

south african  
**Jewish Report**

Volume 21 - Number 13 ■ April 28 2017 ■ 2 Iyar 5777

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# south african Jewish Report

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Photo: Ricci Goldstein



## Lest we forget...

See pages 8 – 11

Don Krausz speaking at the Yom Hashoah memorial ceremony in Johannesburg

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# South Africa to sell arms to Iran?

STEVEN GRUZD

Iran has threatened to wipe Israel off the map. Former US President George W Bush said Iran, with Iraq and North Korea, formed the "Axis of Evil". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu considers Iran the Middle East's greatest threat, with its nuclear ambitions, and support of Hezbollah, Hamas and Syria. Its human rights record is deplorable.

So, why is South Africa seeking to sell it weapons worth about R1,5 billion?

Last month, Rapport newspaper reported that state-owned Denel Dynamics has applied, through the Department of International Relations and Co-operation, to the United Nations Security Council to sell a consignment of arms to Iran, including its Umkhonto surface-to-air missile.

The 2015 nuclear deal with Iran requires Security Council approval for conventional arms transactions until 2020.

History matters here. The apartheid regime had solid relations with Iran under the Shah, but diplomatic contacts were severed by Tehran after the 1979 revolution (despite a secret \$750 million weapons-for-oil deal in 1985). The ANC and Iran quickly found common cause against apartheid and imperialism.

In government, the ANC has consistently emphasised Iran's right to develop civilian nuclear technology, preaching constructive dialogue rather than Western-driven sanctions. South Africa only supported full sanctions after intense US pressure.

Military analyst Helmoed Römer Heitman said: "The government is very strongly influenced by the old guard with their Soviet-induced hatred and suspicion of the US and 'the West'... Key people in government simply do not believe anything negative about Iran: Iran is hostile to the US and so must be 'good'. "Anything to the contrary is despicable US/Western propaganda."

He draws parallels with South African support for Cuba, Libya (under Muammar Qaddafi) and Zimbabwe.

Michal Onderco, assistant professor of international relations at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, wrote: "In the ANC's world view, the oppressor today is the West (or the North), which oppresses weaker, smaller states within a fundamentally unjust system."

And with sanctions now lifting, according to Malte Brosig, associate professor of international relations at Wits University, "there is a 'gold rush' feeling around the globe, as Iran is eager to modernise its economy and armed forces... Given South Africa's shaky economic situation, it should come as no surprise that the government supports these large-scale sales."

Brosig also highlights geopolitics: "Supporting Iran fits into South Africa's critical position towards Israel and the Palestinian question. Iran supports Hamas. The deal could also be seen from a BRICS perspective [the grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa].

"Russia and Iran support Assad in Syria. South Africa has been a stern opponent of

regime change. Thus, there might be a link going from Tehran to Damascus, Moscow to Pretoria."

Since the 2015 nuclear agreement, Pretoria-Tehran relations have rapidly strengthened. Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa led several ministers and 80 business leaders to Iran in November 2015, launching the South Africa-Iran Business Council.

President Jacob Zuma met President Hassan Rouhani on a state visit to Iran in April 2016. In December, the respective defence ministers signed a memorandum of understanding on military co-operation, presumably spurring this proposed deal.

"The ANC leadership simply does not share the Western view that what Iran is doing is fundamentally bad," said Onderco. "It sees a respectable partner that has been victimised and wronged by the West, and sees no reason not to do business with it."

He notes that government is legally required to consider human rights in prospective arms sales. "But, of course one's friends never violate human rights, while one's enemies always do."

Denel Dynamics declined to comment.

### Shabbat Times this week

| Starts | Ends  |                |
|--------|-------|----------------|
| 17:22  | 18:12 | Johannesburg   |
| 17:51  | 18:43 | Cape Town      |
| 17:06  | 17:57 | Durban         |
| 17:26  | 18:16 | Bloemfontein   |
| 17:22  | 18:14 | Port Elizabeth |
| 17:14  | 18:06 | East London    |

### Parshat Tazria Metzora

## The leper who dwells alone

As humans, we have three vehicles or channels through which all our experiences are lived: Thought, speech and action.

Pesach and the month of Nisan emphasises thought. Iyar, the month we have just entered has a particular connection to speech. Sivan, the month of Shavuot relates primarily to action.

Pesach is the celebration of our freedom. It is the liberation that enables us to have a G-d-defined existence as opposed to one in which we are victims of environmental forces, or impotent bystanders lacking control over our destiny.

Freedom is fundamentally a mindset. If we relinquish our mind, we lose our freedom. Hence Nisan corresponds to thought.

Jumping to Sivan, it is the month that corresponds to action, because that is the essence of Shavuot and what Sinai is all about. The Torah given on Shavuot to Bnei Yisrael, mandates us to actively engage the mundane world and thereby infuse it with holiness. The commandments are primarily action-based. Sivan emphasises the characteristic of action.

In between those two is Iyar, the month we have just begun, the focus of which centres on speech. During this month we commemorate the tragic episode wrought by misused speech when Rabbi Akivah's students disrespected one another, which brought on a plague and the loss of 24 000 students.

It is no co-incidence then, that this week's portion, Tazria/Metzora, the month's first, deals with speech. It discusses the skin ailment known as leprosy, manifested as a result of slander and the

perpetrator who contracts it has then to go into a state of isolation and subsequent purification before rejoining society.

From the word for isolation/aloneness we discover a powerful concept. The word is "badad". Elsewhere in the Torah it uses the word to refer to the Jewish people: "A nation that dwells 'badad', alone." This does not mean the Jewish people are reclusive or isolationists.

Their way of life is unique and different and in upholding their Jewish mores they automatically find themselves walking a different and individual path.

The idea here, however, is not only saying that their "aloneness" is an outcome of them asserting their unique character, but, that their "aloneness" is the very description of their being in touch with their unique identity.

A principle: Any time the same word is used in the Torah in different places there is a connection. What is the connection between the esteemed compliment of Bilaam, "A nation that dwells alone" and the leper, who is anything but esteemed and has to isolate himself? They appear opposite!

Understanding Bilaam's praise gives us the depth here:

By saying the leper must "dwell alone", the Torah is hinting that the leper has lost something essential and unique.

What distinguishes a human being is speech, the unique characteristic that elevates man above other species. One who slanders has damaged that which makes him human and he must therefore "dwell alone".

In other words, he must rediscover his uniqueness, his humanness and indeed that of others, in the after-event of him having slandered and thus diminished another.



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# Thulsies target King David Linksfield

ANT KATZ

South African Jewry are reeling after startling new evidence emerged in the trial of Brandon-Lee and Tony-Lee Thulsie on Tuesday, revealing that the country's largest Jewish high school, King David Linksfield in Johannesburg, was on the 23-year-old identical twins' list of previously undisclosed Jewish targets.

The names of Jewish cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro (Zapiro) and investment manager Roy Topol, were also on the list, revealed in court.

Angry King David parents and teachers believed they should have been warned before hearing this on the news while their loved ones were still at the school. Apparently the school had been briefed some three months ago.

The community was so perturbed that the Community Security Organisation (CSO) agreed to hold a public meeting on Wednesday night to allay the concerns of those "seeking clarity - both on the facts of the case and on the security situation of our community", said the organisation, mandated to look after the security of the Johannesburg



Brandon-Lee and Tony-Lee Thulsie



advertised for explosive detonators on the deep web, which is not picked up by search engines such as Google.

Due to their being held under Terrorism Act charges, the Thulsies are not automatically entitled to bail.

This week's court appearance was held to facilitate the trial being moved from the Magistrates Court to the High Court. For this reason, a legal pundit told Jewish Report, it had been necessary for the State to make the court aware of the gravity of the charges. This was why they finally disclosed some of the targets on the list.

Cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro (Zapiro) would not speak to the media, according to his office. He was believed to have been on the list for having drawn the prophet Muhammad. Investment manager Roy Topol, told Jewish Report he knew why he was on the list, but would not divulge details. However, Topol is a well-known Zionist activist on social media.

"Prior to the arrests," (of the Thulsies) said Rabbi Kacev, "we had been adding additional security measures at our schools at immense cost." Those measures had begun last May, he explained. The main thrust of the SABJE security upgrades are to create additional security at the entrances to their schools. "Once they are in, somebody will get hurt," said Kacev.

The schools had added a second tier of security at all entrances, as well as extra cameras on the premises and had several other ongoing security initiatives. "We had acted pre-emptively after watching what has been going on globally." He added that it is important for South African Jewry that the Thulsie case be won. "The authorities have been so expert in their handling of this case; it really has been impressive," he said.

Other new information disclosed in court this week, included:

- The Thulsies planned to use firearms, explosives and possibly poisons.
- Other targets were the British, US, Russian and French embassies in Pretoria.
- The twins' social media discussions prior to their arrest included incriminating evidence.

National chairman of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, Jeff Katz, said that the Board has been "working very closely with prosecutors and the investigating officers" and we are confident in the ability of the State" to make its case.

The CSO (Community Security Organisation), has also been in close contact with the authorities throughout the case.

"It is vital for the community to empower itself as the randomness of the targets show that neither the CSO nor the authorities can do this alone," said a communal notice on Tuesday.

The brothers, who have changed their names to Sallahuddin and Yakeen, are still being remanded in custody.

A 12th charge, of fraud perpetrated in the Free State in 2015, was added this week. Prosecutor Chris MacAdam asked the court to postpone the matter to May 15 so that he can finalise whether the new count, which falls outside the jurisdiction of the Gauteng High Court, could be added together with the other charges.

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# SA ministers slam Israel as 'apartheid state'

ANT KATZ

New Sports Minister Thulas Nxesi and Deputy Minister in the Presidency Buti Manamela, have both publicly slammed Israel, claiming that "innocent Palestinians" were being killed daily by Israel. Manamela even repeatedly vented his fury on supporters of Israel in South Africa.

Manamela - who is also on the ANC National Executive Committee - spoke at a Boycott,

Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) South Africa-Israel Apartheid Week event earlier in the month. "The supporters of Israeli apartheid are not only in Israel, but they are also here," in South Africa. He went on to accuse supporters of Israel in South Africa of "also propagating the ideals" of apartheid Israel and of "ensuring that apartheid is meted out to the people of Palestine."

He went further in accusing South African supporters of Israel of "sponsoring the apartheid regime in Israel" and accused locals who were pro-Israel of "ensuring that the killing of innocent Palestinians on a daily basis goes on".

Manamela accused Israel of being "the most barbaric perpetrators of apartheid since apartheid South Africa". And he had harsh words for Israel's supporters in this country: "We are not only sending a message to the Israeli regime, but we are also sending a message to their local supporters."

But the harshest rhetoric came from post-reshuffle Minister of Sports and Recreation Thulas Nxesi (who is also a member of the SACP Central Committee), who spoke in Johannesburg on April 10 at a welcoming ceremony for Palestinian marathon runners who took part in the Two Oceans in Cape Town. Wearing a Palestinian scarf and speaking on a platform covered with BDS-SA branding, Nxesi went on an anti-Israel hate fest, accusing Israel of being the Palestinians' "jailers".

Nxesi insisted Palestinians had had their

"land taken by force, (were) subjected to military occupation, colonised and living under discriminatory laws, herded into bantustans, imprisoned behind high walls, (and have) their freedom of movement severely restricted".

He went on to accuse Israel of "bombing stadiums in the Gaza Strip in 2006 and again in the murderous bombing campaign of 2014 - when the stadium which had been rebuilt with the help of Fifa, was again damaged, together with 31 other sports facilities."

He added: "We recognise the conflict for what it is, rooted in the national oppression of all Palestinians."

And as sports minister, he added that it appeared the "Israeli government has long declared war on Palestinian sport" and that solidarity with Palestinians was not enough and that there was a need for something more concrete to be done. "To this end I will be consulting with the BDS and the Palestinian Embassy."

Every person has a right to participate in sports and recreation. This fundamental right is embodied in a number of UN instruments, emphasised the minister.

He insisted that his comments were not "anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic", but rather legitimate criticism of the Israeli Government for its "oppressive actions against the Palestinian people. Such criticism springs from the same humanitarian spirit that equally condemns persecution of Jews or any other racial or religious group," he claimed.

Debunking the two ministers' comments, SA Zionist Federation National Chairman Ben Swartz told Jewish Report that the ministers were speaking from "a position of ignorance". Their views represented "radical hatred" he added and were indicative of the "absolute desperation we are seeing from the ANC".

He wanted to know who could take the ANC seriously. "Just like anything with ANC politics today, they are totally out of touch with reality and their ignorance of the facts is increasingly making their views irrelevant in the global arena."



Thulas Nxesi

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## Chief Rabbi changes prayer for the country

TALI FEINBERG

Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein has changed the Prayer for the Republic of South Africa - a prayer rabbis say every Saturday morning in shul.

"Bless us with a President who is morally worthy of this nation of heroes, a President and government of integrity and honesty, dedicated with selfless devotion to the service and upliftment of all the people of South Africa." This was added to the previous version.

The chief rabbi explains his motivation to do this: "Given the circumstances of what is happening in South Africa right now, it

is important that we as take a stand against the immorality of corruption and state capture. We believe in the power of prayer to change the world and so our prayers must say what we want."

This particular prayer, for the welfare of the government of the country in which we live, is the only prayer that we say that is not in a siddur and is open to change. It is an ancient tradition that emanates from Pirkei Avot (Ethics of The Fathers) in the Mishnah.

Its content is left to the discretion of the particular country's religious leaders, but generally focuses on calling for the country's leaders to lead with wisdom, a

sense of justice in order to advance the welfare of the nation.

It is read on Shabbat morning at the end of the Torah reading and just before the Torah is replaced in the ark. It is recited by the rabbi in English.

The chief rabbi says "this prayer reflects our aspirations and dreams for South Africa. The new prayer captures what we want the most."

The prayer was last changed in 1994 in South Africa to mark the new democratic order.

The chief rabbi says the new version will remain "as we see how things unfold. It represents our aspirations for a government of integrity. If there is a dramatic

change in circumstances, we can reconsider."

In England, the prayer is said about the Queen and in the US, like in South Africa, about the president and deputy president. During the First World War, Jews on both sides prayed for the victory of their country's leaders, according to OzTorah.com's article on "Jewish Prayers for the Government". It maintained that the same happened during the Falklands War (between Britain and Argentina).

"It is important for a moral voice in the country to be heard and this is one way we believe is most powerful," says Rabbi Goldstein.

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# Rabbonim lead in protest

TALI FEINBERG

“This is the beginning of a great resistance, of a series of marches and protests, of legal and political actions, which flow so naturally from the spirit of freedom and dignity of all South Africans who will not be subjugated by the greed and dishonesty of a few. As the Jewish community, we must be proud to join in this new struggle to build a great country for all who live in it.”

These are the words written by Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein in a message to the community after taking part in countrywide protests, calling for President Jacob Zuma to stand down.

The protests - which are ongoing - were in response to Zuma's Cabinet reshuffle, firing Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan and his deputy Mcebisi Jonas and leading the country to junk status.

Rabbi Goldstein encouraged all members of the Jewish community to follow his example and take part in protests, to join hands with their fellow South Africans and to be guided by Jewish values and the struggle for liberation, as inspired by the story of Exodus told on Pesach. Addressing a massive and diverse crowd at the “Save SA” rally in Pretoria, he led a rousing chant of “Let my people go” and “Freedom from corruption, freedom from state capture”.

While some may criticise rabbonim for taking part in protests and leading the call for Zuma to step down, Rabbi Dovi Rabin commented: “People were very impressed to see that religious leaders have engaged in the process, not just in thought and speech, but through action.”

Rabbi Gidon Fox said that “it behoves all

moral and decent people to speak out against such moral bankruptcy,” while Rabbi Ramon Widmonte emphasised: “The Jewish people detest injustice and unfairness; the Jewish people are rachmanim, bnei rachmanim (merciful people, children of merciful people).

In a speech at a memorial for late Struggle stalwart Ahmed Kathrada, Rabbi Greg Alexander said: “All of us, including all Jews in South Africa at this point in history and at all times, have a special responsibility to take whatever action we can, to protect and advance hard-won freedoms.”

Rabbi Rabin explains: “The policy of the Chief Rabbi is that whenever there is a request for a prayer to be said at a rally, we always attend,” and he therefore delivered a prayer on behalf of the Chief Rabbi at a march.

“There was a tremendous camaraderie of all South Africans from various political parties and all races and religions. The other religious leaders commented that they have never seen such a diverse crowd at any of the previous rallies they have attended.”

Rabbi Rabin says all countries have been through challenging and difficult times. “We are not unique in this regard. We have a wonderful future in South Africa. We are blessed and fortunate to practise our Judaism freely, unlike in other countries.

Rabbis from various denominations in cities across South Africa joined the protests and some spoke at memorials for Kathrada. The memorials themselves were sites of protest and Rabbi Alexander of the Cape Town Progressive Hebrew Congregation addressed the Cape Town gathering, saying: “Jewish responsibility includes the obligation to make sure the rights of the poor and vulnerable in society



Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein among the other leaders of the 7 April protest march in Pretoria.

are protected, that our country is founded on justice for all, that we see a future with hope and optimism.”

Rabbi Fox attended a march in his capacity as rabbi of the Pretoria community and encouraged his members to do the same. “This was not a political rally; it was about moral leadership and care for the impoverished and as such the responsibility of everyone to make their voices heard.”

“The recent shenanigans were, in my view, a final intolerable act that spoke of the moral decay which our country has seen since the installation of a president who himself is morally vacuous, both personally and politically.

“With this last perfidious act, the moral corrosion was such that I felt one could not simply remain silent. The march was a vote against the moral decay of a leader who has dragged his party to the depth of moral turpitude and ignored with great callousness the plight of his people. It behoves all moral and decent people to speak out against such moral bankruptcy.”

Rabbi Fox says people from all walks of life, from all races and all religions, all political parties and all economic circumstances, “walked side by side, hand in hand in peace and in harmony, with one care only: the welfare

of our country and its magnificent people who deserve a moral, principled and caring leadership.”

Rabbi Widmonte marched in his personal capacity and did so because he feels it is the role of leadership - and in particular Jewish leadership - to contribute productively to broader society.

“For me, the grants scandal was the final straw - the current government took 17 million poor people to the edge of desperation: this is simply evil and was a marker for me of their disregard of the value of human life.”

Rabbi Pinchas Zeckry of the Durban Hebrew Congregation spoke at the Ahmed Kathrada memorial service in Durban, where he emphasised the lessons of Pesach: “The first freedom fighter recorded in the Bible, Moshe, didn't look for the position of leadership - in fact he refused it, suggesting his brother as a better candidate. “Secondly, he did not do it for personal gain - his pursuit for freedom for his people almost cost him his life and he lost all personal comforts.

“Thus, the test will be the day after these protests: Are we going to give up or go back to normal, or continue until the people's message and wishes reach the leadership and bring change?”

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## South African Jewish Report Freedom to right wrongs

We celebrate Freedom Day this week and I feel I have to pause and consider just how free we are and how far we have come as a country and as a community.

So many of us right now are worried about the future of this country, with good reason. We have a president who has gone so far off the rails, he seems to be free falling... As he chuckles at the people gathering around the country to protest his ongoing rule, his kneejerk reaction is to blame it on white racists and outside government interference.

The truth is we have many freedoms in this country, most of which we are oblivious to.

For example, in this newspaper this week we contemplate the cartoonist, Jonathan Shapiro's (aka Zapiro) disturbing cartoon in which he depicts President Jacob Zuma and his Gupta crony gang-raping South Africa.

In another time, even purely factual news was censored before going to print and many a journalist found herself behind bars for being critical of the government. We now have such freedom of speech that we regularly challenge the government in our media with alacrity.

Before Friday April 7, many South African Jews had never been involved in a protest march. Those of us who had, have chilling memories of aggressive policemen with quirts and guns with rubber bullets just chomping at the bit to use them. Those were scary days, indeed!

On April 7, we all cheerfully marched to the Union Buildings, with a huge police presence, but they were cheerful and smiling, looking far more like they had the day off than waiting for the enemy to strike.

Then our Chief Rabbi stood up and led the diverse crowd in chanting for freedom from corruption and state capture. However, the fact that he was there and had marched in the frontline with other South African leaders, is freedom.

I recall back in the 1980s, Jewish communal organisations did not publicly voice their protest - even if they believed in it. I had a sense back then that it was out of fear of what might happen if they did. Now, we all feel quite free to say what we believe. That is freedom!

In this edition, we write about all the rabbis who are stepping out in protest against the Zuma administration. It is so encouraging that our spiritual leaders are taking the lead in doing what they can to help us attain the freedoms that have been taken from us, as in freedom from corruption and state capture.

I find it fascinating that it isn't our communal leaders or politicians among us, but the rabbis who are making a stand. I say Kol Hakavod to them!

I know there are people, rabbis as well, who are fearful of being so outspoken as they see Jews as being "visitors" in any country outside of Israel. In this week's poignant commemorations all over the country, we are reminded of how real that was in Germany all those years ago.

However, in any instance, it is incumbent on those who witness wrongdoing to stand up against it. Had people stood up against the Nazis on behalf of the Jews, would the Holocaust have happened or could they have stopped so many Jews from being killed?

This week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cited a UN document that showed the Allies were aware of the scale of the Holocaust in 1942. He says, if they had acted against the death camps then, they could have saved four million Jews and millions of other people.

On that note, I am grateful for our freedoms and ask that we all exercise our rights against wrong.

**Peta Krost Maunder**  
Editor



## Dateline: Middle East Middle East peace - is it action replay?

PAULA SLIER

**W**hen I moved to the Middle East more than a decade ago, I was excited to cover my first round of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. There were demands from both sides.

Israelis insisted there be no preconditions; Palestinians in turn wanted a state of their own along 1967 borders with Jerusalem as the capital. The right of return for Palestinian refugees was also a contentious issue.

I reported with all the drama and suspense that goes into good television news journalism - would either side give in? What would happen? What wouldn't happen? A few years later there I was, at it again, reporting on failed talks, the possibility of new ones and what all of it meant. Then a few years on... you guessed it.

So, when it was announced that Palestinian Authority President

Mahmoud Abbas would be heading to Washington next week for talks, the thought flashed through my mind to pull those old tapes and consider re-running them.

Reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has become predictable and over the years nothing much has changed - the issues, the objections, the frustrations are the same, if not more. One sobering difference, though, is that I've got noticeably older and so tape reruns wouldn't work!

This month, three years ago, the last US-sponsored peace talks between the sides finally broke down after nine months of delicate negotiations. The deep divides over settlement construction and what should be the future borders of a Palestinian state, proved in the end insurmountable.

And while these issues still have not been resolved, as Abbas gets ready to leave for Washington, there's a very different energy in the air. There's certainly a different president waiting to welcome him in Washington.

Donald Trump is a strong leader - like him or abhor him, he's certainly shown he's not one to back down - as his recent airstrikes in Syria, his threats against North Korea and his squaring up to Russian President Vladimir Putin have demonstrated.

**I**n a telling remark, the Palestinian Authority president recently said of the upcoming visit: "We are glad that now the US administration listens about us from us, and not from third parties..."

It could very well have been a jab at Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, who by the time he stepped down, had Israelis and Palestinians agreeing on at least one thing: Obama wasn't the man to bring peace to the sides. Of course it remains to be seen if Trump is.

But Abbas needs him. Trump's brief phone call last month during which he invited the Palestinian leader to the White House helped lift Abbas out of political isolation, albeit that Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had already met in February and have spoken twice over the phone.

Trump has also already hosted Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and King Abdullah II of Jordan.

Abbas is in a weak position domestically because of the deep internal divisions between the West Bank over which he governs and the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. Last year, Saudi Arabia cut off funding to his Ramallah-based government that left the cash-strapped Palestinian Authority without millions of much needed dollars.

A secret summit in Aqaba last year, organised by Washington and during which Netanyahu met with Egyptian and Jordanian leaders in an effort to hammer out a regional peace push (it failed) was held without Abbas' knowledge. Add to this the violence that is consuming the Arab world at the moment and which has left it weak - and Abbas isn't left with too many bargaining chips.

There are indications that during the meeting Trump will present Abbas with a document calling on the Palestinians to agree to renew negotiations with Israel without preconditions and without an Israeli commitment to freeze



Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, talks to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

settlement construction. In exchange Trump will not act to transfer the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Neither side has confirmed these reports.

**M**eanwhile, Abbas' on-the-record remarks have been that he is open to meeting with Netanyahu in Washington under the patronage of Trump, but that nothing short of a complete settlement freeze remains a deal breaker.

It will be interesting to see how Trump - who isn't exactly renowned for his delicate negotiating skills - manages to get over this hump. In true Trump fashion he might do something that right now is impossible to predict.

No doubt, Abbas will find himself under pressure from the new American president and his vision for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - which is closer to the Israeli vision than the Palestinians'. Given Abbas' weak ability to bargain for the Palestinian side, there could be some agreement on the cards for a resumption of peace talks rather than a permanent agreement. But that alone would be a step in the right direction. Maybe, just maybe, I can finally throw out those old tapes.

• Paula Slier is the Middle East Bureau Chief of RT, the founder and CEO of NewshoundMedia and the inaugural winner of the Europcar Woman in Leadership Award of the South African Absa Jewish Achievers.

### World News in Brief

#### Trump says it's 'possible' he will ditch Iran deal

WASHINGTON - It's "possible" that the United States will not remain in the Iran nuclear deal, President Donald Trump said.

"I believe they have broken the spirit of the agreement," Trump told The Associated Press. "There is a spirit to agreements, and they have broken it."

Asked by the AP whether that meant the United States would stick with the 2015 deal, which swapped sanctions relief for a rollback in Iran's nuclear programme, Trump said: "It's possible that we won't."

Trump's administration in recent weeks has delivered mixed messages about the agreement, which he reviled during his

campaign as the "worst" he had ever encountered but never fully pledged to kill.

On April 19, the Trump administration affirmed in the morning that Iran was in compliance with the deal and in the afternoon said it would review its terms.

Critics of the deal say the sanctions relief allows Iran to spend toward backing terrorism and promoting instability in the region. Trump also is unhappy that Iran continues to test ballistic missiles, which is barred by UN Security Council resolutions but is not under the terms of the nuclear pact. (JTA)



# Protests in SA: A teachable moment



Photo supplied

**NIA MAGOULIANITI-MCGREGOR**

“The doors [of learning] will remain open.” This was said by General Director of the SA Board of Jewish Education (SABJE) Rabbi Craig Kacev after imminent anti-Zuma protest action sparked robust debate on whether Jewish day schools should close on Friday, April 7.

With Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein calling on South Africans to join him in the protest march to the Union Buildings to say “no to corruption and state capture”, queries grew from parents, on the right course of action for children at Jewish schools around Johannesburg.

After in-depth discussions with stakeholders, Rabbi Kacev, along with other board members, concluded that schools should be “a place of learning and not a space in which a particular political viewpoint is imposed”.

He said heads of schools were in the process of considering “how to assist students to grapple with what they see in the media”, with all views “respectfully considered”.

King David Victory Park High School principal Andrew Baker, said discussions centred on the question: “What does it mean to be an educational institution? We reached the conclusion that we should not lose this teachable moment.

“While the decision was taken to remain open, we also decided there would be no repercussions for those children who didn’t arrive.”

Principal of King David Linksfield High School, Lorraine Srage agrees. “Even on the subject of Israel, though we are a Zionist institution,

we do not espouse any particular political point of view in the classrooms.

“Instead, taking into account that there are political complexities in South Africa that stretch beyond an anti-Zuma stance, on the Friday in question, we invited the founder of the Jewish anti-Apartheid Movement, Howard Sackstein, to give an overview of modern South African politics, which included the facts behind the Cabinet reshuffle which led to the protest action.”

**Rabbi Kacev, along with other board members, concluded that schools should be “a place of learning and not a space in which a particular political viewpoint is imposed”.**

As Sackstein says, “I gave a very factual talk about the players in South African politics and their various motivations”.

While Yeshiva College had closed on the Thursday before April 7 for Pesach, Principal Denese Bloch said the question of whether to close a school was, “a complex issue where the rights of the child and parents have to be taken into account.

“I completely endorse my children’s rights to protest peacefully,” she says. “While I’m not ruling out the idea on closing the school for a day in the event of future protest action, no unilateral decision would be taken without consulting parents and the Foundation board members.

Parents would make the final decision after consultation.”

With Cape Town schools on holiday on the Friday, principal of Herzlia High School, Marc Falconer, was spared having to make a decision, but, he says he believes it’s “part of the educational process to allow pupils to explore their democratic responsibility to protest”.

Still, says Falconer, there should be no question that any pupil be forced into a protest. “Politics is tricky but if there were sufficient numbers who wanted to protest this kind of action, we could find ways of staging a protest in ways that would minimise the teaching disruption: an afternoon or weekend protest or a protest assembly or a protest march... Something of that nature while working with the leadership committees of the school.”

As it turned out, few children arrived at King David Victory Park High School on April 7. “The main reasons included a practical fear of the commute,” says Baker. “Most of our children come from the eastern side of the M1 and a few take advantage of the bus system. Parents were concerned that the roads might be blocked getting home.

“Some took part in the various demonstrations around the city while, no doubt, a few thought there wouldn’t be much happening that day anyway, so chose to stay away.”

Rabbi Kacev has suggested steering clear of a “spiral into negativity”. Calling South Africa “a democratic country”, he said it was “this same democracy that gives us a voice and ability to engage with issues and express our views freely”.

**Mom: A title just above a Queen.**

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# Krausz bears witness at West Park Cemetery

ROBYN SASSEN

The horror of what happens when one kind of people dehumanise another, was a thread running through the second half of the Yom Hashoah ceremony at West Park Cemetery on Sunday.

With Don Krausz, a survivor born in Holland of Hungarian and English roots, telling his harrowing tale of survival and luck, horror and privations, and losses too great to bear that simply had to be borne, the event's capacity audience was rapt.

"As a Holocaust survivor I have an obligation not to forget and to bear witness," he concluded his detailed and candid testimony, which took him from Rotterdam as a seven-year-old, to Westerbork and Ravensbruck and finally on the death march. Krausz's childhood was broken by the horror he had to make sense of.

"My obligation is to testify to what I experienced and to remember it. My conclusion was, not that the people who had murdered us were monsters but that they had been indoctrinated to the point where they believed that we, Jews, were not human.

"If you find a poisonous snake in your house, what do you do? You look to kill it. You don't ask if it's a mommy snake. Or a baby. And that was the attitude of the anti-Semites where Jews were concerned. My message is: Don't dehumanise people."

ANC MP Thandile Sunda was visibly moved by the whole ceremony. "The Jewish community is not doing enough to educate the broader community about the horrors of the Holocaust," she felt. "They must go into communities: [the children] are learning about the (Second) World War, but they don't know what really happened to the Jews."

Another thread through the programme was community. Shaun Zagnoev, the Gauteng Council's chairman, reflected that of all the days in the Jewish calendar, Yom Hashoah is the most communal.

Rabbi Yossi Goldman told of the plight and challenges his father, the late Reb Shimon Goldman z"l, faced in escaping the Holocaust to find sanction. "I speak to you not as a rabbi," he began, "but as the son of a survivor. My father was not in a concentration camp, but he was the sole survivor of his entire, large family in

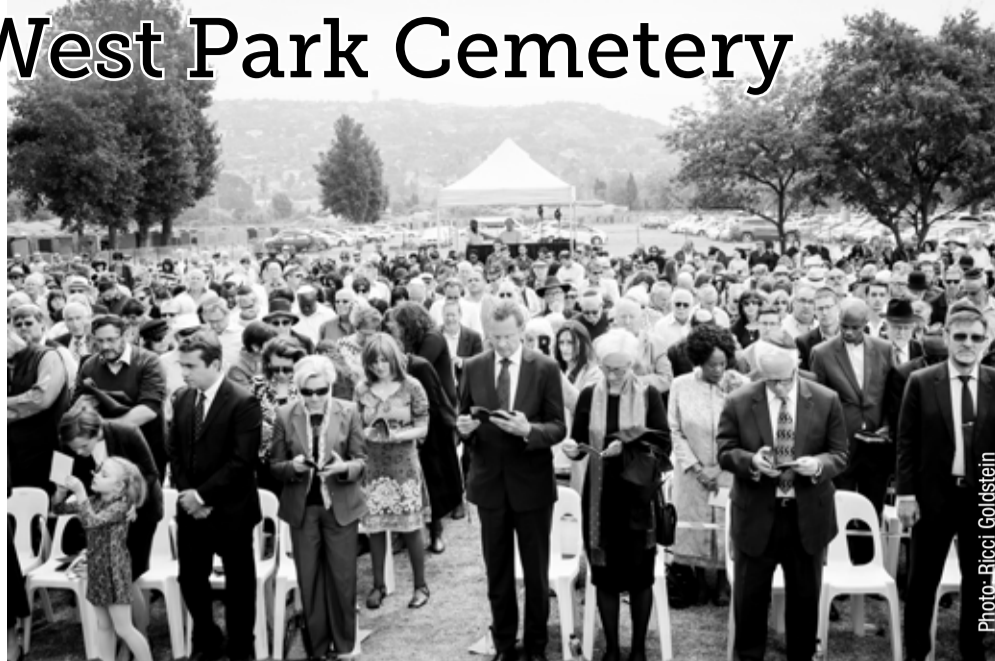


Photo: Rieci Goldstein

Poland; a distinguished family that could trace its lineage back to Rashi."

At 14, Shimon was not rebellious, but he elected to run away from home. That saved his life. He received a transit visa in Vilna through Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara, who was responsible for saving some 6 000 Jews, and travelled through Moscow to Japan, then Shanghai and finally New York, after the war ended.

"My father was never certain whether his family's last days were spent in Majdanek or Treblinka. There were no graves. No tombstones. Every year, he would observe one day of yahrzeit. 12 Elul, for his entire family.

Rabbi Goldman described the community's responsibility - not only to remember the

Holocaust's atrocities, but to rebuild. "If it was our destiny to go through the death camps of Auschwitz and Ravensbruck, it was not our destiny to die. Our Divine destiny is not only to survive, but to live and to flourish as Jews, raising generations of proud, committed, knowledgeable, practising Jews. My father's proudest achievement was the family he rebuilt."

Deputy Ambassador to Israel Ayellet Black, spoke about the next generation's imperative to see "the baton of Holocaust memory" change hands. Featuring candle-lighting by Holocaust survivors, the communal singing of the Partisan song and a tribute to fallen Jewish soldiers by Bill Bergman of the SA Jewish Ex-Servicemen's League, the ceremony was concluded with a Hazkarah by Levi Singer.

## The 'compromise' Shoah ceremony

ROBYN SASSEN

Rabbi Julia Margolis, chairman of the South African Centre for Religious Equality and Diversity (SACRED) described this year's Yom Hashoah as "on the one hand, disappointing, but on the other", she added, "I'm not without hope".

She described the day as moving but also sensitive, as it was during this event under the organisational umbrella of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies that the initiative to address discrimination against women - in the form of banning women from singing in public - began a decade ago.

Describing the Kol Isha negotiation process and the agreement which was reached in Cape Town last year, Rabbi Margolis reflected on how the ceremony was brokered "to end the current situation of discrimination".

But did it work? Rabbi Margolis was ambivalent: "This year's ceremony was designed to include the 'voice of women', without which the mourning for six million people who perished, would lose a great deal of meaning, if not credibility.

"A few days before the ceremony I was saddened to learn that it appeared the organisers had singled out a separate time for the inclusive part with female singing; the memorial ceremony was called 'traditional'; a separate time was allocated and advertised for it."

The first part of the ceremony was mooted "Reflections" and started at 10:30. There was a 30 minute interval and the second part of the ceremony, deemed the "traditional" event, began at 11:30.

While this was felt disingenuous for Rabbi Margolis, the event itself gave her hope. She expressed a fervent hope that Yom Hashoah next year will see the whole community empowered to

attend the full event, and that the title "traditional" will be used to describe the full event and not a segregated understanding of it.

Wendy Kahn, National Director of the SAJBD, expressed satisfaction with the ceremony, particularly with regard to how well attended it was.

"We put in a lot of thought and a lot of work in terms of getting the correct ceremony today," she said. "We will review it, as we do each year, but I feel blessed that we are one of the few communities around the world where the entire community comes together to remember the Shoah."

"Reflections" featured soprano Debbie Joffe singing Hannah Szenes' moving poem, Eli Eli and an arrangement of Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah in English and Hebrew, performed by six choristers of the King David Victory Park Choir as well as the recital of a poem by Rachel Raff of the South African Union of Jewish Students.

It began with school pupils reading out names, origins and ages of Holocaust victims, a chilling reflection on loss. After Kahn's introduction, performers Aimee Goldsmith and Adam Schlosberg read an extract from Boys from the Ashes, a play by Courtneigh Cloud Bernstein about the experiences of her grandfather, Israel Gurwicz.

Reeva Forman, a member of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and a staunch advocate of the Progressive movement in South Africa, found the ceremony moving; in her personal capacity she said: "As a Jew, no matter which stream, I am thrilled to see the massive attendance from all parts of the Jewish community today.

"It shows Jewish South Africans understand ubuntu. I am thrilled. I am in tears: We worship Hashem, we have the same values; we must value and honour each other."

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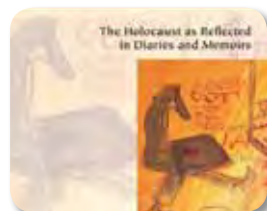
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# German diplomat reminds not to stop teaching the Holocaust

DIANE WOLFSON

The Charge D'Affaires of the German Embassy, Klaus Streicher, brought a strong message to the Yom Hashoah commemoration in Pretoria of ensuring the Holocaust is not forgotten, and always taught to the new generations so it can never happen again.

“Our message to new generations against the passage of time is and must remain our common goal, as we witness a new rise of nationalism and xenophobia in many parts of this world,” he said.

Speaking to diplomats, politicians, Christian Friends of Israel, school children and others in the Pretoria shul complex last weekend, he said: “We are immensely grateful to the Jewish community here, in Israel and all over the world for reaching out to us and helping us to teach the past to future generations, to alert them that the horrors of the past may be unthinkable today, but that this does not make them impossible tomorrow.”

For the German Government,

“active remembrance is also expressed in its historic responsibility for Israel’s security. This responsibility is and will remain a cornerstone of German policy.”

Israel’s Deputy Ambassador to South Africa, Ayellet Black, said that Yom Hashoah has always been unfathomable, intangible and unimaginable. When visiting the camps where it took place, it appeared unreal. It was not what she saw that managed to connect her to the tremendous loss, but what she did not see.

“I did not see a synagogue full of the people who once lived there. I did not see the plays that the communities had written. I did not see the children going to schools that used to stand there.

“The silence, the void, of six million lives - children, mothers, fathers, doctors, comedians - people, is what you do not hear, loud and clear. The voices of the brave survivors should be heard louder, and more often.

Their stories must resonate with us, reverberate through to the generations

that will not meet them.”

Louis Pearlman, chairman of the Pretoria Council of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies emphasised that the root cause of anti-Semitism remains as rampant as ever, “simmering under the surfaces of Europe, the UK, the US and the Middle East as an ever-present threat - a constant reminder of the prejudices and hatred directed towards the Jews for over 2 000 years. With the passing of time, only the reasons have changed; the bigotry itself endures.”

Six memorial lamps were lit by representatives of the various organisations in Pretoria, in memory of the six million Jews who perished. Holocaust survivor Veronica Phillips lit the seventh lamp to acknowledge the past and the belief in the continuation of future generations.

High school learners Nir Levi, Galit and Ariella Harris, in the shul ceremony, read out the names of children who were murdered during the Holocaust.

Sara Malka Fox, a matric learner, brought a message on behalf of the youth, stating that the profound effect of the visit to the Children’s Museum attached to Yad Vashem, left her deeply aware of the necessity to perpetuate the memory and legacy of at least a single child of the overall six million who died in the Holocaust.

“What is the purpose of simply remembering the Holocaust as an unimaginable part of our history?” Fox stated rhetorically and then explained that “these myriads lessons are the stepping stones for our growth as a nation”.

Holocaust survivor Veronica Phillips, born in Budapest in 1926, told of her survival in the international ghettos in Budapest, Ravensbrück, Penig and Johanngeorgenstadt concentration camps, as well as the death march.

Her father was murdered and her cousins shot in front of her, but she, her mother and brother survived.

She met her husband, who had been in forced labour since 1940, on his return to Budapest after the war, one of only five survivors. They moved to England and when her brother was offered a job in South Africa, they joined him.



Photo: Julian Pokroy

Louis Pearlman assisting Holocaust survivor, Veronica Phillips to light the 7th candle

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# Perpetuating the legacy of her grandpa

OWN CORRESPONDENT

**N**ine-year-old Israel Gurwicz was one of many children sardined into the cattle truck of a train bound for death, but somehow managed to squeeze through a tiny opening and jump out of the moving vehicle. He survived to tell his story 65 years later to his granddaughter, Courtneigh Cloud Bernstein, who turned it into a theatrical docu-drama.

In a true story of unconditional love between granddaughter and her grandfather, Cloud Bernstein helped him offload his experience, turning it into something that would be a constant reminder of the pain, loss and anguish. It was the journey that one little Jewish boy experienced during the Nazi persecution of the Jewish people.

Cloud Bernstein recounted her and her grandfather's story at the Yom Hashoah Holocaust and Heroism Day Memorial Service in Cape Town last weekend. It all started, she said, while studying film and she had to direct a play that she could either find or write herself. Overnight she realised this was her opportunity to record her grandfather's story.

"It's now or never. This is the opportunity you've been waiting for," she said to herself at the time. "I approached my grandpa the very next day and said it's time, let's do it, let's tell your story. There was an unspoken truth that we both knew this was going to be our chance to finally open up the wounds that had been covered for 65 years."

In trying to get the full picture, she asked him to remember sense and colours. He recalled the detail in his baby sister Deborah's pink jersey. This made his discovery of the jersey among the pile of clothes of the victims of a mass shooting in Ponary Forest, horrifying.

"I will never forget the night we wrote this part of the play, the moment he shared with me when he realised his baby sister and mother had



Courtneigh Cloud Bernstein speaking at the Yom Hashoah ceremony in Cape Town

been murdered."

At the memorial, she recited an extract from her play "The Boys from the Ashes", in which young Isaac is on the train heading in the direction of Ponary. "My mind is going crazy," said the character playing Isaac. "There is a tunnel coming up shortly. I do not know when, but I keep looking out.

"I climb up the sides of the cattle truck on the panel strips and bend the wire mesh covering the small window upwards. The boys beneath me push me higher and I keep my cool and wait for the moment.

"The moment takes long and eventually we enter the tunnel, there is no time to back out. The fear is gone; my mind is saying "go go go" and I jumped. I hit my head against the tunnel rocks and fell to the ground unconscious. When I woke up, I walked toward the distant light but noticed a German guard at the exit and assumed there was one at the entrance.

"I was trapped in the tunnel as other trains passed through. I was in the tunnel for

hours. While I was in the dark I prayed; Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad. I then heard the knocking of a hammer. It was the rail repairman who was holding an oil lamp.

"I said to myself I must go talk to him and tell him what happened. We both said a prayer in Polish. He said: 'My G-d you are lucky, come I will help you.' I smeared my face with dirt and took the lamp and made believe I was his assistant. I believe G-d sent an angel to save me. In my mind I couldn't stop thinking about what happened to the children in the train. I later found out they all perished in the forest of Ponary..."

Cloud Bernstein said that her grandfather - who died four years ago - attended every single performance of her play wherever it was performed in the country.

"The audience's favourite moment was when I asked him to stand at the end so they could meet the real Israel Gurwicz from the story

they had just witnessed. Everyone jumped up in applause and awe for this tall, courageous man who exuded warmth and love."

Cloud Bernstein went on to further her studies in film acting in New York, where she worked with the Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation, whose goal it is to teach the Holocaust through histories of resistance and partisan fighters, passing on the narrative that Jews did fight back. They recognised her at a gala dinner in New York for the work she had done with the play she had written as a third generation survivor. She described the moment: "I was surrounded by other third generations who are active in perpetuating the legacy of their grandparents in so many different ways, be it as being a school teacher, a rabbi, a doctor, a female cantor, a volunteer at a Holocaust museum, a philanthropist, a filmmaker..."

"The greatest part about it is that we are all so different. There is not just one way to continue the legacy of our loved ones. And so this continues to inspire and show my generation that whatever you do and whoever you are, you can perpetuate the legacy in your own way."

Cloud Bernstein says out of the magic of the historical testimony she wrote, was born a desire to inspire others, to tell the stories of the Holocaust and perpetuate the legacy of their loved ones; to tell their love stories.

"Today I stand before you as a witness - Israel Gurwicz's witness. Little three-year-old Deborah's witness. His mother Bluma, and father Moshe Hirsch's witness," she said.

To other survivors, she said: "Your stories are safe in our hands. We will continue your legacy and tell your stories. We do not take the responsibility lightly."



At the Durban Yom Hashoah ceremony

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# Durban's focus on the youth

LAUREN SHAPIRO  
DURBAN

The Durban Jewish community focused on the youth at their Yom Hashoah commemoration last Sunday evening.

This extended to their keynote speaker, Holocaust survivor Don Krausz who was only a child under the Nazis. He spoke at the Johannesburg ceremony before getting on a plane to Durban to deliver his stirring address to them.

President of the SAJBD (KZN Council) Jeremy Droyman explains why they put such emphasis on the children: "We do this with our children to pass on the lessons that we as a people have paid a huge price to learn."

Jewish learners from schools across Durban participated in the evening's programme, singing songs, reciting poems, reading prayers and speeches, and bearing Israeli flags. Youth also accompanied Holocaust survivors and children of survivors, in lighting memorial candles in remembrance of the six million who perished in the Holocaust.

Aidan Francis, of Eden College, Durban, shared his impressions as a regional delegate on last year's March of the Living programme. "It was life-changing. To see what I saw and experience what I experienced... that is why we will never forget."

A particular tribute was paid to the Warsaw Ghetto and the various kinds of physical and spiritual resistance that its occupants put up against the Nazi regime.

Through its motivation of education, the evening was an act of peaceful, compassionate resistance to injustice in all its forms.

## Opinion and Analysis

# So, a woman sang...



Caely Jo Levy singing at Cape Town's ceremony

GILAD STERN

A woman sang solo at Cape Town's annual Yom Hashoah Holocaust Memorial ceremony last week.

It hardly seems a big deal, and it shouldn't be a big deal. It was a return to communal sanity after about 10 years in which the Cape Jewish Board of Deputies had banned a woman's voice in song, in order to appease the demands of some religious leaders who felt that they could not allow themselves to hear a woman's voice in song. The Cape Board should have asked the religious leaders to maybe leave when a woman sang, if it was unacceptable to them.

But the Board of Deputies, effectively told half of all Jews, namely the women: "Be silent. You may be seen, but not heard, in song at least." In doing that, the Cape Board failed its constituents and broke the law of this land, which prohibits discrimination on grounds of race or gender.

So, last Sunday, Caely Jo Levy sang a Yiddish song, *Mir lebn eybik* (We will endure) - composed by Vilna poet Leyb Rosenthal, who was murdered in the Klooga concentration camp in Estonia - at the commemoration.

We achieved this significant milestone after a decade of exclusion of a female singing voice, and only after a section of the Jewish community, including myself, approached the Cape High Court's Equality Court.

We did this when the Cape Board refused the entreaties of women's groups such as the Union of Jewish Women and Bnoth Zion WIZO, to end the unseemly gender discrimination.

We argued that there were other remedies for being sensitive to religious feelings, other than silencing all women! There was a public controversy, but in the end the Cape Board of Deputies agreed to end the ban rather than going to the High Court. We settled on a win-win process:

The formula agreed to (following an order of court) was that the ceremony would have two parts: The initial section would include a woman singing solo. So, last Sunday, the ceremony started at 10:30, with thousands attending.

After the initial section, at 11:00, while the names of young victims of the Holocaust were being read out, the religious leaders entered discreetly. I was at the gate - I counted four of them.

It was dignified and subtle. We achieved something utterly simple and logical: Whoever didn't want to hear the singing came half an hour late. The ban on women singing was consigned to history. That is as it should be.

Earlier this week in Israel, the national Yom Hashoah ceremony, at Yad Vashem was broadcast on TV, with President Reuven Rivlin, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and the two Chief Rabbis - Ashkenazi and Sepharadi - present, as well as others, including former Chief Rabbi Lau.

A female singer with a wonderful voice, sang on three occasions, the last one being the singing of *Hatikvah*.

It seems that it is religiously acceptable for a female soloist to perform at Yad Vashem, carried live on all TV channels, and in the presence of the Israeli Chief Rabbis. That is as it should be. It is, or should be, unremarkable. I hardly imagine that the Israeli Chief Rabbis are lax in their observance of religious strictures.

Cape Town Jewry has now aligned itself with normative practice in Israel, and with the norms of South African society, which abhors discrimination, for all the obvious historical and moral reasons.

The ceremony was moving and dignified. So, a woman sang... It really was no big deal.

• Gilad Stern is a management consultant, while at work, and a mountaineer instructor when not at work.

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# Enabling artistic freedom and tolerance

MARK OPPENHEIMER

Prominent artists, cartoonist Jonathon Shapiro (Zapiro) and painter Ayanda Mabula, have come under fire for depicting rape in their work. The word carries a double meaning, referring to the sexual violation of a person and the plundering of place.

Both artists rely on this ambiguity to decry President Jacob Zuma's treatment of South Africa and its citizens.

Since the dawn of our democracy, Zapiro has authored hundreds of cartoons that heap scorn on those who abuse their power. He has received international recognition as a satirist willing to ridicule the corrupt and foolish. His recent cartoon portrays Atul Gupta about to rape a woman representing South Africa.

The cartoon references a series of earlier cartoons by Zapiro showing Zuma raping Lady Justice. It is implied that Zuma has transferred control of the country to the Gupta family, to use as they see fit.

Mabula has a history of using violent and hypersexualised imagery to expose corruption within the ANC. His latest painting depicts an anguished Nelson Mandela being raped by a laughing Zuma.

The work provokes an immediate sense of shock. It is designed to revolt us in both senses of the word. It is at once nauseating and a call to action against a morally bereft leader.

Both images were met with the ire of

sections of the South African public. Zapiro was accused of undermining the seriousness of rape, while Mabula was derided for the explicit nature of his piece.

Zapiro maintains that his cartoon treats victims of rape with empathy and that his work serves to underscore their trauma, not disparage it. Mabula claims that he painted Mandela as a representation of all South Africans who have been oppressed by Zuma.

Before rushing to condemn these artists, we should pause to consider the vital role that art has played in our history. During the height of apartheid, resistance art was used to critique the state and defend the marginalised.

Artists risked imprisonment, exile and death in the fight for justice. With the stroke of a brush artists can defy tyrants and stir the hearts of the downtrodden. With this in mind, our Bill of Rights makes mention of artistic

creativity as a form of expression deserving of special protection.

The Constitutional Court has held that "the corollary of freedom of expression and its related rights is tolerance by society of different views. Tolerance, of course, does not require approbation of a particular view. In essence, it requires the acceptance of the public airing of disagreements and the refusal to silence unpopular views."

Evelyn Beatrice Hall encapsulated this idea with the phrase: "I wholly disapprove of what you say, but will defend to the death your

right to say it."

As a nation, we must choose between creating a culture of fear or a culture of tolerance. If artists are vilified at every turn for offending sensibilities, then uncomfortable truths will never be raised.

If we accept that artists have a noble role

to play, then it is vital that we create a culture of tolerance. It is incumbent on us to afford artists the space to test out their ideas, use visceral metaphors and even be offensive.

• Mark Oppenheimer is a practising advocate and member of the Johannesburg Bar.



Mark Oppenheimer

## Aliyah – the good, the bad and the meshuga

Benita Levin

## Why is this year different from all others?

The words "Leshana Haba BeYerushalim" always sparked conversation during our seders in South Africa. Jokes were made about El Al flight specials and banter ensued about plans for possible future holidays.

Last year, when we sang those words with my siblings in their Cape Town homes, my husband and I never imagined we'd be living in Israel today. We had no idea we'd be marking our first major festival as new olim in Ra'anana, Tel Aviv and yes, Jerusalem.

In the days leading up to our first Passover as Israeli citizens, we were wished "Chag Sameach" by several strangers - a bus driver, a supermarket cashier, a security guard and a coffee barista.

Signs appeared in the streets and over freeways, wishing everyone well for the chag, shops highlighted their matzah specials and restaurants advertised if they'd be open for the festival. It felt like the energy in the country was shifting from its normal "intense work" mode to "holiday" mode. Children were counting down the sleeps until the chag started and parents on WhatsApp groups were exchanging their traditional family charoset recipes.

There are several obvious differences between Pesach in Israel and the Diaspora. We were excited about having only one seder, instead of two. It would also be new to celebrate for seven days instead of eight. But the most surprising contrast was the fact that the country seemed to slow down for the week before the chag.

Schools closed for the holidays, ulpan courses stopped and many offices shut down as millions of people prepared to clean... and then clean some more, ahead of the "festival of freedom". It added to the sense that we were part of a huge moment in the country, regardless of whether one was irreligious, traditional or observant.

Festivals have always been about family - had we been in South Africa again this month, we would have been celebrating with parents, siblings and many cousins. Those are memories we will always treasure. This year was set to be something completely different...

You can take the South African out of Africa, but they'll always find each other anywhere in the world. Our first seder here was with other

South Africans who had made aliyah last year. We reminisced about the respective traditions we'd all followed as children. Some experiences are clearly universal - children giggle during MaNishTanah and the race to find the afikomen sees cushions being upturned in lounges, no matter where you are in the world.

As soon as the sun sets after the first day of Pesach, people make the most of the quiet work time to explore the country, before the temperatures start soaring. We spent time with cousins, old friends and new friends in a range of beautiful places, including hiking in the Judean mountains, walking from Tel Aviv to Jaffa and enjoying a special weekend in and around Jerusalem.

The capital was packed over the Easter long weekend, with Christians and Jews marking two important festivals. One couldn't help but smile when seeing a group of elderly "dati"-looking men with long beards giving directions to a convoy of visiting priests.

Hotels were full and scores of tour buses could be seen throughout the capital. The popular market - shuk - was abuzz with fruit and vegetable vendors hollering over each other, trying to catch their next customer's attention.

Then, as the country seemed to reach a festive crescendo... a tragic reality call. News spread that a 21-year-old woman had been stabbed at the light train station near the Old City. The mood seemed to change, almost immediately.

Later in the day, it emerged that Hannah Bladon - a British exchange student - had moments earlier given up her seat on the tram for a pregnant woman. Her family described the murder as "senseless and tragic". A young, innocent life wasted.

So, like a bolt of lightning, we were reminded of the dangers people here have lived with, every day. These are the realities we are experiencing and understanding as olim, for the first time. The overriding response was best summed up by a local woman a few hours later on that day: "We mourn every person we lose as if it's our own child, but those who want to harm us, must know our lives will go on..."

Hannah Bladon and her family are in our thoughts.

**Favourite question of the week:** Nine-year old daughter during the seder: "If you are living in Israel, do you still have to say "Leshana Haba Be'Yerushalayim"?"

**New phrase of the week:** "Motek" - honey or sweetheart.

**Smile of the week:** When your Irish friend arrives from London for her first visit to Israel. As she gets off the bus, the driver smiles: "Shabbat Shalom". Without hesitating she responds, repeating the same phrase: "Shabbat Shalom"!

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## NEWSMAKER

## Q &amp; A

# Uncovering the indefensible

Jonathan Ancer is a journalist, having worked for a number of publications and held a variety of positions in media. He was journalist for The Star; editor of Grocott's Mail, Grahamstown's community newspaper; deputy editor of Bicycling magazine; and head of Independent Newspapers' Cadet School. He recently took time out to write "Spy: Uncovering Craig Williamson".

## What drew you to write about Craig Williamson?

I'm not sure. I was a student at Wits in the early 1990s and was a member of NUSAS - this was the dying days of apartheid and Special Branch had bigger fish to harass than a bunch of long-haired hippies, but because of Williamson we were paranoid about spies on campus.

I became intrigued with how someone could betray people he got close to and had become "friends" with. I was curious how someone could live this double life. I "bumped" into Williamson in 1995 when I was at Rhodes University. I had read a lot about Ruth First's journalism - I wanted to be the kind of journalist that she was - and that was when I learnt that Williamson had been responsible for sending the parcel bomb that killed her, as well as a second parcel bomb that killed Jeanette Schoon and her six-year-old daughter. I followed the Truth Commission and was intrigued with how Williamson managed to wriggle out of responsibility and escape any consequences for the terrible things he had done. I wanted to know if he felt any remorse.

## What was it like first meeting this man who committed such atrocities?

He was the last person I interviewed for the book. I had avoided contacting him, but in the end I had to take a deep breath and call him. It struck me that I knew so much about him - I'd interrogated all aspects of his life and he didn't even know I existed. I was nervous that he would try to manipulate me.

## How would you describe him?

Unremorseful.

## What was it like spending all that time with him as he unfolded his side of his story?

I only spent time with him that morning - up until then I had got to know about him by going through documents, court transcripts, newspaper clippings, reports and through the eyes of the people who had known him.

## How did you go about writing the book, in terms of research?

My main research was interviewing people who had in one way or another encountered Williamson. I managed to track down someone who was in boarding school with him at St

John's more than 50 years ago, students at NUSAS (where he'd become the vice president), people who knew him in "exile" and a few of his former Special Branch colleagues. The book is not only about Williamson; it is also about a generation of activists who helped bring about liberation - people whose stories haven't really been told. In addition to the former student leaders, I also spoke to a former South African president, four former Cabinet ministers and an Academy Award winner.

## How did you manage your life and work around writing - or were you able to dedicate your time to it?

I was lucky enough to get a Taco Kuiper Grant, which was enormously helpful, but I had to earn an income while writing, so I wasn't able to work on it fulltime. I often woke up at four in the morning to work on it.

## How long did it take you from start to finish?

I started in 2010 but in 2012 my laptop was stolen in a burglary and I lost two years of work (of course, I hadn't backed up). I was demotivated and hit the pause button. I started again about six months later and since then devoted at least two days a week to it. I now make back-ups of back-ups of back-ups and have all sorts of versions floating around the digital cloud.

## How has writing the book impacted on your life?

It's made me realise how important it is to remember and record our history. I have thought a lot about betrayal, accountability and responsibility.

## How did your loved ones feel about you writing this book?

Everyone was supportive - even my wife, Jean, who had to share me with an unpleasant character for so many years. My father went through the questions I had planned to ask Williamson and advised me to delete some of the more hostile ones and Andrew, my brother-in-law, read the manuscript and gave me useful feedback.

My siblings have plastered social media with publicity for the book, and my mother has pushed up the sales by buying books for everyone she has ever met (thanks, Mom).

## What was your biggest learning from this experience?

Besides, backing up my work often? Actions have consequences - and although there are destructive people like Williamson, who were responsible for betraying, interrogating and killing, there are also decent people who risked their lives for freedom and democracy.

## What is next?

Now I exhale...

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Beyond

# Jewish leaders alarmed as Le Pen advances

ADAM ABRAMS  
PARIS

Jewish leaders inside and outside France have expressed alarm after far-right populist Marine Le Pen's strong showing in the first round of the French presidential election last Sunday.

Pro-Europe centrist Emmanuel Macron of the En Marche party and Le Pen, head of the National Front party, emerged victorious in the election's initial phase. Macron gained 23,7 per cent of the vote to Le Pen's 21,7 per cent. The candidates will face off in the final round on May 7.

According to a poll from Ipsos/Sopra Steria released on Sunday, Macron is projected to win the final round with 62 per cent of the vote.

French Prime Minister Bernard Cazeneuve, Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault, former Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin and defeated presidential contender Benoit Hamon, have all called on voters to rally behind Macron.

Many French Jews consider Le Pen a threat to their community, and the CRIF umbrella group for French-Jewish organisations has referred to the far-right politician as a candidate "of hatred".

CRIF President Francis Kalifat last week Friday said Le Pen's growing popularity is "a real danger to our country's democracy".

Russian Chief Rabbi Berel Lazar also weighed in, saying in an address organised by the Limmud FSU educational organization: "If Marine Le Pen is elected president of France, the Jews must leave."

Le Pen has previously called on French Jews to give up wearing yarmulkes as part of her initiative to ban religious symbols in public and

fight radical Islam in France.

"The struggle against radical Islam should be a joint struggle and everyone should say: 'There, we are sacrificing something,'" she told Israel's Channel 2.

"Maybe [Jews] will do with just wearing a hat, but it would be a step in the effort to stamp out radical Islam in France."

She has also stated that if elected, she would bar dual citizenship with non-European Union countries, distressing many French Jews who also hold Israeli citizenship and would be forced to renounce it.

"Israel is not a European country and doesn't consider itself as such," Le Pen told France24 in February.

At the same time, some Jews support Le Pen specifically because of her commitment to fighting radical Islam, and are willing to look the other way on her nationalistic agenda's implications for matters such as Jewish ritual slaughter.

"In 2002 and 2007, surveys show that less than five per cent of Jews voted for the FN (National Front), for her father Jean-Marie Le Pen. In 2012, Marine Le Pen drew about 14 per cent of this electorate," Jérôme Fourquet, an analyst at FIFG, an organisation studying French public opinion, told i24news this month.

"There has been a rise in insecurity since the early 2000s in the Jewish community, that is, a rise in delinquency aimed specifically at Jews, and also a feeling, that is quite justified, that the Republic and French society looked away and did not want to see."

Approximately 70 000 Israelis are eligible to vote in France's election. French Israelis turned out in droves to cast absentee ballots last Sunday, presumably against the far-right



French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen.

candidate.

Fourteen polling stations were set up in six Israeli cities known to have large French expat populations - Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Netanya, Haifa, Ashdod and Eilat.

"The four candidates are offering very different programmes, so it's hard because it's different from other elections. I can't say whom I'll vote for, but I will certainly vote," French Ambassador to Israel Hélène Le Gal said on Sunday, Yedioth Ahronoth reported.

Le Pen's National Front was founded by her father Jean-Marie Le Pen, a convicted Holocaust denier who has been charged multiple times for inciting racism and anti-Semitic hatred.

In mid-April, Israel's Foreign Ministry condemned Marine Le Pen for her comments on the Holocaust that "contradicted historical truth", when she stated France bears no responsibility for implementing a German-ordered roundup of 13 000 Jews for deportation to Auschwitz in 1942.

Former French President Jacques Chirac and current President Francois Hollande have both apologised for France's role in the roundup, which is known as the "Vel d'Hiv".

Prior to the first round of the French election last Sunday, Le Pen's challenger Macron said her comments on the Holocaust were "a serious mistake".

Macron, a 39-year-old former banker, has built up a centrist political movement called En Marche and has stated he is "neither of the

right, nor the left". He incensed French Jews when he stated in 2016 that France's Jewish schools must de-emphasise Talmudic studies in their curriculum.

"Religion cannot be present in school. But I hear few people becoming concerned by the consequences of this phenomenon, more and more children being sent to religious schools which teach them to hate the Republic and teach mainly in Arabic, or in other places (Jewish schools) teach the Torah more than general studies," Macron said.

Despite these comments, Macron is viewed as the preferable candidate by French Jews who are repelled by Le Pen's Holocaust revisionism and direct affiliation with known anti-Semites such as her father. Yet the National Front, led by Marine Le Pen, did expel Jean-Marie Le Pen from the party in 2015.

French-Jewish public opinion also favours Macron's stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which includes support for a two-state solution.

"My line is clear: We are friends of the State of Israel and partners for Israel's security. We will always be in this camp... At the same time... I would like to advance with the recognition of two states," he said.

Macron has condemned the BDS movement, calling anti-Israel boycotts "profoundly anti-Semitic" and stating that anti-Zionism "leads directly to anti-Semitism". (JNS.org)

## World News in Brief

### 'No' to Palestinian request to apologise for Balfour Declaration

LONDON - The British government has rejected a Palestinian request to apologise for the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which led in part to the creation of Israel.

The British government sent a letter to the Foreign Ministry of the Palestinian Authority saying it would not apologise for the statement, as called for by PA President Mahmoud Abbas in an address to the General Assembly in September, Reuters reported.

The news agency cited Manuel Hassassian, the Palestinian ambassador to Britain, who told the Voice of Palestine Radio of the refusal in an interview on Tuesday.

Britain will recognise the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration with celebrations in November together with Israeli officials.

The British government this week responded to a petition filed with the British Parliament calling on the government to apologise for the statement and "lead attempts to reach a solution that ensures justice for the Palestinian people".

More than 13 000 people signed the petition, which needs 100 000 signatures by May 3 in order for the Parliament to consider it for debate.

"The Balfour Declaration is a historic statement

for which HMG (Her Majesty's Government) does not intend to apologise. We are proud of our role in creating the State of Israel. The task now is to encourage moves towards peace," the government's response read.

"The Declaration was written in a world of competing imperial powers, in the midst of the First World War and in the twilight of the Ottoman Empire. In that context, establishing a homeland for the Jewish people in the land to which they had such strong historical and religious ties, was the right and moral thing to do, particularly against the background of centuries of persecution," the response said.

It continued: "Much has happened since 1917. We recognise that the Declaration should have called for the protection of political rights of the non-Jewish communities in Palestine, particularly their right to self-determination. However, the important thing now is to look forward and establish security and justice for both Israelis and Palestinians through a lasting peace."

The petition called for a two-state solution and for negotiations conducted directly between Israel and the Palestinians, "but with appropriate support from the international community". (JTA)

The National Arts Festival presents Tall Stories' West End musical adaptation of the award-winning picture book by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler.

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# The voice of protest is the voice of Jacob

RABBI RAMON WIDMONTE

*Whoever has the ability to protest against the members of his household, and doesn't, is caught up with the members of his household. Whoever has the ability to protest against the members of his city, and doesn't, is caught up with the members of his city. Whoever has the ability to protest against the whole world, and doesn't, is caught up with the whole world.*

*Talmud, Shabbat 54b*

**T**his evocative piece of Gemara is one of the most powerful entreaties to Jews to speak truth to power. And it is something deep in our DNA. Abraham, the bearer of our first covenant is distinguished from all the previous people in the bible by one trait: he speaks up, even protesting against G-d.

Later, the biblical prophets became the archetypes of social critics who would challenge the morality of the ruling powers, at risk of life and limb; and we echo their words in our synagogues till this day.

Who can erase the searing power of Isaiah directed at Jewish kings and priests: "Hear the word of Hashem, you rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our G-d, you people of Gomorrah. For what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?...

I often wonder to myself whether, like Mcebisi Jonas, I would be able to refuse a R600 million "incentive".

It's mind boggling. The moral strength, the righteousness, the selflessness.

"Your new moons and your appointed seasons My soul hates; they are a burden to Me; I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; when you make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood..."

However, at many points in our history, we have stilled this voice because the price of speaking can be very high.

In our own country, we know that while there were Jews across the gamut of political and religious spectrums who did protest the evils of apartheid, the majority of the community was very quiet. Some kept quiet in admiration of the apartheid regime, but most out of fear that as a fragile minority, it was not prudent to raise one's profile. Their fear was that perhaps, after blacks, they would target Jews.

But it is clear that in democratic societies in which Jews are welcomed, they quickly find that voice.

In the Civil Rights movement in the United States when the push came to register black voters in 1964, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner went down to Mississippi and paid for it with their lives. And as much as the recently released film, "Selma", erased Rabbi AJ Heschel from the picture (literally and figuratively), that towering Orthodox rabbi was there with Reverend King.

These voices begin as outliers in a community which was tentatively testing the waters of tolerance, but then they become a flood.

In South Africa, it seems, we are witnessing such a beginning. But why now?

Firstly, I believe, it is a testament to the strength of democracy in South Africa. As much as the organs of state have been beset



Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (second from right) in the Selma Civil Rights March with Martin Luther King, Jr (fourth from right).

by corruption and cupidity over the past two years, we have been inspired by the strength of the judiciary and, until recently, the Public Protector. We are witness to a resilient system of checks and balances which enshrines the democratic process and its freedoms.

Secondly, we have been empowered by the example set for us by powerful leaders. Thuli Madonsela, Pravin Gordhan, Mcebisi Jonas and Nhlanelahle Nene have led us with their courage.

I often wonder to myself whether, like Mcebisi Jonas, I would be able to refuse a R600 million "incentive". It's mind boggling. The moral strength, the righteousness, the selflessness. And if these people can fight the good fight, surely we can, surely we must, step up to the plate.

Thirdly, we live in the latest epoch in human history: the i-Poch. The explosion of our ability to voice our views (on Facebook, Twitter and the like) has had some awful side-effects, least of which is having to put up with narcissists who insist on regaling us with the exact details of how they chose their latest brand of deodorant.

The i-Poch is so self-centred, it is often nauseating. But on the other hand, people have lost many of the traditional inhibitions against making their views known; and this has spread from the virtual world into the real world.

**F**ourthly, as Jews, whether we are conscious of it or not, the fact that we have the State of Israel, strong and always open to us, is a source of incomparable security and pride. Throughout the millennia of our wanderings, the price of speaking up could have been exile or worse.

Those of us born after the founding of the State, have the incomparably dangerous capacity to take Israel for granted - we simply have no experience of what it was like to live as stateless, wandering Jews, always fearing the next "decree". This lack of fear alone plays a large role in how outspoken Jews are today.

Lastly, on a deeper, spiritual level, I would return to the quote from the Talmud above. The commentators ask what is meant by the statement that if we do not protest that we are "caught up" with those who should have been the targets of our objections.

The standard, but harsh explanation is that of Rashi who says that if we are silent in the face of evil, we are complicit in it. However, Rav Kook's comment on this


a "problematic issue" and the power which can solve it. But since every ability is aimed at a particular purpose, when that ability is not actualised it becomes a destructive force.

**R**av Kook explains that often we have been entrusted with a gift in order to combat an evil in the world. But that gift needs to be used, it needs expression. When we are confronted with that evil and we miss the moment to manifest that part of us, it lies dormant and festers, and eventually rots within us and this is what the Gemara means, that we are "caught up" with the evildoers. When we do not

Sometimes a human being has a special, personal ability which is suited to address an issue - he or she has the capacity either to remove a negativity in the world or to bring about a positive addition.

manifest our abilities to make a difference, it harms us.

Perhaps then, the final reason that the new generation of Jews is engaging in such processes for change is because we have been gifted with the power to help those changes become reality. On the deepest level we sense that if we do not channel these powers positively, we will be left frustrated and empty. But if we do act, then we will become who we are meant to be.



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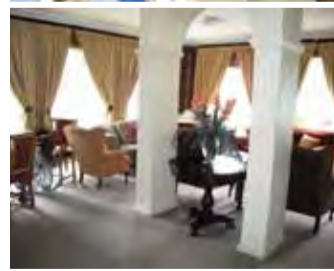

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# Does 'Never Again' apply only to Jewish loss?



## TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

When Holocaust survivor Don Krausz talked movingly on Yom Hashoah on Sunday to a packed audience at West Park Cemetery in Johannesburg, about his experiences as a boy in Nazi camps, an uneasy question hung in the air about what Israel's former Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, a survivor of the Holocaust who was in the Buchenwald camp, said in a recent interview on Israel's Army Radio - that another "shoah" was taking place on Israel's northern border in the six-year Syrian war.

Lau said what is happening is unequivocally a holocaust. He stepped into contentious territory by using this term, which Jews regard as applying only to the Holocaust in the Second World War in which six million Jews died. He also implied Israel should be doing something to stop the carnage.

For South African Jews, Syria seems a far-away conflict they can do nothing about. And they have huge problems in their own country to deal with. Yet South African Jewry's strong ties to Israel, which borders on Syria, adds weight to the issue. And the prolific use of the phrase "Never Again" in the context of Yom Hashoah, raises a moral imperative.

In the planning of Yom Hashoah, it would be appropriate to mention Syria. It would not detract from memorialising Jewish Holocaust victims, but would indicate that the message is taken seriously.

A theme in Holocaust Remembrance Day is that the world's nations did little to prevent European Jews' mass murder, when they could have saved many. Everyone knows what is happening in Syria today, yet the world powers stand by and let it go on.

Half a million Syrian men, women and children have been killed and 11 million displaced, many becoming refugees seeking sanctuary in other countries.

Chemical weapons, such as the nerve gas sarin, have been used against civilians. In 2013,

artillery shells containing sarin killed 700 civilians in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta; earlier this month Syrian air force planes launched it in bombs. Last December, a quarter of a million civilians were besieged in Aleppo by the Assad regime, with the slaughter of hundreds every day.

What could little Israel be expected to do, aside from treating wounded Syrian victims in Israeli hospitals, which it is doing? Its army is strong, but it is a tiny country with many enemies in a chaotic region.

Yet Rabbi Lau pleaded for action and former Israeli military intelligence chief Amos Yadlin has said Israel could destroy Syrian aircraft used to drop barrel bombs, chlorine and sarin on civilians.

Israel would risk being sucked into the conflict. Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman said in an interview: "...Let the world take responsibility and act instead of talking."

The term "Never Again" was intended to ensure that the world would not allow people - not only Jews - to be slaughtered by mass murderers.

It has failed, as shown by the Rwandan genocide and events in Bosnia and Darfur, among others. Now Syria. Former US President Barack Obama did not act in 2013 after Ghouta. Donald Trump will likely follow suit.

Lau has been criticised for his statements. But Holocaust centres worldwide attempt to make the Jewish experience a universal lesson. Johannesburg's new Holocaust and Genocide Centre, pioneered by Tali Nates - whose father and uncle were on the famous "Schindler's List" and were saved from the Nazis - stresses the importance of recognising and preventing genocide anywhere.

Yad Vashem chairman, Avner Shalev, said the international community must "end the human suffering [in Syria] and provide humanitarian aid to the victims".

There is no easy answer to Israel's and the Jews' role in a world which is again allowing genocide. But the phrase "Never Again" would sound more authentic if it was applied to Syria.

• Read Geoff Sifrin's regular columns on his blog [sifrintakingissue.wordpress.com](http://sifrintakingissue.wordpress.com)

## Community Columns

### A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

## Changed Yom Hashoah format adds valuable new dimension

There were again excellent attendances at the Yom Hashoah gatherings organised by the Board in the various centres around the country.

This year, for the first time, the ceremonies in Johannesburg and Cape Town consisted of two parts, one with a cultural-educational focus, followed shortly thereafter by the more traditional ceremony.

The new format was introduced in response to objections from certain sectors of the community that, in deference to Orthodox sensibilities, the programme up until then had excluded women as solo singers.

Through the two-part structure, we are now able to address these concerns

by including women singing solo in the first part of the programme while not taking anything away from the traditional Yom Hashoah format with which all members of our community feel comfortable.

Despite the considerable extra work that it entails for our Johannesburg and Cape Town branches, it is a solution that not only ensures that the all-important principle of communal unity is maintained on this special day, but which has added a valuable new dimension to the way the Holocaust is commemorated in this country.

For our keynote speaker in Johannesburg and Durban this year, we were privileged to have Don Krausz, a survivor whose outstanding work both in terms of testifying to what he experienced during those harrowing times and as an educator on the Holocaust in general, has made him a revered household name in our community.

The Johannesburg programme also included Rabbi Yossy Goldman, who spoke movingly of how his late father, who likewise survived the Holocaust

but lost his entire family, never wavered in his staunch Jewish faith and after the war succeeded in building a thriving Jewish family every bit as committed to rebuilding what had been lost.

Over the years, Don Krausz has spoken to tens of thousands of people, Jewish and non-Jewish - including to over 500 school groups - and I have personally been privileged to spend some time alone with him, learning from him. In doing so, he has continually stressed that what made the Holocaust possible was not that those who perpetrated it were intrinsically evil, but because they had been indoctrinated to the point that they no longer regarded their victims as being human.

The fundamental message that we and all succeeding generations, need to take is therefore never to dehumanise people, whether on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion or any other such grounds.

Through commemorating and teaching about the Holocaust, we remind ourselves of what this kind of rhetoric can lead to, and strengthen our resolve to do everything that we can to prevent such horrors from happening again.

History also demonstrates all too starkly that bigotry, hatred and deceit, thrive in societies experiencing high levels of political, social and economic turmoil. It was in just such an environment that the Nazis were able to seize power in the first place. For our part, we must ensure that we never lose our sense of ethics and morality, particular in these times of duress that our country is currently experiencing.

• 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

### A column of the Chevrah Kadisha

## The thing about money...

After love, money is possibly the most talked about subject in the world. Acquiring it, owning it, spending it and sharing it, occupies an enormous amount of our time as adults and dictates much of our behaviour.

In my monetary musings I wonder if there is any subject that evokes more controversial and contradictory emotions than money. Clichés abound across a world divided into haves and have-nots.

And while poverty is an enormous challenge, the Talmud teaches that the test of wealth is greater because it is a gift from G-d, with strings attached and doesn't ever really belong to us. We are merely His agents and need immense wisdom and humility to understand how best to use it.

Those who don't have money believe it can solve their every problem, while those who do, know that it can't.

In fact, it can create its own set of challenges for people who pursue it to the exclusion of everything else. Money frees and enslaves us all at once. Some betray their morality and even commit crimes to obtain it; stories are written about it; success is measured against it and many believe that it really is what makes the world go round.

And can one ever really have enough of it? As we acquire more of it, our needs grow, our tastes refine

This column is paid for by the Chevrah Kadisha



**Partners in Chesed**  
**Michael Sieff**

and there will always be the next innovation, improvement or challenge. "Put your money where your mouth is" has become the ultimate yardstick of integrity. It is said that the truest measure of character involves how we choose to react in the face of the loss of money.

We all know that the value of money is unreliable and uncertain. Determined by global markets, we have little control over it; a large fortune today can be a small one tomorrow. And of course, no-one can take it with them when they leave this world. Only our good deeds accompany us.

Although money can't buy love, health or happiness, one eight-year-old donor gave me a little blackboard that said: "Money can buy happiness if you give it away." And that seems to be the crux of the matter.

Judging by the Gates, Buffet, Rockefeller families, and our own magnificent community, giving it away looks like the ultimate expression of financial success.

As guardians of our community, the Chev appreciates all too well the huge responsibility we have to ensure that money gets to the people who need it. We also know that it actually does make the world go round. At least our corner of it!

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

## Letters

### SOME FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE MAY CHANGE WANER'S VIEWS

Ernest Waner of Brakpan is talking from a position of ignorance or so it seems ("Squatter camp fires: suggestions for pre-emptive action ignored", SA Jewish Report, April 7). Either that or he has never set foot in any of the squatter camps, otherwise he wouldn't be so quick to give advice, although he doesn't say what it was, to Helen Zille, Premier of the Western Cape, Chief Fire Officer Ian Schnetler and Cape Town mayor Patricia de Lille.

I have been to most of the squatter camps around the Mother City, including Imizamu Yethu, and even to my untrained eye, it is quite easy to see why whole settlements are wiped out by fire so easily.

The shacks are built too close to each other

and when a paraffin stove or a burning candle is knocked over accidentally while the occupant is sleeping or out, the blaze spreads like the proverbial wildfire, leaving devastation in its wake.

How does Waner expect the City to be proactive and get there before the fires start? Perhaps he should tell us what advice he gave to the authorities and those of us who live here can judge if it's worth taking and then persuade Zille, Schnetler and De Lille to introduce the measures he proposed.

**Brian Josselowitz**  
**Cape Town**

**Disclaimer:** The letters page is intended to provide an opportunity for a range of views on any given topic to be expressed. Opinions articulated in the letters are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, staff or directors of the Jewish Report. **Guidelines for letters:** Letters of up to 400 words get preference. Provide your full name, place of residence, and daytime phone number. We do not publish letters under noms de plume. Letters should preferably be e-mailed. Letters may be edited or shortened. The Editor, PO Box 84650, Greenside, 2034 email: [editorial@sajewishreport.co.za](mailto:editorial@sajewishreport.co.za)

# Never letting hardship hold him back

PETER FELDMAN

Bryan Schimmel is one of South Africa's most colourful entertainers. You cannot NOT know when he's in the room; he has that kind of presence.

But this is a far cry from the fearful schoolboy with a bad stutter who was bullied. Today, this icon of South African musical theatre - as a musician, arranger and musical director - is flamboyant, outspoken, opinionated and determined to make a difference in his field.

This year Schimmel was nominated for a Naledi Theatre Award for his contribution as musical director for "Annie". It is his ninth Naledi nomination in a career that has spanned more than 30 years.

But he is so much more than a musician; he is a dare-devil who overcame so much that life threw his way and simply used it to get even better at life!

How many people would undergo trapeze training to overcome a fear of heights and then seriously contemplate flying through the air while conducting an orchestra? It sounds like pure Hollywood. The logistics still have to be carefully worked out, but Schimmel is game.

The flying idea, Schimmel told Jewish Report, came to him when he was asked to conduct a 45-piece orchestra for Gary Player's 80th birthday in 2015.

The event producer wanted him to make a flying entrance down to the podium. "Nothing crazy, just a straightforward drop from 12 metres above the stage," he said, revealing that it was both "scary" and "exciting" at the same time.

"As I was enjoying the downward journeys to the podium during rehearsal, I suddenly thought: What if I was doing proper aerial stunts and flying across an orchestra while conducting... I did research and found there were no flying conductors. And so began The Flying Maestro."

He's been training at a facility in Kyalami, which specialises in aerial performance training. "I have only performed a showcase. I am yet to make my official debut with an orchestra. It hasn't happened yet because it's a costly exercise from a rigging point of view. But my training is ongoing and I am ready to do it the moment the opportunity presents itself."

Right now, Schimmel is the musical director for "Priscilla: Queen of the Desert, The Musical" at the Teatro at Montecasino.

Some in a competitive and often viciously jealous industry might view Schimmel's somewhat over-the-top characteristics as unnecessary, feeling that his talent is enough.

But Schimmel believes he is "not wired to be a wall flower", adding: "Too many people don't voice their opinions and state what they believe in. My ethos has always been that if you give somebody your truth they will always trust what you have to say - whether it's what they want to hear or not."

An integral part of his ethos is one of contribution. It is important, he maintains, because it drives him at this stage of his life.

"As a kid who grew up being bullied at school, who stuttered badly, who had a very difficult father-son relationship, the only thing that mattered was achieving success in music.

"There was a time when I had such a fear of speaking because I thought I would be disliked or rejected because to me it was a handicap.

"I will always remember at age 12, going to audition for Brickhill-Burke's production of 'The Sound of Music' at the old His Majesty's. I auditioned for Kurt. I got through the singing and dance audition and folded miserably in the reading because of my stutter.

"I recall how that experience impacted on me for many years. So, with that mindset, it's almost ironic that I am as outspoken and opinionated as I am.

"My friend, director Alan Swerdlow, was the one who took me to the edge of the cliff in 1994 and got me to speak on stage and not just play the piano in the original

Bryan Schimmel



Photo supplied

'A Handful of Keys'.

"I will always be grateful to him for that. It was traumatic but it gave me the courage to become a musical director talking to groups of musicians and actors, to lecturing and now motivational speaking."

But it hasn't all been success. There have been tremendous life lessons that have shifted his focus to what's important and what's not. More than 30 years later, it's not the achievements he wants to be remembered for, but the difference that he has made in so many people's lives.

"I will have been living with HIV for 20 years next year; I am a recovered meth addict of over 15 years; and I have overcome my fear of speaking in public, to name a few.

"I have chosen to live with passion and commitment and to contribute to the lives of others, and in so doing encourage so many others who may struggle with challenges and afflictions, that the one thing we have absolute control over is our attitude."

Asked if he was a very private person, Schimmel responded: "I think, particularly in the entertainment industry, it is important to be private when so much of you is available for public consumption.

"I am an open book in many respects and I display a very colourful persona, but that's not me all the time. Having friendships and interests in people who are not from my industry, keep me grounded and reminds me that showbiz is my job, it's my passion, but... it's just showbiz."



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# Cohen brings gurus to SA television

PETER FELDMAN

Justin Cohen is a man on a mission to get others to unleash their potential. His own potential is so out there, like a lion in the wilds.

This authority on human potential insists that on the speaking circuit it's not just what you say, it's how you say it that impacts on people's lives.

Cohen (43), is an impressive communicator and well-known on the speaking and conference circuit. As a member of the South African Speakers Hall of Fame, he has travelled to more than 20 countries in a career spanning 17 years, speaking and training in motivation, sales, customer service and leadership.

Now, in his latest project, a TV series called Gurus on CNBC Africa, he gets other experts on success from around the world and gives them a platform and then asks them the tough questions. He has been passionate about this concept for years and is very excited to have been able to make this possible.

"Most talk shows are just interviews. Gurus has a keynote presentation in front of a live audience, followed by an interview. So, we have all the sizzle and excitement of a live audience.

"These are not just subject matter experts; they are expert communicators, so I want people to see them in their natural element. Afterwards I put them in the hot seat to dig even deeper into their keys to success."

Cohen features experts like Gambian-born London-based business guru and renowned motivational speaker, René Carayol who has helped Bill Clinton, David Cameron and Richard Branson

unleash their strengths. The experts on his show include: Robert Kiyosaki, author of the bestselling personal finance book of all time, "Rich Dad Poor Dad", Michael Jackson, the world's leading expert on change, and South Africa's Siphwe Moyo, an expert and author on human capital development and nipping the culture of entitlement in the bud.

Cohen says he is in the fortunate place of doing work that "is more fun than fun".

He added: "My purpose is to equip and inspire people and organisations to unleash their potential. Isn't that what life is all about? Growing, developing, being the best that you can be.

"That's what gets me up in the morning, that's what drives my passion."

The author of four books and seven audio books, Cohen has hosted TV shows in which he interviews the world's top experts on success.

A few minutes in his company and you feel the energy and the snap, crackle and pop that make him such a dynamic speaker.

When asked whether he is South Africa's answer to self-help, he cringes a little. "I would not be so arrogant as to say this.

There are many great speakers and authors on the South African speaking circuit. My aim with Gurus is to bring those speakers to a wider public."

From a background in music and drama - he attended the National School of the Arts and studied psychology at Rhodes University - Cohen found his purpose in life and he is helping others in the process.



Justin Cohen

As for Gurus, Cohen was thrilled to connect with some of the world's leaders in his profession. However, he was deeply impacted by the success of Moyo, a former Orange Farm informal settlement resident, who had absolutely nothing in life, but who uplifted himself to become a corporate superstar.

"It's not just that he made it, but how he made it," says Cohen.

Moyo speaks out about how both black and white South Africans need to get over their sense of entitlement and take personal responsibility, if they are to ultimately succeed.

• You can catch Gurus on Thursday at 21:15 on CNBC Africa (DStv channel 410) and online at [www.cnbcfric.com/tv/shows](http://www.cnbcfric.com/tv/shows).

## Community

### Community stalwart dies at 101

HELEN SHAPIRO

Community stalwart Lisa Frank died in Sydney on April 12 at the age of 101, after a life of service. In 2000 Lisa (then 85) emigrated to Australia to be with her daughter, Dorit Krawitz, who lives in Sydney. Lisa had lost her husband many years ago.

Lisa was born in Frankfurt in Germany on December 7, 1915 and her family later moved to Berlin. In 1935, Lisa, Fritz and her brother Helmut Hirsch, left for South

Africa, thus escaping the Nazi horrors. They initially shared a small apartment in Hillbrow in Johannesburg.

Fritz and Lisa had two daughters, Ann Horowitz - now living in England - and Dorit.

In South Africa Lisa and Fritz will be remembered for their tremendous work and dedication to IUA and WIZO respectively. Fritz was honoured with the Israel Goldstein Prize, awarded to only one person in the Diaspora annually. A library at Beyachad is dedicated to him.

Lisa was for many years chairman of the Oaklands branch of WIZO and a most successful fundraiser. She led many missions to Israel and through that, encouraged many young people to get involved in community projects. In Sydney Lisa continued to fundraise for WIZO.

She is fondly remembered as a remarkable, elegant and gracious woman, with great charm and wisdom. She was always the optimist, with a lot of concern for others and an open home for anyone and everyone.

She was a formidable bridge player, still playing competitively the week before she died. She leaves behind her two daughters, six grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren and many friends around the world.



Lisa Frank

### Brand-new van for JWBS, compliments the Jossel family

OWN CORRESPONDENT

There was jubilation at the Jewish Women's Benevolent Society office in Johannesburg on Tuesday last week when the organisation received a brand new vehicle from Brian and Rosalind Jossel and their family.

Brian had picked up a flyer advertising a Jewish Women's Benevolent Society cooking demo fundraiser and he noticed the proceeds were to go towards buying a new van for the society's 55 Club.

He contacted Maureen Disler, the society's chairperson and told her he was buying a brand new van for them.

Maureen said: "The amazing generosity and kindness displayed by Brian and Rosalind and their family will make a truly meaningful difference to all those people who will be transported in it to and from the JWBS 55 Club and to the JWBS as a whole".

Photo supplied

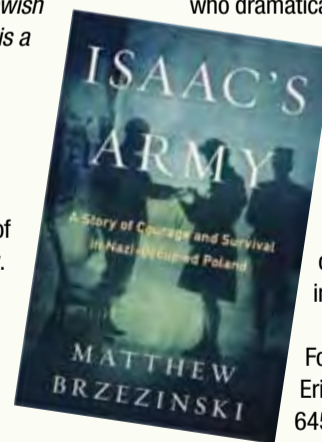


Selwyn Noik; Maureen Disler; Natalie Koren; Brian Jossel; and Rosalind Jossel.

### Jewish books to read

*The South African Zionist Federation Isie Maisels Reference Library has a host of new Jewish interest books available for loan. Here is a synopsis of the first of the new titles:*

**Isaac's army by M. Brzezinski, 2013**  
Matthew Brzezinski reminds us that, through a combination of cunning and luck, some Jews managed to stay out of the Polish concentration camps entirely. This book focuses on Warsaw, where the highest concentration of European Jews once lived, as the heartland of Jewish life. The Warsaw Ghetto and its harrowing conditions for Jews are



seen from three viewpoints: that of the Osnos family, who dramatically flee Poland and encounter various immigration nightmares; that of the Mortkowitz family, who are forced to hide their young daughter inside a Catholic convent while they literally hole up with Gentile families outside the Ghetto; and that of an assortment of orphans, led by Isaac Zuckerman, who organised the forces of Jewish resistance inside the Ghetto.

For more information, contact Maxine or Eric: [maxine@beyachad.co.za](mailto:maxine@beyachad.co.za); or (011) 645-2557/2567

#### Friday (April 28)

• Lunch hour classical music concerts at the Auto & General Theatre on the Square every Friday at 13:00. No booking. Unreserved seats at R50 (incl coffee and biscuits) available at the box office from 12:30. Etienne Malan (violin) is back from Wiesbaden, Germany for a special performance with Jacob Swart (piano). Information: Daphne Kuhn or Mika Stefano (011) 883-8606.

• Shalom Seniors Club meets today. Contact Esther on (011) 485-5619 Monday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday mornings for more information.

#### Sunday (May 7)

• WIZO invites organisations/schools/businesses/teams to join it for a walk to celebrate Israel's 69th Birthday. Venue: Huddle Park, Linksfield. Time: 09:00. Cost: R69 for 69 years for 6,9 kilometres (or the distance you can walk). Further details: Zee 083-377-5644 or Jenny (011) 645-2515.

#### Tuesday (May 9)

• WIZO Women Inspired hosts "From my Heart to Yours" with Roz Basserabie, motivational speaker. Time: 09:30 for 10:00. Venue: Home of Joceline Basserabie. Cost: R100 (incl tea and cake). Bookings and venue details: Jenny (011) 645-2515.

#### Monday (May 11)

• Cape Town Holocaust Centre presents "I have a Name", a public lecture by Robin Ruizendaal. Venue: 88 Hatfield St, Gardens. Time: 18:00. Light refreshments will be served. RSVP: Dianne (021) 462-5553 or [admin@holocaust.org.za](mailto:admin@holocaust.org.za)

#### Monday (May 18)

• Cape Town Holocaust Centre hosts a screening of "Tzipora's Nest", a film by Malka Nedivi. Venue: 88 Hatfield St, Gardens. Time: 18:00. Light refreshments will be served. RSVP: Dianne

(021) 462-5553 or [admin@holocaust.org.za](mailto:admin@holocaust.org.za)

#### Sunday (May 21)

• Cape Town Holocaust Centre hosts the launch of the book "East West Street" by Philippe Sands. Venue: 88 Hatfield St, Gardens. Time: 15:00. Light refreshments will be served. RSVP: Dianne (021) 462-5553 or [admin@holocaust.org.za](mailto:admin@holocaust.org.za)

#### Monday (May 22)

• JWBS hosts "The Agony and the Ecstasy of Speaking on Holocaust Remembrance Day in Germany" with Marlene and Lael Bethlehem. Venue: Waverley Shul Hall. Time: 19:30. Information: (011) 485-5232.



# Wounded Israeli soldiers teach learners about hope



Photo: Arnaldo Mandel

Maor Elcobi; Hadi Saad; and Roei Itzhaki.

OWN CORRESPONDENT

“Hope for Heroism” is a non-profit organisation helping and supporting wounded Israeli soldiers; all of the money raised by it goes directly to help these soldiers. As Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha’atzmaut approach, the South African community is again reminded of the men and women who played such an important part and continue to be involved in keeping Israel safe. Three Israeli soldiers representing “Hope for Heroism” spoke to the King David Sandton learners, enabling them to hear first hand about what it takes to defend Israel.

# More to ‘identity’ than a name



Photo: Jethro Levy

Principal Lorraine Srage, Holocaust survivor Veronica Phillips and Vice Principal Mazal Sacks.

NURIT JOSELOWSKY, GRADE 11

Last week Friday, King David Linksfield held a Yom Hashoah assembly. The theme was “Identity”. To many people an identity is just their name, but to others it is their history, their religion, their family and their legacy; it is the way they are known, as well as remembered.

During the Holocaust, a Jew was never seen as a person, but rather as a number, an object and an enemy - six million people, 1,5 million children, looked at as one single enemy, simply for being Jewish.

Holocaust survivor Veronica Phillips who survived the Ravensbruck concentration camp, shared her story with the King David Linksfield learners.

After listening to her story, displaying her true strength and immense bravery, the learners realised how privileged they

were as one of the last generations to be able to hear the stories of these heroes who went through something today’s younger generations will never be able to fully understand.

At the Yom Hashoah ceremony at West Park Cemetery last Sunday, we heard Rabbi Yossy Goldman of Sydenham Shul mention memories of his father, who was a Holocaust survivor.

What stuck with me was that when Rabbi Goldman was living in America and he went to daven in shul every morning, he would see all the men roll up their sleeves to put their tefillin on and most of them, Holocaust survivors, had blue numbers on their arms. These were the numbers with which they were identified during the Holocaust.

As Jews, we need not only recognise our identities, but also the identities of those who came before us and those still to come.



Micaela Dermeik; Alexa Friedman; Georgia Stoller; Gabriella Sitsakis; Julia Stenz; and Alexa Novick.

# Yom Hashoah at Victory Park

HANNA BEN-MOSHE

King David High School Victory Park commemorated Yom Hashoah on Monday in an emotional assembly in which the school boys’ choir gave a moving rendition of The Partisan Song in Hebrew and Yiddish. Tributes were paid to the righteous gentiles who courageously saved Jewish lives while risking their own lives.

Aviad Sela, head of the Israel Centre, was guest of honour.

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# Hard work is paying off for Diego Schwartzman

JACK MILNER

Diego Schwartzman did not win the Monte Carlo Masters tennis tournament last week, but he nevertheless came away with a trophy of

which he is extremely proud. In fact, he lost to Rafael Nadal in the quarter-finals of the tournament, but he came out of the event with two prizes. The first is that he has reached a career-high ranking of No 34 in the

world and the second is that Nadal presented the 24-year-old Argentinian with his playing shirt. This happens all the time in soccer but rarely in tennis.

Last Friday in Monte Carlo, Schwartzman did not only play on one of the most fascinating centre courts in tennis history, but he did it against a nine-time tournament champion and his big idol Nadal, who won 6-4, 6-4 in a balanced match where the Argentinean player did everything he could.

Schwartzman actually led 4-2 in the second set but could not hold Nadal off. At the end of the match he asked Nadal for his game shirt which the Spaniard gladly handed over to him.

Diego lost to Nadal also in 2013 Acapulco and in the 2015 US Open.

The Argentinian is probably the only Jewish tennis player in the top 100 these days and has been overlooked as nothing more than a journeyman. However, last year he started to turn the corner when he won his first ATP Tour event in Istanbul. Since then he has caught the eye, especially on clay, his favourite surface.

Schwartzman was born in Buenos Aires; the family emigrated from Germany.

He began playing tennis at the age of seven and despite his relatively small size, impressed his coaches but his height was always seen as a major issue.

He could almost be called the Amanda Coetzer of the men's tennis tour because at 1,7m, or five feet seven inches in the old measures, Schwartzman is the shortest player on the professional tour.

It is a major disadvantage, but what he misses in height he makes up for in speed and tenacity. He never gives up and pulls off amazing shots.

Not coming from a well-to-do family, getting him to compete in tournaments around the country and other parts of South America, was not an easy task. When Diego was a junior his mother went to the tournaments carrying bags filled with rubber bracelets made by father Ricardo so they could sell them in order to pay for the trips. At the age of 16 a private sponsor began to help him.

Right now, thanks to his success on the tour where he has earned prize money in excess of \$1 million, he does not have to deal so much with that aspect anymore. Getting rid of the financial burden Schwartzman believes is one of



Diego Schwartzman shakes hands with Rafa Nadal after losing to the Spaniard in Monte Carlo last week.

the reasons for his recent success. "Now, being able to have a big team around me helps, and the fact they can accompany me on tour, is fundamental to my growth," explains Schwartzman.

Once the big bucks started to come in he could afford a top coach and early last year hooked up with former world No 15 Juan Ignacio Chela.

"Diego is a very good player, very intelligent and I try to bring him all my experience, after so many years on the circuit and try to help him play his best tennis," said Chela.

Last December Schwartzman began pre-season training under the watchful eye of Martiniano Orazi, the man who perfected the game of Juan Martin del Potro for more than seven years, and physical trainer Juan Manuel Galván.

"He has a good work ethic and is well coordinated thanks to his physical build, but he had to improve his strength and intensity," said Orazi.

In Monte Carlo when, after he beat Roberto Bautista Agut, he had tickets to watch the match between Monaco and Borussia Dortmund in the Fifa Champions League, but was tired and opted to stay in his hotel and relax.

The next day he came out and easily beat Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff.

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