews, it is our bond with the Jewish tradition and all Jews and our understanding that all humans are equal, regardless of race, gender identity, age, disability, national origin, and sexual

orientation.

Our goal is to make this world a better place - step by step - and I am sure that we share this with most Jews all over the world.

But reality proves that not everyone shares those values with us and too often those others are fellow Jews.

Last week’s Jewish Report contains again one of those hurtful examples in which the respect we offer to others is rudely rejected. Vilifying Progressive rabbis as “uneducated” and accusing us of destroying the Jewish people is outrageous because it destroys the idea of Klal Israel, one Jewish people.

It uses the same methods anti-Semites use in their approach to de-legitimise Israel as an unworthy state.

But as much as the anti-Semites are wrong in making Jews second class humans, the author of this statement in the Jewish Report is wrong in his approach to make Progressive Jews second class Jews. With his hate speech, he is leaving behind the common ground our ancestors once created by accepting the Torah.

Rabbi Adrian M Schell
Bet David, Morningside, Sandton

LETTER WRITER’S VIEWS ON REFORM JEWS BLATANT HATE SPEECH

My name is Gila Efrat and I am 17. I am proudly part of Netzer and very passionate about my Judaism.

I read in last week’s Jewish Report a letter stating that Orthodox Jews are the only real Jews, or relevant and genuine Jews. I am shocked that this is acceptable. It is blatant hate speech.

What is so wrong about being Reform or Progressive? Is being inclusive, accepting and loving unworthy? I thought that was what Judaism was all about - a community and world-wide unity through our common affiliation: being Jews.

We do not need more divisions, especially between culture and religions, let alone our own faith that we both follow.

Many a time I have heard about how Progressive/Reform Judaism is not religious enough or we make up our own rules. It is illogical, disrespectful and emits a superiority complex to deem how religion should be observed.

Is it Orthodox Jews who follow laws made in the Rabbinical period - and not from the Torah itself, but man-made laws - who are absolute in their practice of Judaism? It seems to be quite a fallacious argument to claim something so contradictory.

Progressive Jews are changing the world. What a pity that narrow-minded Jews cannot be part of this wonderful concept of tikkun olam. We are obligated to create the Messianic era; we can’t wait around for a Messiah to come. We must be the change we want to see in the world!

Let us unite. We all have the same common goal. Judaism should connect us, not separate us! It should comfort us and offer safety. Judaism has been so positive to me and it should be for every Jew. The last thing we need is ignorance, arrogance and prejudice.

Gila Efrat
Cape Town

JEWS IN GLASS HOUSES SHOULDN’T THROW STONES AT ANYONE

We are all Jews, regardless of the way we interpret our religion. If a Christian is a Methodist, a Catholic, an Anglican etc, they are all still Christians, with no argument about that.

What makes it so difficult for Jews to think the same way? Discriminating against your own is like apartheid - abhorrent!

As for this nonsense that most Reform Jews marry out of the faith, well, I would venture to say that at a local Chabad congregation near to my home, a substantial percentage of the children of their members have married out of the faith. Yes, there will always be intermarriage, but what Reform Judaism does so well, is bring Jews who have married out, back into the faith by accepting their spouses and children and allowing them to be raised as Jews.

Many Jews who are committed Reform members would have been totally lost to the faith if they did not have tolerant Reform congregations to embrace them and bring them back into the fold. Another thing: I believe many Orthodox Jews continuously “reform” anyway. Look at Orthodox Jews who park their cars near the shul on Shabbat, and then walk the short distance to the building; look at the those who keep strictly kosher at home, only to eat “only fish or vegetarian” prepared in restaurants where nothing is kosher; look at Orthodox women who look so attractive in their designer sheitels, when the aim is to not make yourself attractive to anyone other than your spouse; look at Orthodox women who want to be trained as clergy, but are meeting such opposition from their chauvinistic male counterparts.

Then there is the disgusting behaviour of those really strict Orthodox sects, who assault and spit at women on buses and in the streets, who refuse to allow women to worship at the Western Wall etc. We all know about the sexual abuse that goes on in strict haredi societies. So, my point is that Jews in glass houses should not be throwing stones, at anyone, but certainly not at fellow Jews. Remember too, that the Nazis never asked whether you were an Orthodox, Conservative or Reform Jew - they saw us all as Jews and murdered us all the same way.

Now, if those killers could see that (and those who continue to kill Jews, still do), I can’t see why our own cannot.

Reform Judaism is growing and prospering all over the world, even in Israel. Reform Jews donate huge sums of money to benefit all Israelis. Please know that the money helping a loved one in Israel could well be coming from a Reform Jew who sees all Jews as Jews.

Treat your neighbour as you treat yourself. The rest is all commentary.

Karen Saltz
Markham, Ontario, Canada

KNIGHT, ZAGNOEV SHOW IGNORANCE OF PROGRESSIVE RABBIS’ TRAINING

Eli Knight and Martin Zagnoev’s assertion regarding the education and knowledge of Progressive rabbis (in letters to the Jewish Report) is strongly challenged by me.

All our rabbis, worldwide, have to learn Torah (written and oral), Talmud, as well as traditional and modern interpretations of halacha. This study is done at one of the seven rabbinical seminaries in Israel, the US, the UK and Europe.

Most students spend at least one year of the (minimum) five-year course at a yeshiva in Israel. All courses are at university level and a master’s degree is a requirement. Only then can smicha be obtained.

If Knight and Zagnoev think that Progressive Jews do not engage in study and debate of Torah, Talmud and response, they are uninformed. If they think that Orthodox Jews do not marry “out”, they are naïve.

If either of them had ever walked on Shabbat, down Joseph Street in Highlands North, or past Lions, Waverley, Great Park or Greenside Shuls (to name but a few), they would know that many Orthodox members drive

JEWISH REPORT BERATED FOR PUBLISHING ‘HATE SPEECH’

The contention by Eli Knight in last week’s Jewish Report that Orthodox Judaism is the only true reflection of Jewish religion, refers.

It constantly amazes me that anti-Reform hate speech can fall effortlessly from the lips of the so-called religious Jews in this country and be repeated by the SA Jewish Report.

You are quick to condemn anti-Semitic hate speech from the ANC or the EFF, but have you looked in the mirror? Your hate speech is even more damaging than that of non-Jews.

It’s a self hatred I find intolerable and terribly, terribly sad. You should be ashamed of yourselves! Hashem gave the Torah to Klal Yisrael - not your select few. This is lashon hara at its worst.

Madeleine Hicklin

Is our letter writer proposing censorship? We are neither an Orthodox nor a Reform newspaper, but our letters page is, as has been often stated, a forum for diverse opinion. As a paper we do not necessarily subscribe to any of the views expressed by contributors to our letters page. Of course we guard against libel and fiercely protect our decorum. But if a letter writer does not agree with a view expressed in a letter, he or she is welcome to refute what has been said – in another letter.

- Editor

BERNIE SANDERS NOT A GOOD CALL FOR US OR ISRAEL

Democratic presidential hopeful in the US, Bernie Sanders, although a Jew, is an anti-capitalist who is opposed to economic growth, if it increases economic inequality.

He describes himself as a “democratic socialist”, trusting that the word “democratic” makes his belief in socialism more plausible.

As America is the land of the “free” and the “American dream”, Sanders, like many of his left-wing democrats, wants to reverse a “massive transfer of wealth” from the rich to the middle class, by instituting a 90 per cent personal income tax rate for top earners.

Fresh from his New Hampshire victory, Sanders was having breakfast with Reverend Al Sharpton, the New York, black anti-Semite.

Sanders wants to lobby for the black vote in the South Carolina primary on February 27.

Sharpton had his first anti-Semitic race riot in Crown Heights, New York, 24 years ago. The riots were started after a car driven by a Lubavitch Jew, struck two black children, killing one.

A few years after that, Sharpton led two pogroms against Jewish businesses in Harlem; he has a record of hatred against Jews.

SELWYN SEGAL A MOST UNIQUE HOME

As parents and friends of the residents of the Selwyn Segal Hostel, we would like to sincerely endorse the column by Michael Sieff in last week’s edition of the Jewish Report. This institution is indeed the most unique home for exceptional people run by exceptional staff from the security guards to the CEO.

We have found that even when a resident is, on occasion, under ‘punishment’ for ‘bad’ behaviour, it is administered with special love and care, turning a punishment into a reward.

Over the years that we have been involved with the Selwyn Segal, we can only say that it has been a privilege and honor to be in the company of these wonderful people, both residents and staff.

To Michael Sieff and all at the Chev: May you enjoy Hashem’s richest blessings for all your endeavors.

Choni and Miriam Davidowitz.
Golden Acres.

REFORM JEWS ARE BY NO MANNER OF MEANS ‘SECOND-CLASS’ JEWS

My first response to Eli Knight’s letter in last week’s Jewish Report, that Orthodox Judaism is the only true reflection of Jewish religion, is a question to the Jewish Report editorial staff: Journalism 101 requires that you ask for a response from “the other side” so as to encourage a balanced perspective for your readers.

My colleagues and I have not been graced with such a request, though if our responses are published, that may go some way in a levelling of the playing fields.

The author sets out his letter from start to finish, from what can only be described as a “holier-than-thou” perspective. First, seeking to demean and then belittle myself and my (Progressive) colleagues, by incorrectly referring to us as “priests” and while offence is intended, none is actually taken.

From our perspective we (human beings) are ALL equal in the eyes of G-d and from a spiritual perspective, none of us are orphaned: we are ALL children of G-d. I look upon a priest with the same respect I do upon a rabbi.

The author then moves on in the same tone by, in essence, referring to all Reform Jews as “second-class citizens”, the “real” or Orthodox Jews being the ones of great depth, the ones who work hard and do not make a mess of this world, etc.

If the author had the ability to be still for a moment, to turn his gaze inward and contemplate the matter for long enough, he would soon realise that the gist of what he is espousing, is no different at all - in point of fact, is precisely the “thinking” of the Fuhrer - his holier-than-thou perspective of himself and “his people”, relative to all other communities, nations and people existing on the same planet as him.

In no way, shape or form do I speak from an “anti” perspective; my speaking is done to encourage thought, deep thought - this is the way I was raised as a child and taught as a Reform rabbi.

I lived the vast majority of my life in Jerusalem, served as an officer in the IDF, my mother is a rabbi, her parents and grandparents were killed in the Holocaust. How, I ask you, does the author claim to be “more Jewish” than I am?

Rabbi Julia Margolis
Chairman SA Centre for Religious Equality and Diversity

We have to put the record straight: We gladly publish your response to a letter affecting your religious stream, but for a myriad reasons - also policy – we will not submit copy we intend publishing to third parties beforehand for responses, unless to clarify a point. The fact that we publish your response in this issue means that we are fulfilling our mandate for fair play. Our letters pages are a forum for “diverse opinion” and if letters meet our stringent standards and are not libellous, we will consider publishing them. - Editor

IN GREATER SCHEME OF THINGS, A JEWS IS NOT DEFINED AS ORTHODOX OR PROGRESSIVE

This letter is in response to the bigotry and prejudice expressed by Eli Knight in last week’s Jewish Report (on Progressive Judaism) and his resistance to facing reality.

Jews make up only 0,2 per cent of the world’s population, yet occupy significant numbers of headlines in the news, as leaders in business, the arts, the humanities, academia, science and every sphere of life.

Nobody asks if these people are Orthodox or Progressive Jews or in fact if they are affiliated to any congregation. It appears rather a waste of energy to be focusing on differences and competition over who is better than, or more authentic, than whom when we consider just how tiny we really are (in numbers) as a group.

If we wish to play the numbers game we can point out that there are approximately 1,8 million Progressive Jews around the world; 60 per cent of Jews in the United States describe themselves as Progressive while only 10 per cent describe themselves as Orthodox.

In the UK 20 per cent of Jews identify themselves as Reform or Liberal. Similarly in Cape Town and Durban, 20 per cent of Jews consider themselves Progressive. It seems enormously arrogant to claim Jewish authenticity for only those who choose to be Orthodox, while significant numbers of Jews find other forms of practice more meaningful.

It seems to me that blind adherence to conformity for conformity’s sake is of less value than ensuring that we live with integrity and ethically in the world and contribute to building our communities and the greater South Africa.

Progressive Jews believe that each individual has the right to make

choices about religious practice based on knowledge and life circumstances. To do this requires information and it is the role of the synagogue to provide this information and education.

Beit Emanuel, for example, has a Talmud study group, offers weekly talks on topics chosen to encourage debate and learning, has a movie club and opportunities for discussion about matters of ethics and choices about how we live our lives.

We do not define our lives by where we sit in shul. We do not insult men by suggesting that they cannot control their sexual urges if they see a woman’s hair. We do not insult women by suggesting that they cannot lead congregations and do not share the same intellect as men and have the same rights as men.

We do not pray each day to thank G-d that I or you were not born a woman. We do not reject congregants because of their sexual preferences. We recognise the humanity in all people. We do not define ourselves in competition with you but rather define ourselves as being who we are.

Progressive Judaism is growing, not only because of conversions from those who become Jews by choice, but also from those abandoning Orthodoxy to find a form of religious practice which has greater meaning for them.

Our religion admonishes us to guard against bigotry and prejudice. I urge all to listen to our liturgy and live these words authentically.

Diane Fine
Congregant of Beit Emanuel, Johannesburg

BE CAREFUL ABOUT SELF-FULFILLED PROPHECIES

Last week’s Jewish Report quoted a poll conducted by Midgam Consultants and Research Institute that 25 per cent of Israelis fear another Holocaust and that 29 per cent believe Israel will cease to exist.

So, what are we going to do about these fears? Sit back or, as a nation, consciously confront them?

In the Stone Tanach, Job (3.24) says: “Because I feared a fright, and it has overtaken me; what I dreaded has come upon me.” In the King James version Job says: (3.25) “For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that of which I was afraid is come unto me.”

Rosenthal and Jacobson, in their bestseller “Pygmalion in the Classroom”, based on the law of expectation, say: “Our prediction or prophecy may in itself be a factor in determining the behaviour of other people.” Later they say: “Another major theorist to employ the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy was Gordon Allport (1950)). His application was to the field of international tension and war. It was likely, Allport suggested, “that nations that expect to go to war, go to war”.

We need to look for miracles in our everyday lives and be constantly grateful to G-d for them. This brings us closer to His love and consequently it becomes our reality. The more we expect miracles, the more we look for them with complete faith and thanksgiving, the more we find them. All our bodily activities are cause for thanksgiving as well as our experiences.

Many years ago my mother and I were given a lift in a friend’s car

from Johannesburg to Durban. Halfway there a fierce storm hit us. We begged our friend to stop at the next town, but he drove through it unflinchingly. The torrential rain beat so hard against the windscreen the wipers were useless and the headlights didn’t penetrate the heavy rain.

I quietly thanked G-d for our lift and prayed for His protection. Suddenly the words from Psalms came to my mind: “In Thy light shall we see light.” (Psalm 36:9)) I rejoiced, knowing that was my answer. From then to the next town a sheet of lightning lit up a vehicle or cart just as we were about to hit it. When we arrived at the next town, Ladysmith, our driver agreed to sleep over. We were given the last two available rooms! Our protection was complete!

The whole world needs to have waves of miracles flooding through all the media so that readers start lifting themselves spiritually to recognise G-d’s miracles which, according to the daily Thanksgiving Modim, “are with us every day”.

International floodgates of gratitude can sweep the world if all people reading this will send 150 words to this publication before June 15, telling of a big or small miracle in their lives!

What a book of triumph that would be as each person contributes towards expecting good.

Edna Freinkel
Lyndhurst, Johannesburg

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JAWITZ
PROPERTIES

Akiva College - a small KZN school with a mammoth big heart

MICHELLE KING

In 2011 a new Jewish school opened in the suburb of Izinga in Umhlanga, KwaZulu-Natal. The school was initially called the Umhlanga Jewish Day School and the high standards of education in Kodesh and general studies, as well as the excellent facilities and staff, attracted many young families in the small community. The school has grown from strength to strength and as of this year it has 60 learners, from play group to high school, a new principal Kerryn Feigenbaum (who used to teach at King David Linksfield) and a new school name: Akiva College.

The Akiva College family pulled out all the stops in their efforts to make a difference in

the beautiful but sadly drought stricken KZN province. Some areas in the province have been dealt a harder blow than others and a resource that we so easily take for granted - water - is no longer available to them.

East Coast Radio, along with Gift of the Givers, put out a request to everyone to reach out and help those in need. The teachers followed up on this request and together with the children and their parents, collectively managed to donate in excess of 1 250 litres of fresh water to the “Watershare” drive.

Not only did the school collect over a ton of water, but it did so in less than 24 hours! This is a remarkable effort considering the size of the school and the small number of families there are.

Month of Adar welcomed with song and dance



Sporting fun headgear, Torah Academy Primary School pupils, joined by staff, dance in the quadrangle on the first day of the month of Adar Rishon.

RABBI MOTTI HADAR
PRINCIPAL, TA PRIMARY

Torah Academy Primary School has an entire programme planned for the two months of Adar - to generate and increase positive joy and happiness in the school.

Last week Wednesday, the first day of the month of Adar Rishon, children added to the joy by wearing funky hats, wigs, headbands, or other hairpieces to school.

Every child received a smiley face badge, to be worn until Purim.

In conjunction with the badges, the school launched a “Greet with a Smile” campaign, encouraging children to greet each other, as well as teachers, staff, parents and visitors, with a smile, politely and pleasantly.



Doff a hat in honour of month of Adar

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Eden Core Lyndhurst last week held a special Crazy Hat Day in honour of the Jewish month of Adar. The whole school took part. The children made hats to celebrate the new month, which they all wore, as Adar is the official “happy month”. It is written: “As soon as Adar begins, increase in joy!” In a leap year there are two months of extra happiness!



‘Fun Friday’ as Sandton Sinai kids ‘sock’ it to them

NATASCHA SHER

At Sandton Sinai the aim is to increase the joy and happiness felt in the school during Adar. This will be done through various mediums, both in a formal setting but also informally.

From now until Purim, every Friday will be “Fun Friday”. Learners will come to school with a fun accessory.

Pictured are grade 1 and 2 learners in their funky socks.



Rosabelle Klein tots actively collect for ‘Bottled Water Drive’

CARON LEVY, PRINCIPAL

Rosabelle Klein Hebrew Nursery School in Johannesburg recently joined hands to collect bottled water for victims of the severe drought that some areas in South Africa are experiencing.

The children and their parents were very generous in contributing large bottles of water for the school’s “Bottled Water Drive”. The school will be handing over the water to nearby communities affected by water shortages, so that everyone will have clean, healthy, fresh and hygienic water to drink.

Pictured are kids from the grade R class with some of the bottles of



For a ‘quickie’ Jewish wedding, call Rabbi Mel Hecht

RON KAMPEAS
LAS VEGAS

Rabbi Mel Hecht clutches his black coffee and paces in front of the Dunkin’ Donuts just down the road from the Red Rock Casino in Las Vegas.

It’s 14:27 and the couple said they’d be here by 14:20. The photographer has an appointment at Bellagio at 17:00 and he wanted to get started by 14:30.

“Here she comes,” says photographer Britt Pierson.

Karen Butt, resplendent in a teal bridal gown and carrying a bouquet of cloth flowers, is waving from the stretch limo idling in the parking lot unable to fit into a space. She trots across and apologises for being late, but it’s all good because Hecht has turned on his rabbinical calm, flashing a huge toothy grin framed by his trim, white beard.

Her bridegroom, Craig Silver, follows in her wake, patting his inside pocket, making sure he has the rings.

Hecht sets about calming the nervous couple. “I thought this was a circumcision,” he says, introducing himself as “Rabbi Cutcherdickoff”.

Silver laughs, relieved - a little relieved, anyway. He’s getting married, after all. The rabbi slips into his white SUV and checks the back seat with a pat for his gear: the battered, black leather briefcase stuffed with a kiddush cup, a golden tallit, an array of marriage certification stamps and an ancient Rabbinical Assembly prayer book. And a wine glass wrapped in a napkin.

Hecht has this routine down. He’s about to turn 77 and he’s been doing this since he arrived in Las Vegas in 1980 from Fort Pierce, Florida, where he was a congregational rabbi.

Call Graceland Wedding Chapel, scroll

through the five Elvis options (from \$199 for basics to \$799 for duelling Elvises), ask about the “Yes, we do offer Jewish ceremonies” on the website’s FAQ page, and the lady on the phone will tell you, “Call Rabbi Mel”. There used to be another guy, she says, but he’s gone. That’s Las Vegas: People come and go and are forgotten.

Or it once was Las Vegas. Hecht is a holdover from the last of the city’s Wild West days, the 1980s, when there wasn’t much of an established Jewish community here, just two or three synagogues and folks moving in and out.

He came to serve an established synagogue but it didn’t work out, and he became the go-to guy for idiosyncratic Jewish weddings and funerals - rites that would make sense nowhere else but ring true in a town built by the Jewish mob, where roads just end and buildings rust half-completed, where Jewish would-be entertainers come to fail and Jewish one-time entertainers come to fade.

What once was Hecht’s side vocation - ministering to the transient - has become his fulltime job. Other rabbis build community; Hecht tends to those fleeing communities. Some are pornographers, gamblers or gangsters who disappear until they die, when they want Hecht to make sure their long-estranged families know that in the end, they did not forget they were Jewish.

Others are like Butt and Silver, pretending for one fantastical weekend that all they have is each other, leaving behind families complicated by divorce and generational tensions.

“Las Vegas is perhaps the only place that is not so much interested in someone’s past as it is in how that person performs in the present,” says Hecht, who charges \$400 for your basic nuptials.

At the Graceland Wedding Chapel, Hecht has never played “Elvis the rabbi”. But yes, there

were Jewish brides who wanted an Elvis impersonator to sing before the ceremony, or after the ceremony, or in the middle of the ceremony. There was the bride who wanted Elvis walking her down the aisle.

Don’t brides want their fathers to give them away? I ask.

“They don’t come with the father,” Hecht says. “With a select group, but not their parents.”

Family in Las Vegas is not the one you’re born into, it’s the one you create. Two days before Butt and Silver wed, Hecht meets me at a Starbucks near his home.

Outfitted in a black pinstripe suit and white shirt, he’s about to do a funeral: a man born to a Jewish mother and an Italian father who spent his life driving a cab and tending bar. He had started a family, abandoned it, then raised another - never marrying Jews, never raising his children Jewish. But one thing everyone in his family knew - from estranged to recent - was that he wanted to go out as a Jew.

Hecht will recite the El Malei Rachamim in English, to be true to the dead man’s wishes, but also so the families will feel connected.

“The funeral home knew who to call because of my reputation,” he says. “I’m a rabbi for all people, not just Jews.”

Butt, 49, a clinical social worker in Old Lyme, Connecticut, and Silver, 59, who develops real estate, had met on JDate two years earlier and they talked with Hecht over the phone. She knew he was the one. He sounded “familiar,” she say.

“We wanted to focus on our marriage,” Butt says, explaining why the wedding is in Las Vegas. “It gets more complicated with families.”



Silver chimes in: “We wanted it to be just about the two of us.”

There are parents and kids from previous relationships. How many times have they been married?

“Never mind, just say we’ve been married before,” Butt says.

The limo arrives at the first turnoff in the Red Rock Loop. Families are gathered by the roadside to gaze at the canyon.

“Aren’t there too many people for a wedding?” Silver asks, having expected something a little more serene.

Butt, already out of the car, pulls Silver out. “We’re walking out of here Mr and Mrs Silver, that’s all I know,” she says.

The passers-by become part of the ritual, bikers whooping cheers to Hecht’s grinning approval. This is Las Vegas, and family is who you make it in the moment.

Hecht throws the golden tallit over the couple. As they huddle, their faces etched in bliss, he blesses them in the first person plural, a “we” that encompasses himself, the couple’s absent children (whom he names), Pierson the photographer, me, the bikers roaring by, the grinning family watching from the over-look, the Jewish dead and living.

“We wish you the kind of home that is made of more than stone and wood,” the rabbi says, “that it will be an island that will protect you from the frenzy the world has become.”

Out comes the wine glass wrapped in a napkin. Silver smashes it not once but twice.

Hecht pronounces them man and wife. (JTA)

Ada turns 100 at OPH with joyous celebration

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Ada Plett celebrated her 100th birthday in the beautiful garden of Sunshine Circle at Our Parents Home last week Thursday.

Born on February 2, 1916, Ada is the oldest resident at OPH. Family, friends and staff joined in celebrating this momentous milestone. The home provided a mega birthday cake and savouries and presented Ada with flowers and a gift.

Ada has been residing in Sunshine Circle for the past eight years. She is still very socially active and all visitors and staff are always greeted with a friendly smile.

When asked how old she was, she replied with a mischievous glint in her eye: “I still have to work that out!”

In spite of all the hype and fussing by her children,

grandchildren, great-grandchildren and staff and residents of Our Parents Home, Ada remained calm, patient and quietly assertive as always.

“All of us at OPH feel truly blessed and privileged that we could share in this milestone and we wish her lots of joy and good health,” says OPH general manager, Kay Govender.

Ada (née Weinberg) was born in Marquard in the Orange Free State, the eldest of five, all of whom have passed on, with the exception of her sister Louise who lives in London.

After matriculating in Senekal, Ada moved to Johannesburg where she married Norman Gross. He died at a young age and she married Manny Plett.

They moved to Bulawayo in 1957 and remained there for 20 years, before moving to Port Elizabeth. She worked for many years as an office administrator.



Seated: Ada Plett and Hayley Nathan. First row: Nicole Nathan; Adam Plett; Ethan Plett; Sharon Plett; Riley Nathan; Bongzi Ntsaingwa holds Kyle Plett; Dana Plett; and Rodney Plett. Back row: Anita Plett; and Josh Nathan.

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Einstein’s gravitational waves are making plenty of scientific waves

ANT KATZ

Last week scientists said they had been able to directly detect the existence of gravitational waves, first indicated in the ground-breaking “Theory of Relativity” by renowned Jewish scientist Albert Einstein a century ago.

But the announcement was not without controversy in Israel where, at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem after the announcement, property magnate Dror Halevi took the opportunity to criticise Israeli society’s lackadaisical attitude toward the famous scientist while the world celebrated his theory’s vindication and also his centenary last year.

The gravitational waves discovery was announced by David Reitze, executive director of the US-based Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO), during a media conference in Washington, DC last week.

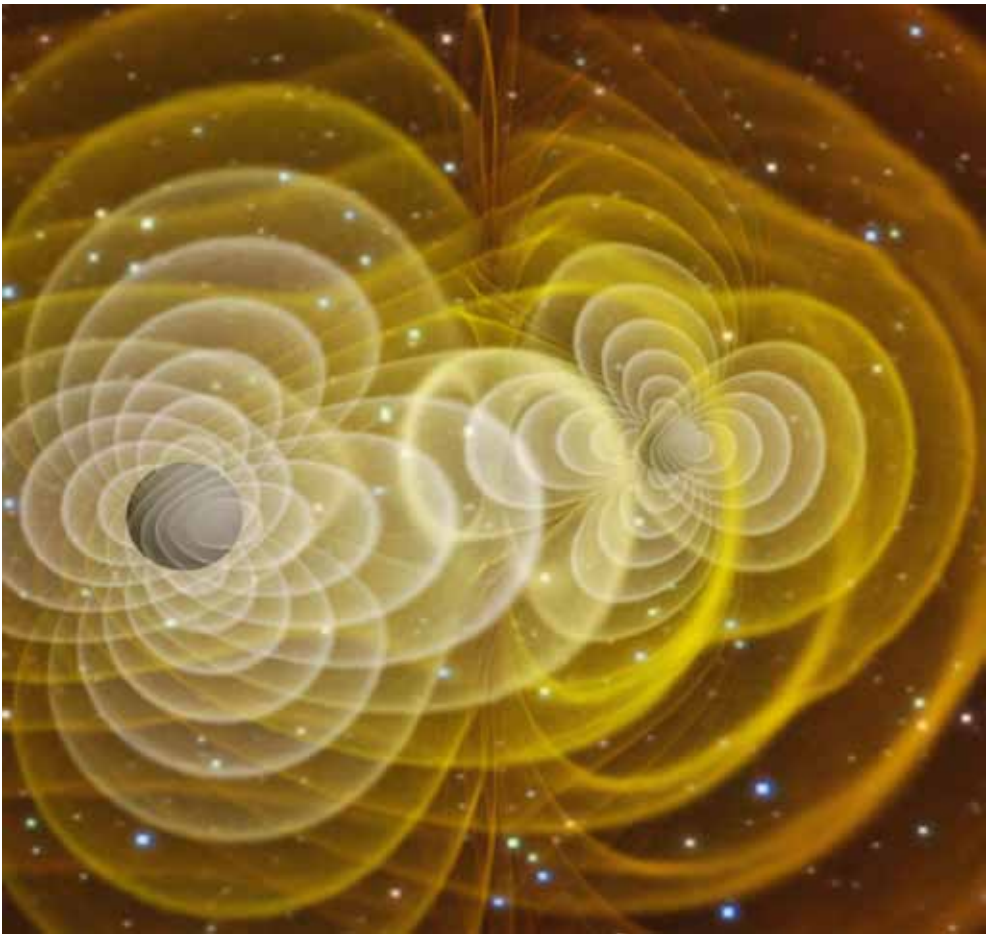
Reitze said the gravitational waves had, in fact, been detected on September 14, 2015, by both of the twin LIGO detectors in Livingston, Louisiana and Hanford, in Washington State.

The Daily Maverick’s Brooks Spector wrote that the wave was detected at “261.625565 hertz (or middle C for the non-musical) - of two black holes coming together and warping the very fabric of the space time continuum”. (If that isn’t clear...)

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Einstein’s theory stipulated that gravitational waves are produced from the merger of two black holes. The only problem has been that in the 100-plus years since the publication of the famous theory, such a collision has never been observed.

The reason for this is likely a combination



of the rarity of such events and the ability of human sciences to detect them. But this time, without question, Earth was hit spot-on, on September 14, last year.

“Gravitational waves, sort of at a fundamental level, are very similar” to the results one gets when one throws a rock into a pond,” explained Reitze.

The difference, he says, is that in this case, instead of a moving rock and a still pond, there are two massive objects, both accelerating at high speeds in the emptiness of space.

Once one has two massive objects moving and accelerating towards one another, this will lead to them eventually orbiting around one another. This is what creates the ripples that travel outward, proffered Einstein, and that’s what a gravitational wave is.

The result is that, unlike being contained to a single plane like the ripples a rock creates on the flat surface of a pond, these ripples “are in space themselves”, he said.

According to estimates by LIGO scientists, the pair of observed black holes were about 29 and 36 times bigger than the mass of the sun, respectively, and their collision took place 1,3 billion years ago, reaching Earth last year.

“It’s a tremendously important discovery. It’s something that tells us something we didn’t already know, which is in this case that it’s possible to have a binary black hole (BBH). We never knew that before. We know from previous work that neutron stars, which turn into pulsars, can be binary, that they can be in pairs,” John Mather, a senior scientist at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), told Reuters.

A BBH is a system consisting of two black holes in close orbit around each other. A pulsar (short for pulsating radio star) is a highly magnetised, rotating neutron star that emits a beam of electromagnetic radiation which can only be observed when the beam of emission is pointing toward Earth (much the way a lighthouse can be seen only when the light is pointed in the direction of an observer), and is responsible for the pulsed appearance of emission.

Dieticians warn against latching on to fads

MOIRA SCHNEIDER
CAPE TOWN

The hearing into sports scientist Professor Tim Noakes’ conduct at the Health Professions Council of South Africa has focussed public attention once again on the Banting diet that he strongly advocates.

Noakes is facing a charge of unprofessional conduct after he purportedly advised a woman on Twitter to wean her baby on to a low-carbohydrate, high-fat diet.

Jewish Report asked two dieticians for their takes on the diet.

Lila Bruk, a dietician in private practice in Johannesburg, did not mince her words. “I feel that it’s another fad, almost like a cult,” she says, describing the diet as “unhealthy”, while noting that there are ways of cutting carbs in a healthy way to attain a moderate intake.

She also prefers to focus on healthy fats such as nuts, seeds, avocados, fatty fish and olive oil.

“Ultimately, the only thing that really works is a balanced diet, because what lands up happening is that people latch on to something that seems too good to be true - they’re attracted by the fact that they can eat all these foods that they haven’t been able to have like cheese and cream.

They lose weight because any diet works if you stick to it, but unfortunately the long-term sustainability is very challenging.

“It’s very, very hard to go through your entire life never having a piece of cake or a slice of toast. And in addition to that, we don’t really know what the long-term health consequences (of the Banting diet) are either.”

While there is recent research showing that saturated fats are not as bad as were originally thought, the “safe doses” are not known.

Bruk thinks the charge against Noakes is “definitely” justified.

“Putting aside whether you agree with Banting or not, it is so unethical to give advice to somebody when you’ve got no idea as to their background.

“He doesn’t know if this baby has allergies or pre-existing conditions.”

Bruk brands as “ridiculous” Noakes’ contention that he was answering the woman’s question as a scientist not a doctor, adding: “You can’t pick and choose what hat you’re wearing at any point.

“If you’ve got ‘Dr’ in front of your name, people are assuming that you’re going to be answering from that point of view, with a medical slant. I feel he’s clutching at straws.”

Her concern is that whatever the outcome of the case, it won’t change the effect the diet has had on the public. “At least this case has brought awareness to people who are maybe blindly following him and Banting, to take a step back to consider whether it’s the right thing to do and to question things a bit more than they were before.”

Heidi Bieber, a dietician in private practice in Cape Town, was more conciliatory, saying she is neither for nor against the Banting diet. “It really does work for some people, but I do not feel that it’s a long-term, liveable way of life, especially for women, and there are risks associated with it that can’t be ignored.”

On the other hand, she says, the risk of obesity is “very big” and when it does work you see “huge” improvements in people’s health from the weight loss per se. In addition, “the diet has highlighted key issues, that sugars, refined carbohydrates and processed foods are the enemy.

“Fat is not the problem, but I still advocate only good fats - I don’t think people should eat a lot of saturated fats. I do allow carbohydrates, but not in high amounts - it’s all about quality and quantity of carbs at a sitting.”



Rabbi Ramon Widmonte presents a tour to Poland—a Journey to Life.

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‘Four Choirs in Concert’ - a once-in-a-lifetime Lewandowski treat

For the first time in South Africa, four choirs will come together in Johannesburg to perform the works of 19th century German Jewish composer Louis Lewandowski and his contemporaries. Two of the choirs will then go on to complete a tour in Cape Town. The concert series is hosted by South Africa’s Lewandowski Chorale which has invited the Syna-

In Johannesburg the Synagogal Ensemble Berlin will be joined by the Johannesburg Jewish Male Choir and the Soweto-based Imilonji KaNtu Choral Society.



Members of the Synagogal Ensemble Berlin, who will visit South Africa for the first time.

gogal Ensemble Berlin for its first appearance in South Africa. In Johannesburg the Synagogal Ensemble Berlin will be joined by the Johannesburg Jewish Male Choir and the Soweto-based Imilonji KaNtu Choral Society. Each will perform works of Lewandowski

ki and his contemporaries and together they will also perform a number of massed items. “While each choir is different, they are united by the inspiration they draw from the works of Lewandowski and their links to the prestigious annual Louis Lewan-

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dowski Festival, which is hosted each December by the City of Berlin,” the media release states. Although they have performed in various combinations, this is the first time all four choirs will come together on the same stage. The programme will also feature African liturgical music, Jewish Baroque music and other genres. Says Adam Golding, musical director of the Lewandowski Chorale: “Most South African lovers of serious music would not be familiar with Lewandowski, or, at best, would have heard of him peripherally. He was an absolute master of melody who combined traditional Jewish music from Eastern Europe with the popular romantic style of classical music. Lewandowski

understood the human voice and the blending of the voice.” In Johannesburg on Wednesday, March 16 at the Len Miller Hall, Redhill School, 20 Summit Road, Morningside, at 20:00. Ticket prices range from R180, R150 and R90. To book: <http://ww2.webtickets.co.za/event.aspx?itemid=1461686959> In Cape Town on Saturday, March 19 and Sunday 20 March, the Lewandowski Chorale and Synagogal Ensemble Berlin will perform at The Jewish Museum, 88 Hatfield Street, Cape Town at 20:15. Tickets cost R150. To book: <http://ww2.webtickets.co.za/event.aspx?itemid=1461686959>

News

Rabbi Mirvis has a winner with his ‘Ma’ayan’ course

With all the arguments for women to participate more fully in halachic religious practices, Commonwealth Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis has launched a groundbreaking qualification for Jewish women, the “Ma’ayan” course, according to the Times of Israel. Considering the Chief Rabbi’s upbringing in Cape Town - his father Rabbi Dr Lionel Mirvis was famous for liberal sermons and for visiting political prisoners on Robben Island - it is natural his son would interpret halacha with an open-mindedness which covers non-racism and non-sexism. The course, starting in September, is aimed at attracting Jewish women who want to play a greater role as educators in their communities. The Times of Israel states: “Ma’ayan” -which means “spring” or “fountain” - will consist of three components: study of the Jewish laws of family purity, taught by Dayan Shmuel Simons of the London Beth Din; academic study about women’s health and related medical issues, to be taught by senior lecturers from University College, London; and pedagogical training focusing on adult education, so that the Ma’ayanot will be able to run community education projects. Some of these latter classes will be taught by Chief Rabbi Mirvis himself.” Before being appointed chief rabbi in 2013, Rabbi Mirvis served at Finchley Synagogue, where he appointed the UK’s first - and so far only - female halachic adviser, Lauren Levin, says The Times. “But officials in the Office of the Chief Rabbi (OCR) say that the Ma’ayan course is intended to go much further. “Some rabbis have been crying out for such an initiative,” one official told The Times of Israel. “The Chief Rabbi is well aware that there is a pool of talent, represented by Jewish women in the UK, which is not currently being harnessed.” Since there were many intimate issues of Jewish law which some women felt uncomfortable about discussing with their rabbi, it was hoped that the new qualification would provide educated female experts, who would bring an extra dimension with their academic training and community commitment. The academic side of the course, which will complement the halachic module, will provide a thorough grounding in women’s health issues, from genetic testing to psychosexual issues and disorders, infertility and IVF. The third component of the course, the community education arm, is a particular pet project of Rabbi Mirvis, who is known to feel that more adult education could be run by educated and informed Jewish women. “That is a skill set which I have long considered an essential ingredient for Jewish life to flourish,” he said. All the candidates will be required to carry out a practical project, to deliver an educational programme in a community and act on feedback and response to it. The idea is that women from the first cohort of graduates - probably between five and 10 women in all - will each be assigned to a cluster of synagogue communities and will then be responsible for dealing with many questions relating to women’s roles within modern Orthodox Judaism. OCR officials say that the 18-month-long course will have a very stringent application process. Candidates for the first cohort are being sought by recommendation.

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New study: Sperm quality damaged by cell phones

HAIFA - A groundbreaking study suggests that regularly talking on a cell phone for more than an hour a day, and talking on the phone when it is connected to a charger, doubles the likelihood of a decrease in sperm concentration from 33,3 per cent to 66,7 per cent.

The study also indicates that sperm concentration decreases to an abnormal level in men who carry their phone at a distance of less than 50 centimetres from the groin. An abnormal concentration was found in 47,1 per cent of men who carry the phone at a close distance, compared with 11,1 per cent in the total male population.

The findings, reported in Reproductive BioMedicine Online, support a long-held suspicion of a link between cell phone use and male infertility due to radio frequency electromagnetic radiation emitted from the phones.

“In light of the research findings it is certainly recommended to shorten the duration of calls, not to carry the phone near the groin, not to sleep next to it, not to talk while it is being charged - in fact, it is better to turn it off while it is being charged - and to use a headset or hands-free kit whenever possible,” warned lead author Dr Ariel Zilberlicht, a gynaecologist at Carmel Medical Centre and a faculty member at the Technion Faculty of Medicine, both in Haifa.

Zilberlicht and his colleagues stress that further and larger studies are needed in order to confirm their findings. - Israel 21c

‘Orthodox children attend Jewish day schools’

PHILADELPHIA - How do we ensure the continuation of the Jewish people? This is the question that consumes Michael Steinhardt.

Steinhardt is this year’s keynote speaker at the Jack M Barrack Hebrew Academy’s gala. His connection to Philadelphia began with his education at Penn, where he earned a degree from Wharton.

After making his fortune on Wall Street, Steinhardt decided to focus fulltime on his passion for the Jewish world. He created the Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life. Among many other initiatives, he was one of the founders of Birthright.

Steinhardt sees a bifurcation in the American Jewish community today. “Virtually 100 per cent of Orthodox students attend day schools,” he said. “Among the non-Orthodox Jews, attendance is between five per cent to 10 per cent.”

He would love to see more non-Orthodox Jewish learners getting a really excellent education in day schools.

It is his fervent hope that the future generations of Jews will care about Judaism and Israel, and will be able to express this in fluent Hebrew!

His grandchildren, whose father is a South African Jew now living in New York City, attend Ramaz Jewish Day School in Manhattan but come to Cape Town every summer and attend Herzlia for a few weeks at a time.- The Philadelphia Jewish Voice



How two Holocaust survivors found romance

LOS ANGELES - In a way, their relationship began like so many others: a workplace romance.

Gabriella Karin, 85, was a docent at the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust (LAMOTH); Robert (“Bob”) Geminder, 80, was on the museum’s board of directors.

His wife, Judy, had died four years ago. Gabriella’s husband, Ofer, passed away two years later.

Neither one expected to love romantically again, but both seemed to understand that their long and fruitful marriages marked them as romantics.

“Is the pope Catholic?” Bob said. “I didn’t stay married for 52 years and she didn’t stay married for 64 years for no reason.”

Both are Holocaust survivors, deeply committed these days to a post-retirement career transmitting their stories to young people.

“We were trying to make menschen (upright citizens) out of young people,” he told the Jewish Journal. “We spoke in schools all the time - I did, Gabriella did - way before we even knew we existed.”

On February 17, they celebrated their first anniversary as a couple, on a speaking tour in Baltimore.

It started innocently. The two have known about each other for half a decade. They got to know each other a little better on the March of the Living, the annual youth pilgrimage to Poland and Israel, listening to the other’s stories of surviving the war. - The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles

Expert on India research to win Israel Prize

JERUSALEM - Professor David Shulman of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem will be awarded the Israel Prize for religious studies and philosophy, the Education Ministry has announced. The Israel Prize is largely regarded as the state’s highest honour. In its decision, the prize committee stated that Shulman was a “brilliant and groundbreaking researcher of the religion, literature, and culture of Southern India”. The committee added: “Prof Shulman is known for a variety of publications in these areas, which has bought him renown in Israel

and in the world and has won co-operation with leading researchers in the field. One of the characterising aspects of his research work is the command over a wide variety of languages including Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam.”

“His outstanding research in diversity deals with different literary issues and numerous research topics including: religion, myth, art, folklore and imagination. In Israel he founded the field of study of India and the majority of researchers of India in Israel are his students,” they wrote.

The prize is presented annually on Independence Day in a state ceremony in Jerusalem in the presence of the president, the prime minister, the Knesset speaker and the Supreme Court president.

- Jerusalem Post

Oz Labour MPs told to spend time in Israel/ Palestine Authority

SYDNEY - New South Wales Labour members will be encouraged to spend substantial time in both Israel and the Palestine Authority when visiting the region.

At the NSW Labour state conference in Sydney, a motion was carried stating that the party believes, as a strong supporter of a two-state solution, that it is important to understand the perspectives of Israelis and Palestinians and “encourages all party members visiting the region for the purpose of understanding the conflict to spend substantial time in both”.

It comes after a push within the party to ban Labour MPs, officials and Young Labour members from accepting subsidised trips to Israel.

The resolution also condemns the Abbott/ Turnbull government for “failing to provide clear leadership on Australia’s contribution to progressing peace” between the two regions and endorses the resolution carried at the ALP national conference last year, which states that if the next round of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians fail, the party will consider recognition of a Palestinian state.

NSW Jewish Board of Deputies President Jeremy Spinak said this was a “sensible outcome” that “rejects the anti-Israel bias and discrimination” promoted by a few party members. - Australian Jewish News

Sinai Indaba in future will be Sinai X

ANT KATZ

Don’t make any plans and save these dates... The immensely successful national educational Sinai Indaba is being reformatted, renamed and, most urgently to note, being brought forward from its usual June occurrence. It will take place between April 3 and 10 this year.

Jewish Report was told by Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein and Laurence Horwitz, his projects strategist, what the community can expect from what Horwitz described as their “new exciting format”. And, adds Rabbi Goldstein, the community should enjoy the “bold new experience which will be interactive and collaborative”.

Firstly, the new name will be “Sinai X. The Experience”.

The event will be held in Johannesburg on Sunday April 3; in Durban, Thursday April 7 and in Cape Town on Sunday April 10.

While Rabbi Goldstein and Horwitz are - for now - holding further details close to their chests, they hope to provide more on Sinai X in the coming weeks. Their online booking system is expected to be up and running in the next week too - so watch this space.

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079-299-3890 during the day.

Chocolate halva cake pops



REBECCA PLINER

Cake pops are such a fun, bite-sized way to serve dessert, particularly for special occasions. And I love this unique twist on the decadent combination of chocolate and halva. For those who might be a little wary of a halva, fear not: You can add as little (or as much) halva as you like. One of the best parts of this recipe is that you can make it with boxed cake mix. That's right - a trained pastry chef is encouraging you to cheat on this one! I have made this recipe with home made mocha cake, but the truth is you cannot tell the difference between scratch-made or boxed, so you might as well save yourself some time. By substituting a few ingredients for high-quality choices, these treats will taste like you were slaving all day. These cake pops are chocolaty, easy to make and sinfully delicious.

- Ingredients:**
- 1 box of moist chocolate cake mix plus eggs and oil per directions.
 - Optional substitutions: For cake mix, instead of water, I used coconut milk. For the oil, I substituted apple sauce.
 - 1 cup halva (any flavour of your choice) plus more for décor.
 - 12 ounces good-quality semi-sweet or dark chocolate (for dipping).
 - Recommended equipment: Popsicle sticks, small ice cream or cookie scoop.

- Method:**
- Prepare boxed cake mix per directions or with optional substitutions. Add crumbled halva into the cake mixture. Bake per directions.
 - Meanwhile, place a piece of parchment paper on a sheet pan and make a space in the fridge or freezer to place once cake pops are rolled.
 - Once cooled, the cake should be moist enough to roll into perfect cake pop consistency. Use a small ice cream

or cookie scoop to help you measure them out, and mix in extra halva pieces to your taste. Wear food-safe gloves if possible; this can get messy quickly. Roll into uniform and tight balls and make sure there are no cracks.

Quick tip: Squish the mixture together tightly, then roll between palms for the perfect cake pop.

- Place in fridge to chill.
- While the cake balls chill, melt and temper the chocolate. Set your microwave on a medium setting. Break up half the chocolate bar into a Pyrex or microwave-safe bowl. Make sure there is no water in the bowl or any utensils you are using.
- Melt the chocolate at 30-second intervals until 90 per cent is melted. Stir to speed up the melting process. Chop the remaining half of the chocolate bar into small chunks. Add to melted chocolate. Let sit for 10 seconds and stir until combined.
- Take the cake balls out of the fridge, dip the popsicle sticks into chocolate and insert them into cake pops. Repeat until finished.
- Once chocolate has set on sticks (not shiny anymore, matte finish), dip cake pop into chocolate. I recommend to constantly stir the chocolate so it stays a good temperature. If the chocolate becomes thick and hardened, place back into microwave, reheat gently and stir.
- Add in extra pieces of room temperature chocolate if you have. It is best to work in a warm kitchen so the chocolate doesn't harden as quickly.
- Decorate cake pops with sprinkles, halva or a drizzle of melted chocolate. Another variation for the pops is to leave out the popsicle sticks and simply dip the cake balls in chocolate and set in mini cupcake liners. These are cute, easy and much faster to prepare.
- Store pops in fridge until serving. You can freeze the pops wrapped tightly in plastic wrap, an airtight container, or a sealed plastic bag. (The Noshers via JTA)

What's On

Today, Friday (February 19)

- UZLC hosts Jack Mink on “A selection of Yiddish Songs” . He will be playing music and giving a talk on it. Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 – 14:00. Contact: Gloria (011) 485-4851 or 072-127-9421.
- Bet David Kids’ Club. Fun Shabbat activities for all children ages 3 - 10. Time: 18:00 - 19:00. Enquiries: Kendyll - youth@betdavid.org.za. Venue: Bet David, Morningside. Enquiries: Sharon (011) 783-7117.
- Bet David Torah study and light breakfast. Time: 08:45 – 09:45. No charge. Venue: Bet David, Morningside. Enquiries: Sharon (011) 783-7117.
- Bet David youth service and activities for all children ages 3 - 10. Time: 10:00 - 12:00. Shabbat morning service. Time: 10:00 – 12:00 followed by a brocha. Venue: Bet David, Morningside. Enquiries Sharon (011) 783-7117.

Saturday (February 20)

- RCHCC hosts a talk by John Matisonn on his latest book, “God, Spies and Lies”. Venue: Clive M Beck Auditorium. Time: 19:30. Donation: R80 (incl refreshments). Booking: Hazel or René (011)

Sunday (February 21)

- WIZO Women Inspired hosts author Kate Emmerson who will share a process “To Step in, Step Up and Step Out”. Venue: Home of Joceline Basserabie (call contacts for venue details). Time: 09:30 for 10:00. Cost: R80 (incl tea and refreshments). Contact for bookings: Joceline: 082-441-4375; Lorraine: 083-268-8016, Maureen: 082-445-1515, Isarae: 083-375-1212, Leslie: 083-456-3911, Ilana: 082-601-2519 or Merlene: 082-410-4976. Bestselling books and DVD’s will be on sale. Please bring cash.
- Cape Town Holocaust Centre in partnership with the Jacob Gitlin Library hosts a book launch: “A World of Pains: A Redemptive

Monday (February 22)

- UJW adult education division hosts Peter Fabricius, foreign editor, Independent Newspapers, on “Hope and Envy: Tunisia, Jihadists, Lies and Western Meddling”. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 09:30. Donation: R35. Contact: (011) 648-1053.

Tuesday (February 23)

- WIZO Johannesburg holds its 102nd AGM in the Beyachad Auditorium, Raedene. Time: 09:30. Helen Maisels Trisk will speak about the 2016 WIZO AGM held in Israel. RSVP: (011) 645-2515 wizojhb@beyachad.co.za
- UJW adult education division hosts Dr Lorraine Chaskalson, formerly of Department of English at Wits, on “The Written Word Leaps off the Page” Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 09:30. Donation: R35. Contact: (011) 648-1053.

Wednesday (February 24)

- HOD’s Lodge Jerusalem is holding a bingo evening at the HOD Centre in Orchards at 19:30 for 20:00. Tickets at R100 for 5 games are available from Colin 072-114-6969, Louis 083-457-7827, Joe (011) 485-5140 [w] or Allen 082-334-0998.
- Second Innings hosts outing to Ngwenya Glass and a tour of Gilroys Breweries. Bus will depart at 09:30 sharp from the parking area below Golden Acres. Cost: R140 for the outing without the brewery tour; R220 for the outing with the brewery tour. Enquiries: Book with Betty Kowal, 072-316-4394.

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Parable?” by Solly Kaplinski of Israel. Venue: Cape Town Holocaust Centre, Gardens. Time: 18:00. Light refreshments. Entrance is free but donations welcome. RSVP: (021) 462-5553 or admin@holocaust.org.za

Guttman or Hajós - it remains Jewish Olympic gold

JACK MILNER

We are in another Olympic year when we once again look to see how much Jewish representation, other than the Israeli team, will be in Rio de Janeiro. The Americans are usually good for the odd Jewish team member, but in the early days of the modern Olympics it was usually countries like Hungary who had most Jews in their teams.

The first Jew to win an Olympic medal since the Games were reinstated in 1896 - at the Athens Games - was Alfred Hajós, a Hungarian Jew. He became the Olympics' first-ever swimming champion, winning the 100m. He also went on to win the 1200m race.

Hajós was born in Budapest, as Arnold Gutt-

mann. He was 13 when he felt compelled to become a good swimmer after his father drowned in the Danube River. He took the name Hajós (which means "sailor" in Hungarian) for his athletic career because it was a Hungarian name and anti-Semitism was rife in the country.

Hajós was an architecture student when the Athens Games took place. He was allowed to compete, but permission from the university to miss classes was difficult to obtain. In fact, when he returned to the university the dean did not congratulate Hajós on his Olympic success, but instead said: "Your medals are of no interest to me, but I am eager to hear your replies in your next examination."

In those days the swimming events were not staged in a beautifully kept swimming pool but

rather in the Mediterranean Sea where swimmers had to battle the elements. The 18-year-old Hajós won his two medals in extremely cold conditions with the water temperature about 13 degrees Celsius, with waves crashing down on the swimmers.

Before the 1200m race, he smeared his body with a thick layer of grease, but it proved to be of little protection against the cold. "My will to live completely overcame my desire to win," he later admitted.

At a dinner honouring Olympic winners, the Crown Prince of Greece asked Hajós where he had learned to swim so well. Hajós replied: "In the water."

Ironically, the athlete he beat in the 100m swim was Otto Herschmann, a Jewish Austrian swimmer, fencer, lawyer and sports official. Herschmann finished just half a length behind Hajós with the balance of the swimmers unsighted. So it was a Jewish one and two in the event.

From 1912 to 1948, the Olympics included "art competitions" in which medals were awarded for architecture, literature, music, painting, and sculpture. Those medal totals are no longer included in the official tally, but they were popular at the time. Hajós, who became a renowned architect, won for his design of a stadium.

Despite winning the competition, he was only awarded a silver medal. The officials decided not to award the gold in architecture that year. No reason was ever given.

Herschmann also won a silver medal at the 1912 Summer Olympics, in the men's team sabre event in fencing and is one of only three athletes to date to have won an Olympic medal in more than one sport.

Other Jewish fencers who participated in the



First Jewish Olympic gold medallist Alfred Hajós from Hungary pictured with his swimming medals at the 1896 Games in Athens.

1912 Olympics included Hungarian gold-medal winning sabre fencers Dr Jenő Fuchs, Dr Dező Földes, Lajos Werkner, and Dr Oszkár Gerde, and Austrian silver-medal winning sabre fencer Albert Bogen.

Herschmann served as president of the Austrian Olympic Committee from 1912 to 1914 and then as president of the Austrian Swimming Federation from 1914 to 1932.

Herschmann was in private practice as a lawyer in the 1940s but was persecuted by the Nazis. On January 14, 1942 he was arrested and deported from Vienna to Izbica concentration camp in German-occupied Poland. He died on June 17, 1942 in the Sobibor extermination camp.

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Maccabi SA junior cricketers look to 2017

JACK MILNER

The Olympic Games take place later this year and the next Maccabiah is due to take place in July 2017. Maccabi SA is beginning preparations for the Maccabiah and Gauteng junior cricket trials will be taking place over two Sundays - on March 6 and 13 - at Crawford Sandton, from 08:30 to 13:00.

Only players born between 1999 and 2002 are eligible for selection for the 2017 Games. Players who would like to be selected are expected to be present at both days of the trials and no exceptions will be made. The trial registration fee is R200. Players must come dressed in white cricket kit and are required to bring their own cricket balls.

The Maccabi Junior Cricket Management Committee has selected a professional broad-based and independent panel of six selectors for these trials, according to Myron Michel, convener of Maccabi SA junior cricket. No parent, Maccabi administrator or committee member is on the selection panel.

Some 39 players will be selected at these Gauteng regional trials and together with players selected from other provinces, will be eligible to compete at Maccabi national trials on Sunday May 1 and Monday May 2 in Johannesburg at Crawford Sandton. A team of 15 players will be selected at the national trials to represent South Africa at the 2017 Maccabiah.

• Should you be interested in registering your child for the Gauteng trials, please forward his name and date of birth to joanne@corpersion.co.za. Closing date for entries is Sunday, February 28.

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TRULY KOSHER

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