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oak dining chairs
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south african Jewish Report

■ Volume 21 – Number 15 ■ 12 May 2017 ■ 16 Iyar 5777

www.sajr.co.za

A holiday of hope...

Photo: Yossi Rozenboim

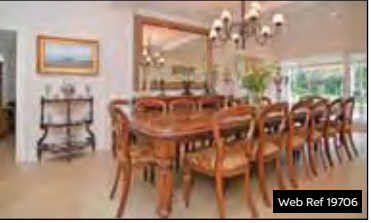
One of the Israeli youngsters living with cancer, Raanan Gigi, is having the time of his life being driven around in a fast car by Capetonian Saul Goren on their special holiday in South Africa, this week. See page 10

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Tafelberg protesters take aim at Zille

ANT KATZ

Despite the Western Cape government having made a final decision in late March to sell the Tafelberg site in Sea Point to build a Jewish school, the Reclaim the City (RTC) organisation is still not giving up the fight for the sale not to go through.

Last week Friday, the Ndifuna Ukwazi Law Centre, representing RTC, brought an appeal before the Cape High Court to review the decision they referred to as Premier Helen Zille having “sold [out the] poor and working-class residents”.

The site - owned by the Western Cape government - was originally used as Tafelberg School and was to be sold for R135 million to the Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School. For over a year, RTC has been trying to halt the sale, as they want the land to be used for an affordable social housing project. RTC’s aim is to see affordable housing for working-class people closer to their places of work, to make the city centre more inclusive.

Once the sale was announced, the City of Cape Town, the national government and local residents - many of whom were Jewish - expressed their opposition to the sale.

Ndifuna Ukwazi Law Centre plans to argue that both the Province and the City had failed “to give effect to the right of poor and working-class people to access land and housing in well-located areas”.



Former Capetonian Andrew Feinstein (a former member of parliament) also declared his protest, which was against Zille for calling RTC’s opposition to the Tafelberg sale, “anti-Semitic”. He wrote in the Daily Maverick last Sunday, that as a Jew, “anti-Semitism is personal for me. It is irrelevant who the Tafelberg buyer is, because the fault is not with the buyer but with Zille’s administration.”

He added: “After years of promising to use the site for housing, the province issued a tender notice which allocated 90 per cent importance to price and 0 per cent to the social value of any future development.

“Zille saw no reason to reconsider this, even after it was revealed that her adviser, Gary Fisher, framed the tender in this way once his company had bought

up properties in close proximity to the site.”

Feinstein, who now lives in the UK, said: “I know many of the leading protagonists within Reclaim The City. They simply don’t have a prejudicial bone in their collective body. Some are young Jews, proud of their heritage. Most are progressive black activists who make common cause with people of all backgrounds committed to a just society.

“Yes, they will point out the persistence of residential segregation, underpinned by largely unchanged patterns of white property ownership, but that is to oppose the legacy of racism, not to invoke it.”

However, said an RTC representative at the court last week Friday, their appeals had “fallen on deaf ears”.

RTC is livid with Zille whom, they say, has “demonstrated that our voices were not heard or considered”. Now, says RTC, Zille’s “spurious justification for selling the site will be tested”.

Shabbat Times this week		
Starts	Ends	
17:13	18:03	Johannesburg
17:38	18:31	Cape Town
16:55	17:46	Durban
17:15	18:07	Bloemfontein
17:09	18:02	Port Elizabeth
17:02	17:54	East London

Parshat Emor

Return home

So, Justin Bieber was in Tel Aviv last week and attracted some 50 000 fans to his concert. Go a little further north this weekend, to Miron and you will experience an event anticipating nearly 500 000 participants for the Lag B’Omer celebrations there.

This week we read the portion of Emor, which means to teach and includes instructions for the priests who were to serve in our Holy Temples, later to be established in Jerusalem. The portion continues with observances for all the Jewish festivals of the year.

Although we observe these holidays to the fullest extent here in the Diaspora, their ideal fulfilment, and indeed the practice of all mitzvot, is actually in our Holy Land, preferably in the Holy Temple. In fact, did you know that most mitzvot are actually only relevant in the Land of Israel?

Although most Jews had only dreamed of Israel for the past 1 947 years since the Second Temple’s destruction, none have lost their connection. For the last 3 000 years we Jews have had an uninterrupted presence there. The majority, who were exiled from its borders, forever breathed the Land, spoke of it, studied its ancient laws and offered sacrifices there both

literally and figuratively.

Three times a day we pray toward Israel. In each of our prayers, during bentsching, and at every religious milestone we mention the Land. At our happiest and even our saddest occasions, we invoke Jerusalem. At the end of each Pesach seder and Yom Kippur we declare “Next year in Jerusalem!”

In next week’s portion, the Torah foretells that eventually when we will be exiled as a result of our sins, its earth will remain barren.

For the last two millennia, no nation who inhabited Israel’s topography could do anything there successfully. Her soil wouldn’t produce, her streams didn’t flow. Israel remained for them a place of marshes, swamps, disease, and desolation.

Finally, the Jews return and now she is flourishing. Fertile fields, lush orchards, productive farms, robust vineyards, vibrant cities, flourishing villages, a powerful economy, major inventions, tremendous centres of learning and study. Why is that?

It is G-d’s chosen land, which He gave to His chosen people, as an inheritance for eternity. This is stated in the Bible - embraced by billions of Christians and Muslims as the word of G-d - hundreds of times.

We are G-d’s people and Eretz Yisrael is G-d’s land that He gave to us. The Torah is our “title deed” to the Land as delineated in so much detail of the covenant between G-d and our illustrious ancestors.

And when we get it, unapologetically and

Rabbi Ari Kievman
Sandton Central Shul



absolutely, the world will get it, too. No matter how many UNESCO resolutions, our true right to the Land of Israel does not change.

Let us support Israel; let us defend and strengthen her in every possible way. Let us go there with our families and communities to be infused by her majestic holiness. It is the birthright of every Jew to spend time there, and to connect not just to the food and culture, but also to Eretz Yisrael’s innate spirituality and holiness.


Fifty years ago, Jewish people everywhere were on edge. Tiny Israel was at war with its neighbours and a miracle was needed fast. Thankfully, it happened. In just six days the IDF managed to defeat their enemies and make significant advances on many fronts. For the first time in 19 years, we were able to pray at the Kotel. Even military strategists called Israel’s stunning victory a miracle.

Now we can flourish in our homeland, whether for a Justin Bieber concert or a more meaningful Lag B’Omer celebration. We are home and can anytime return there.

This week, in the spirit of Emor, we are launching a new course called “Survival of a Nation” in which we will journey through the history of our homeland and explore its relevance to every Jew today. I invite you to join me on this fascinating journey of our story. For more information contact Chabad House or go to www.JLI.org.za.

South African
Jewish Report

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FBI chief fired – huge impact on Jews

RON KAMPEAS
WASHINGTON

“You make us better,” James Comey told the Anti-Defamation League in his final public speech as FBI director. Judging from the applause in the conference room at the venerable Mayflower Hotel here, the feeling was mutual.

Mired in investigations of the scandals of 2016 (Hillary Clinton’s relationship with her e-mail server) and 2017 (Donald Trump’s relationship with Russia), not a lot of love ended up being lost between the FBI director and either party. Democrats called for Comey’s firing last year when a week and a half before the election he reopened the Clinton case because of e-mails found on the laptop of former Congressman Anthony Weiner in an unrelated case.

President Donald Trump, who repeatedly praised the FBI director as a candidate, fired Comey on Tuesday, ostensibly because Comey treated Clinton unfairly last July - he excoriated her for her e-mail habits in a news conference, but recommended against legal action.

The firing was drawing attention for its timing: Comey is delving into ties between the Trump campaign and transition officials who may have had ties to Russia. Among the folks whose business it is to keep Jews safe - like those gathered on Monday in the Mayflower for the ADL’s leadership summit - admiration for Comey was fairly unequivocal. To a degree greater than most of his predecessors, he made the Jewish story central to the FBI mission. Comey required all FBI staffers to undergo a tour of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

“Good people helped to murder millions. And that’s the most frightening lesson of all,” he told a museum dinner in 2015. “That is why I send our agents and our analysts to the museum. I want them to stare at us and realise our capacity for rationalisation and moral surrender.” Comey, already known as a persuasive speaker, was especially adept at understanding what moved Jewish Americans. In his ADL speech this week, he recalled meeting a man who was not far from the scene when a gunman opened fire last June at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

“My name is Menachem Green and I’m Jewish,” Comey quoted the man as saying, pronouncing Menachem impeccably, and



FBI Director James Comey preparing to testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Capitol Hill, on May 3.

went on to say that Green was pleased to tell him that he ran toward the shooting alongside a police officer he learned was a Muslim.

“Director Comey put in extraordinary resources and showed tremendous commitment to the American Jewish community,” Goldenberg said, noting that the FBI had deployed agents to Jewish communities across the states.

“We were Jew and Muslim and Christian and white and black and Latino running to help people we didn’t know,” Comey recalled Green saying. Comey also noted the “Muslim activists who raised over \$100 000 to repair Jewish headstones in St Louis and Philadelphia - that makes us better.” The now former FBI chief also embraced one of the ADL’s signature issues, improving reporting of hate crimes by local authorities. “We must do a better job of tracking and reporting hate crime to fully understand what is happening in our country so we can stop it,” he said. Just a week earlier, Comey was due

to receive a recognition award from the Secure Community Network, the security affiliate of the Jewish Federations of North America. Paul Goldenberg, the SCN director, said Comey was to be recognised for his work with the community in tracking down the perpetrator of dozens of bomb hoaxes on JCCs and other Jewish institutions. “Director Comey put in extraordinary resources and showed tremendous commitment to the American Jewish community,” Goldenberg said, noting that the FBI had deployed agents to Jewish communities across the states.

Comey could not personally accept the recognition, and SCN delivered it to a surrogate, because Comey was on the Hill testifying to the Senate about how he handled the e-mail and Russia scandals. In his testimony, he noted one of the FBI triumphs of recent months as a defence of the agency - helping to solve the JCC bomb threats. “Children frightened, old people frightened, terrifying threats of bombs at Jewish institutions, especially the Jewish community centres - the entire FBI surged in response to that threat,” Comey said in his opening remarks on Wednesday to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

In March, an Israeli-American teen was arrested in Israel on suspicion of calling in more than 100 bomb threats. Last month, the US Justice Department charged the teen, Michael Kadar, with making threatening calls to JCCs in Florida, conveying false information to the police and cyberstalking. “Working across all programmes, all divisions, our technical wizards, using our vital international presence and using our partnerships especially with the Israeli national police, we made that case and the

Israelis locked up the person behind those threats and stopped the terrifying plague against the Jewish community centres,” Comey said. Comey may be gone, but the shock among Democrats - and some congressional Republicans - at his departure, means his memory is unlikely to fade anytime soon. “We must have a special prosecutor,” Senator Charles Schumer, Democrat New York, the minority leader in the Senate, said in a statement delivered at a briefing for reporters late on Tuesday. Schumer said he told Trump in a phone call that firing Comey was a “very big mistake”. Trump fired back on Twitter, recalling that Schumer had said recently that he did not have confidence in Comey. “Then acts so indignant,” Trump said, calling the New York lawmaker “Cryin’ Chuck Schumer”. Representative Adam Schiff, Democrat California, the ranking Democrat on the US House of Representatives Intelligence Committee, which is also probing the Trump campaign’s Russia ties, said there was no contradiction between being appalled at Comey’s handling of the Clinton case and at his firing. Schiff noted that Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who has recused himself from the Russia investigation because he had met with a Russian diplomat during the transition, had signed off on the firing. “The decision by a president whose campaign associates are under investigation by the FBI for collusion with Russia to fire the man overseeing that investigation, upon the recommendation of an attorney general who has recused himself from that investigation, raises profound questions about whether the White House is brazenly interfering in a criminal matter,” he said. (JTA)



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Kosher versus non-kosher meat prices

ANT KATZ

Last week Jewish Report dispelled the myth that the kosher meat and chicken prices are substantially more expensive inland than at the coast. This week we are looking at the prices of non-kosher meat for comparison.

We checked the current shelf prices at Pick n Pay in Rosebank, Johannesburg and in Sea Point, Cape Town. We did a similar exercise with Checkers, using the Balfour Park and Sea Point stores as examples.

As we said last week, no meat price survey is 100 per cent accurate, simply because prices quoted are those prevailing at the time of going to print (in this case Wednesday, May 10), and they may be altered the next day. Also, when comparing prices, one is not always getting like-for-like, as in the quality of the meat, the cut, trim and packaging.

Last week’s kosher price comparison, for example, on chicken breasts, ranged from packs that included skin and fat, while others had both removed.

The results of this week’s survey were:

Non-kosher lean mince was lowest at Checkers Sea Point at R70 per kilo and highest at Checkers in Johannesburg at R89, while it was R75 a kilo at both PnP stores.

The average supermarket price for kosher mince was R97,25/kg, which is just 26 per cent above the average non-kosher price of R77,25/kg.

Checkers Balfour also had the highest prices for non-kosher boerewors at R80/kg, followed by PnP Rosebank at R58 a kilo. At Sea Point

TABLE OF PRICES										
All prices are per kilo										
SHOP	Fresh Whole Chicken Kosher	Fresh Whole Chicken Non-Kosher	Lean Beef Mince Kosher	Lean Beef Mince Non-Kosher	Beef Boerewors Kosher	Beef Boerewors Non-Kosher	Lamb Rib Chops Kosher	Lamb Rib Chops Non-Kosher	Beef Roast Kosher	Beef Roast Non-Kosher
Pick n Pay Cape Town	R100	R35	R90	R75	R100	R45	R160	R125	R190	R89
Checkers Cape Town	R100	R43	R96	R70	R90	R50	R160	R155	R120	R95
Pick n Pay Johannesburg	R80	R33	R103	R75	R95	R58	R203	R150	R200	R90
Checkers Johannesburg	R80	R50	R100	R89	R97	R80	R260	R150	R160	R80

Checkers, the price was R50/kg and at PnP Sea Point it was cheapest at R45/kg.

So, kosher customers who pay an average price of R95,50/kg for boerewors, are charged a hefty premium of 64 per cent over the average non-kosher price of R58,25.

Non-kosher lamb rib chops were R150/kg at both Johannesburg retailers, while PnP in Sea Point again came in lowest at R125/kg, while the nearby Checkers was highest at R155/kg.

Kosher lamb is an average of R195/kg, which is 35 per cent more than you would pay for the average non-kosher lamb chops, which sell for an average of R145/kg.

Kosher roast beef is almost 90 per cent more than what non-kosher consumers are paying on average. While the basic non-kosher roast is topside, a generally more expensive hindquarter cut, the kosher roast, raisin rib, comes from the forequarter.

Non-kosher beef roasts didn’t vary in price much. Checkers Balfour was lowest on this at

R80/kg, while PnP Sea Point came in at R89/kg, PnP Johannesburg at R90 and the highest is Checkers in Cape Town at R95/kg.

When it comes to chicken, however, the kosher market prices are a whopping 124 per cent higher than non-kosher chicken, at an average of R90/kg versus R40,25/kg. This comparison was made on whole fresh chickens.

The non-kosher prices of chicken this week saw PnP in Johannesburg coming in at R33/kg; followed by PnP Cape Town at R35, Checkers Cape Town at R43 and topping the list was

Checkers Balfour at R50 per kilogram.

If a consumer was to buy one kilo of each of the five items, they would get the best deal in PnP in Cape Town, paying just R369. At PnP in Johannesburg, they would pay R406, at Checkers in Cape Town, they would get their meat for R413 and at Checkers in Balfour, they would be out of pocket by R449.

It is probably good to shop around in your own city - rather than look for bargains elsewhere in the country.

Achievers

‘Galaxy of Stars’ set to dazzle South African Jewry

ANT KATZ

Nominations for the 19th annual Absa SA Jewish Report “Jewish Achiever Awards” are now officially open. The 2017 event’s theme is “Galaxy of Stars”.

- The Business Award categories are:
- The Absa Listed Company Award, going to a Jewish person in a senior leadership position within a listed company and who has achieved great success worthy of recognition; and
 - The Absa Unlisted Company Award, going to a Jewish person who is in a senior leadership position in an unlisted company and who has achieved significant success worthy of recognition; and
 - The Absa Entrepreneur Award, going to a Jewish person who has shown enormous entrepreneurial flair and business innovation.
 - The Europcar Women in Leadership Award, honouring the contribution made by Jewish women in all spheres of South African leadership.
 - Young Jewish Entrepreneur Award, going to one of SA’s leading Jewish rising entrepreneurs.

The Jewish Report humanities awards are:

- The Lifetime Achievement Award in Honour of Helen Suzman, awarded to a Jewish person who has contributed in an extraordinary manner, in their specific field, over a lengthy

- period of time;
- The KIA Community Service Award, going to a Jewish person who has served the Jewish community with remarkable distinction;
 - The Arts, Science, Sport & Culture Award, going to a Jewish person who has excelled in any of these spheres; and
 - The Humanitarian Award in Honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, awarded to either a Jewish or non-Jewish person who has contributed substantially to the betterment of South African lives.
- The annual fundraiser culminates in a dazzling black-tie awards gala evening, replete with music, comedy and a sparkling array of VIP guests. Members of the community may nominate as many people, and in as many categories as they wish.
- Send your nominations to: nominations@sajewishreport.co.za


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South African
Jewish Report

Towards respecting differences

I would never have imagined I would be celebrating a powerful woman losing an election, but far-right populist National Front candidate in the French election, Marine Le Pen stands for everything that concerns me about where the world is heading.

Her inward-looking, fanatical right-wing views are frightening. She wanted to rid France of multiculturalism, ensure all French citizenship should be “inherited or merited”, she said. She is opposed to any public displays of religious belief, including men wearing kippot and women covering their heads.

She publicly denied that the French had anything to do with rounding up the Jews during the Holocaust. This was long after former President Jacques Chirac admitted their part in rounding up 13 000 Jewish men, women and children, throwing them into the Vélodrome d’Hiver, an overcrowded sports arena in Paris, before they were deported to death camps.

She is no friend of the Jews or Muslims. And, it was with interest that I notice that Jews and Muslims together opposed her campaign.

Le Pen epitomises a trend in international politics. That is one of closed-minded nationalism, where anyone who isn’t 100 per cent sixth generation from the country, shouldn’t be allowed to stay. Remind you of another time and place in Europe? It does for me.

But, look to the US where President Donald Trump is not a huge fan of foreigners and demands “American jobs for American people” and makes it clear certain foreigners are not welcome in his country.

Before that, we had the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom, which stumped so many people who thought it not possible that the British would vote to leave the European Union. But, there too, this was a vote to isolate and separate. It was a vote to keep Britain that much more British.

For me to see that the centrist, more globalist, dare I say open-minded candidate, Emmanuel Macron won in France, was a relief. I hope that this is a sign that perhaps there is a change or a shift back into realising that the world is made up of different people who all need to learn to respect and live together peacefully.

So, yes, I am glad that Le Pen failed and am concerned that she got as far as she did.

Did you know that Le Pen is a mother of three teenagers? I find it surprising because her public persona is so far from nurturing or empathetic.

Speaking about mothers - and turning from politics to something more nurturing - I want to pay tribute to the mothers of our nation.

In this edition, we take a light-hearted look at the Jewish mamas and what makes us unique and we also celebrate a few unique rebbetzins, who not only look after their families, but their congregations and their careers.

These rebbetzins, along with most Jewish people, are likely to be celebrating Lag B’Omer on Saturday night and Sunday. For me, and I am not an expert here, Lag B’Omer has a big lesson for us in respecting one another. As I understand, the 24 000 Rabbi Akiva disciples died of a sudden epidemic because of lacking love and respect for one another.

So, when is the world going to learn to love and respect each other for our differences? That goes for Le Pen, Donald Trump, Theresa May, and every single one of us.

Shabbat Shalom, Chag Sameach and happy Mothers’ Day!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



Dateline: Middle East

‘Anyone but Marine Le Pen’

PAULA SLIER

During Israel’s last parliamentary elections in March 2015 there was a popular slogan in the country - “anyone but Bibi” - referring to Benjamin Netanyahu who, as Israeli prime minister, has served the longest consecutive term in Israel’s history.

I was reminded of this - the sentiment and not the years in office - as French voters headed to the polls last Sunday to vote for “anyone but Le Pen”.

However, unlike in Israel where Netanyahu again won the elections, the refrain stood steadfast in France and its far-right National Front leader, Marine Le Pen, suffered a major defeat at the hands of centrist Emmanuel Macron in the final round of the country’s presidential elections.

Ask the average Israeli what he or she thinks of the result and they’ll tell you that both candidates were bad choices. In the days leading up to the French elections, I took to the streets of Tel Aviv with a photograph of Le Pen and Macron on my Ipad and stopped ordinary Israelis.

“Who is this?” Just about everyone recognised Le Pen by name. Only two out of 10 knew Macron. Several didn’t know either.

“Le Pen hates Muslims and that’s why I like her,” was the most common answer I received. “But the problem is also that she doesn’t like Jews.” That too was a view echoed by many.

Among the just-over 13 000 French citizens who cast their ballots in Israel, an overwhelming 94 per cent gave Macron the nod - it wasn’t so much a vote of confidence in the 39-year-old former banker and relative newcomer to French politics - as it was a vote against Le Pen.

Their reasoning was simple: They feared the leader of the far-right would make good on her threat to strip French-Israelis of their dual citizenship and that her victory would bode badly for Jews in France.

Le Pen stunned many when she recently suggested Paris was not responsible for the wartime roundup of Jews who were sent to Nazi death camps. She has also called for a ban on wearing Jewish and Muslim religious symbols in public, ritual slaughter and giving pork-free meals in school cafeterias.

Her father, Jean-Marie, who established the party in the 1970s, is a known Holocaust denier who infamously called the gas chambers a mere “detail of history”. He has also claimed that the German occupation of France was not “particularly inhumane”.

But the fact that his daughter lost these elections doesn’t mean Israelis are smiling. Nor are the French (one third of whom abstained or spoilt their vote - a record number in nearly half a century).

Brussels may be sleeping a little more soundly this week, but it doesn’t mean the EU’s future - or that of the new pro-EU French president - is secure. Far from it. Macron’s victory will no doubt briefly stem the global wave of the British Brexit,

the Donald Trump victory and the struggle by Europe to get a handle on the hundreds of thousands of immigrants seeking refuge within her borders. But the undercurrents are still there and growing.

If the votes are translated into actual numbers of people who voted, Le Pen won 10,6 million votes (half that of Macron), trailing behind the 16 million people who didn’t vote for either candidate. So, she actually came third, but it was the best electoral result her party, since its establishment, has ever achieved.

In Le Pen’s own words, her “massive result” cemented her as the leader of the country’s opposition, sending a shiver down the backs of many who have been watching with mounting anxiety the rising power of the far right across the continent.

As one Israeli politician told me, Le Pen has now positioned herself as a true political force that won’t be disappearing in the coming years. In this respect she is the true winner of the elections.

Netanyahu, alongside many international leaders, congratulated Macron, saying one of the greatest threats facing the world is Islamic terror. In a statement issued by his office, Netanyahu stressed that Israel and France would continue working together to combat it.

Across the Israeli political spectrum, lawmakers echoed his remarks, despite the fact that Le Pen has tried to appeal to Israeli and Jewish sentiment by drawing common cause over the fight against radical Islam.

Most Israelis are having none of it. But Macron is not particularly strong on fighting extremism and has been painted as weak and inexperienced on security issues by his critics. Nonetheless he is considered to be pro-Israel and there is some expectation that under his leadership there will be a strengthening of co-operation between France and Israel.

He supports the two-state solution and is against the BDS movement. Israeli officials say they expect French foreign policy to continue as is, with no major strategic changes.

Macron is all smiles at the moment, but there is concern that his victory will be short-lived. In June the country will hold parliamentary elections and in order to govern properly, the new president needs to get as many of his people elected - Le Pen is already gunning for those seats and is making plans for a major party makeover.

Macron at present has no seats at all in the parliament and in the end, how much clout he will have in the assembly, will determine his ability to pass reforms and live up to his election promises. Should he fail, Brussels, Israel and indeed much of the world, could be forced to deal with a reality that for now they prefer to keep under the carpet - a far-right president in office.

• 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.



Playing Wagner with a clear conscience?

VIC ALHADEFF

Richard Wagner. The name ignites animated debate in the Jewish and music worlds - a debate which can evoke anger and angst when those worlds collide.

Can one listen to Wagner with a clear conscience? Should one play his music in Israel? Can a composer who died in 1883 - six years before Hitler was born - be damningly identified with his country’s genocide of the Jewish people?

And if the answer to that last question is in the affirmative, does it trump the insistence by music aficionados that no philharmonic orchestra that takes itself seriously - and no study of music - can be complete without Wagner?

These and other vexed issues underpin a controversy which remains unresolved in the Jewish Diaspora and particularly Israel, where an unofficial ban on Wagner endures seven decades after the death camps were liberated.

So, who was Wagner? He is described as



“the most volcanically controversial figure in the history of music”. Conventional wisdom insists that Wagner was a genius whose compositions were so seminal and innovative that ignoring them renders any appreciation of classical music congenitally flawed.

Yet, he has two strikes against him - he was viciously anti-Semitic and his music and writings were embraced by Hitler as validation of his own worldview. Hitler has been quoted as saying: “Whoever wants to understand National Socialist Germany, must know Wagner... Wagner’s line of thought is intimately familiar to me. At every stage of my life I come back to him.”

Wagner’s music was a feature of Nazi newsreels and major occasions. One of his vile statements - “The Jew is the plastic demon of the decline of mankind” - is included in the Nazi film “The Eternal Jew”, while an extract of his Die Meistersinger accompanies Nuremberg rallies in Leni Riefenstahl’s anti-Semitic film Triumph of the Will.

Hitler insisted that the rallies open with performances of Die Meistersinger, in 1933 issuing 1 000 tickets to Nazi officials, while an extract from Wagner’s Ring Cycle was the main anthem of Nazi mourning.

In addition, Hitler alluded to Wagner’s Parsifal in a chilling 1939 speech prophesying the destruction of the Jews, and he wrote in Mein Kampf: “At the age of 12, I saw... the first opera of my life, Lohengrin (by Wagner).

In one instant I was addicted. My youthful enthusiasm for the Bayreuth master knew no bounds” - so much so that every summer from 1933 to 1939 he presided over the Bayreuth Festival (a Wagner celebration), greeting the audience from his balcony.

The Wagner estate, Wahnfried, became his second home, and Wagner virulently attacked Jews in a pamphlet titled Jewishness in Music.

Israel’s unofficial ban predates the State. In the aftermath of Kristallnacht a member of the board of the Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra - forerunner of the Israel Philharmonic - asked conductor Arturo Toscanini to remove Die Meistersinger from the programme. Wagner has been played on radio and TV since then, but not in concert halls - with occasional contentious exceptions.

About to perform an encore in 1981, Zubin Mehta invited those who wished to do so to leave the hall and conducted an extract from Wagner’s Tristan and Isolde. Holocaust survivor Ben-Zion Leitner, who had fought in Israel’s wars, strode to the front, exposed his battle scars and shouted: “Play Wagner over my body!”

Mehta has tried to play Wagner several times, while Daniel Barenboim, who has conducted at Bayreuth, elicited a similar outcry when he conducted the prelude to Tristan and Isolde, and an attempt by the Israel Wagner Society to hold a concert at Tel Aviv University saw the university withdrew permission, as did a city hotel.

Opponents of the ban argue that composers Chopin, Liszt and Mussorgsky all made comments that could be regarded as anti-Semitic, while Tchaikovsky described Benjamin Disraeli as “that

detestable Jew”.

Bizarrely, Theodor Herzl was captivated by Wagner. “Heine tells us he heard the flapping of an eagle’s wings... when he wrote certain verses,” Herzl wrote. “I too believe I heard a fluttering of wings while I wrote that book.

“I worked on it every day to the point of exhaustion. My only recreation was listening to Wagner’s music... particularly Tannhäuser, an opera I attended as often as it was produced.

“Only on the evenings when there was no opera did I have doubts as to the truth of my ideas.” The book was The Jewish State.

Israelis have generally made peace with Germany; it is a staunch ally, it has paid billions in reparations and Israelis drive German cars. But discussion of Wagner cannot be reduced to focusing only on the quality of his music.

Dachau survivor Uri Chanoch says Wagner provided ideological infrastructure for Hitler. Ultimately, the issue is the power of the symbolism that intertwines and identifies Wagner with Hitler and his pivotal presence in the Nazi psyche. For that reason, the unofficial ban should endure.

• Vic Alhadeff is Chief Executive Officer of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies in Sydney, Australia, and former chief sub-editor of The Cape Times. South African playwright Victor Gordon’s new play, You Will Not Play Wagner, premiered in Sydney last week.

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Orthodox batmitzvah girl leyns from Torah

BRIAN JOSS
CAPE TOWN

When a young Orthodox Cape Town batmitzvah celebrated her coming of age recently, she leyned from the Torah.

While this is unheard of in South African Orthodox circles, it has become “a strong trend in the modern Orthodox world in America, Israel, England and Australia”, said a Johannesburg woman who prepares boys and girls for this milestone and who asked not to be named.

In fact, so sensitive is this issue that most of the people asked for comment, including the batmitzvah girl herself, her family and the rebbetzin who taught her, have asked not to be identified.

However, Dina Brawer, founder of the Jewish Orthodox Female Alliance (JOFA) in the United Kingdom, said more families have in the last three years chosen to celebrate their daughters’ b’not mitzvah in a way that includes an element of ritual (not limited to Torah reading), such as havdalah or by reading a megillah.

The mother of the Cape Town batmitzvah told Jewish Report she had been thinking about her daughter’s batmitzvah for a long time. When she suggested to her rabbi how she thought it could be done, she said he did not agree to the daughter leyning “on our Sea Point Shul premises”, even at a women-only service in the shul hall.

A woman had never leyned before at an Orthodox minyan in Cape Town, so the mother investigated the concept of hosting a halachic minchah service with a Torah reading led by women. “Dina (Brawer) was an invaluable resource.

“On the Shabbat morning, my daughter delivered a dvar torah from the front of a packed Sea Point Shul. It was important to us to celebrate with our shul community and not to separate ourselves from them, and so we sponsored a kiddush bracha.”

On the afternoon of Shabbat chol hamoed succot, about 200 people (including members of the shul) congregated at an overflowing house used as an office by the Union of Jewish Women. The Torah service was led and run entirely by women.

“My daughter leyned with such confidence and pride that many a tear was shed.

“The obstacles we faced when trying to conceptualise the

batmitzvah, created the opportunity to find a creative and satisfying solution. After the service we went to our home for a seudah shlishit (third meal) and our daughter led havdalah as Shabbat came out,” the mother said.

Brawer guided the batmitzvah and her family in choosing a hall rather than a shul to have the ceremony, where they used a privately-borrowed sefer Torah and the mechitzah was made of balloons.

Dr Deborah Weissman, a specialist in Jewish education who has had extensive experience in teacher training, religious feminism, interfaith teaching and dialogue, said her Kehillat Yedidya congregation in Jerusalem has been organising women’s Torah readings, including for b’not mitzvah, for almost 40 years, mainly for members and their families.

“I doubt that we want to do this kind of thing very often, but are willing to give advice to others, who do,” she explained.

“Since we are an independent congregation, we have not had trouble from any rabbinic authorities over what we do. Although we were the pioneers, it’s quite common in Israel now for girls within the modern Orthodox community to celebrate their batmitzvah by reading from the Torah,” said Weissman.

It took the Cape Town mother a long time to find someone who was prepared to teach her daughter, and eventually found a rebbetzin to do it.

The rebbetzin, who didn’t believe this was becoming a trend in Cape Town, said: “Although I do believe there are more girls and families who find this appealing and would consider it an option, the push-back from the rabbis and rebbetzins, although subtle, is clear and unwavering: they did not approve,” she said.

“But I think it is a good idea. There are so many changes that are taking place within the Jewish community about the status of women. Since this is not a question of clear prohibition but rather communal integrity, the rabbinic leadership should consider it.

“The desire for this is not emanating from irreligious women, but rather religious women seeking greater fulfilment in areas



where halacha is not clearly broken.

“Some people are reluctant to discuss this, as they and even some women, find it strange as it’s not something their bobbess would have done. Others know the opinion of the rabbinic fraternity and will not question it,” said the rebbetzin, who has not taught this to any other girls.

The batmitzvah’s mother said it was important that her daughter was taught by an observant Orthodox woman, “both to make the circle bigger and as a role model and so my daughter did not feel like we were moving out of what is acceptable”.

The mother said: “I asked Dina (Brawer) a number of questions on how to run a women-led Torah service in a halachically appropriate way.

“I asked how we could change over from a male-led mincha service to a women-led Torah service.

“I know of many girls in the Progressive movements who have had the same kind of batmitzvah; many led the service and leyned, as well as unaffiliated young women. However, I don’t know of anyone identifying as Orthodox who has done this before or since,” said the mom.

The Rashi challenge

Rabbis around the world cite Rashi more often than most sages, but Rabbi Jonathan Fox took this to a new height by publishing a book on 3 000 questions and answers relating to this mediaeval French rabbi, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki’s teachings. Here is a Q&A with Rabbi Fox.

What inspired you to write the Rashi Challenge and what is in it?

To create a fun and stimulating alternative way of teaching and learning Rashi’s commentary on the Torah. The book is filled with questions and answers on Rashi’s Torah commentary. The questions are separated into the portions of the week and are followed by the answers.



Who was Rashi and why is his commentary so important?

Rashi is the acronym for the mediaeval French rabbi, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki. Rashi’s commentary on the Torah is widely accepted as the most important and illuminating explanation of the word of Hashem. Knowledge of Rashi’s commentary has become the goal of millions of Jews over the last thousand years.

How does one use the book?

- By merely browsing through the questions and answers, beginners can start to build their knowledge of Torah and Rashi.
- By searching for the answers in Rashi’s commentary, one can learn the entire commentary in an interactive and stimulating way.
- Students can use the questions to test their knowledge of Rashi.
- Teachers can use the questions to test their students.
- Parents can use the questions and answers to create a fun and interesting atmosphere at the Shabbos table.

Who did you do the Rashi questions and answers for?

I originally compiled them for Torah learners. By searching for the answers in Rashi, one is forced to read and understand both the Chumash and Rashi. The question and answer format makes it fun and interesting.

Where were the original questions and answers published, how often and over what period of time?

In the Glenhazel Shul newsletter weekly for over two years. They were also used as part of the Torah syllabus at the Yeshiva College High School.

Who read them and what was their response?

Community members and learners at Yeshiva College. Readers and learners have enjoyed the challenge of testing their own knowledge, searching for the answers and simply having an easy way of learning Rashi through Q & A.

What does Rashi mean to you?

Rashi is a hero of mine and so many others. He takes the learners by the hand and guides them through the Torah (and Talmud) by explaining difficult words, lines and chapters in a meaningful yet extremely simple way.

How has his work impacted on your life?

It has literally opened up the Torah and the Talmud, making it possible to understand and access the wisdom of G-d and our Talmudic sages.

- *The Rashi Challenge can be bought at the Kollel Bookshop and 15 per cent of the sales of the book goes to the Chevrah Kadisha.*



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Mayor Mashaba wants more Jews in Jozi

ROBYN SASSEN

“We are proud to have two thirds of the Jewish community, numbering some 80 000 people in this grey city of Johannesburg,” said Johannesburg’s executive mayor, Herman Mashaba, speaking to a capacity audience at the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre earlier this week. He was the guest speaker at the opening of The Goldene Medina, an exhibition celebrating 175 years of Jewish life in South Africa.

“And I’d like to tell the rabbis to please get us another 80 000 and bring them here to Johannesburg. We still have space for them,” he added, warmly reflecting on the community’s historical reputation for its work ethic and its economic sensibilities.

“I speak to you not only as the city’s executive mayor,

an active citizenry that is deliberate about training future generations ensuring that tolerance and respect take precedence over discrimination and hate.

“The Jewish community has given us some of the country’s most ardent struggle heroes,” he went on, citing a long list of luminaries in the community who were prominent in the fight for democracy, but more than the heroes are the ordinary people, who have been willing to work hard to make their city grow and prosper.

Indeed, the focus of this exhibition is on those unsung heroes, as Gavin Morris, the director of Cape Town’s South African Jewish Museum, explained. The exhibition was designed and created by the SAJM team, and is currently on loan by the JHGC for a period of eight weeks.

Shaun Zagnoev, chairman of the Gauteng Council, as MC of the event, explained the evolution not only of the exhibition which was designed and made in Cape Town under the auspices of the South African Jewish Museum, but also the trajectory of the community itself, which reached from the arrival of impoverished immigrants in 1841 to the development of a vibrant community distinguished by leaders and giants.

He spoke of the ordinary people who too contributed to broader society.

“The Jews in South Africa have adapted to the challenges of their environment and have created the infrastructure through which to ensure the continuation of their age-old religious and cultural heritage,” he said with regard to the community’s welfare system, educational achievements and institutions and charities, as well as the idea of South Africa remaining “home” even for ardent Zionists.

“SA Jewry is a can-do community,” he added. “They rise to the occasion, when circumstances demand. We have overcome the most formidable

challenges in the past, and I believe we have the capacity to deal with the future’s challenges similarly.”

Morris offered lucid insight into the thinking behind the exhibition itself, which is on show on the second floor of the Centre. “This exhibition was a very difficult proposition for the museum, as the core of the SAJM’s permanent display is focused on the trajectory of the community.

“We hit upon a new approach - the personal stories - the stories of you and I. There are personal anecdotes and photographs on display here. No names are mentioned, no photographs are captioned. The reason we did this was to avoid faribels!

“You will find familiarity, nostalgia, memories from your own youth, here. The exhibition has no chronological coherence. It doesn’t focus on famous faces. It’s a ticket to your own memories: our past, present and future.” He mentioned the museum’s digital archive project that is currently under development, aiming to collect and retain the communities’ collective records.

Declaring the exhibition open, director of the JHGC Tali Nates, concluded the proceedings by making a special point of welcoming Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein and his wife Gina, trustees of the Centre, on their first visit to the centre.



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

The mayor at the exhibition

but also as a capitalist with a strong respect for the value of capitalism to a city’s growth.”

Reflecting on the community’s collective contribution to the development of Johannesburg as well as its entrepreneurial flair, he said that it has “provided the foundation we will be building on as our city reaches its potential as the economic heartbeat of our country. In the past years, we have seen our country deteriorate.”

He condemned the greed of the state and itemised South Africa’s problems, from potholes to unemployment, lawlessness to vanity projects funded by taxpayers, which have compromised the dignity of the country’s people.

“But we are determined not to despair.” He explained the mayoral office’s plans to address these issues with initiatives to revitalise the inner city to make it attractive for investors again.

Digressing to mention the bloodstain of the Holocaust and the disgrace of apartheid, he said that both should be retained in the country’s collective memory.

“They need to be retrievable memories, to ensure that we never allow our humanity to be brought to these low levels. Human hate starts with a stripping of others of their humanity, because they are different. We need to be

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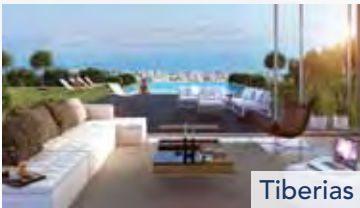
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Chaiyanu - ‘a vacation from being sick’

TALI FEINBERG

Imagine spending a glorious Cape Town day riding fast cars, followed by sailing on a yacht, concluded by a wonderful dinner and party with warm, generous new friends.

That is what a group of young Israeli children and teens with cancer did on their first day of the Chaiyanu “Hope Tour” to South Africa. They have been brought here to enjoy the best that life has to offer, distracting them from the sadness, monotony and medication that usually regulate their daily lives.

“It is a vacation from being sick, says Benjamin (20), from Be’er Sheva, one of the older teens. Aviram (16) from Jerusalem says this experience has taught him that good things can come after bad things. Yes, he had cancer, but now he has got to enjoy this trip and this will give him strength in the face of future challenges.

Noam (17), from Jerusalem, says that seeing the line-up of sports cars is “like being in a movie”. A car fanatic, he has lost fingers and toes in his cancer battle, but his eyes sparkle with excitement as he enjoys this dream-come-true experience.

“The tour is made possible by the generosity of South African families, says Elad Maimon, CEO of the organisation, which is based in Johannesburg. From the flights to the meals, outings, activities, administration and accommodation, our very own community is the force behind this dream adventure.

The tour has separate tracks for boys and girls. Meeting the large contingent youngsters over breakfast at Chabad in Sea Point, they had arrived in Cape Town tired from their trip, but their spirits and energy were immediately lifted



as they were whisked off to a party in Camps Bay, hosted by Avi Levy and 200 of his closest friends.

“We were dancing and singing - we all know the same songs!” Ari (21) remarked. “South Africa has the warmest people. We may be far

“The tour is made possible by the generosity of South African families, says Elad Maimon, CEO of the organisation, which is based in Johannesburg. From the flights to the meals, outings, activities, administration and accommodation, our very own community is the force behind this dream adventure.



Photos: Yossi Rozenboim

from Israel, but it’s like having another family.”

Mark (17) from Ashdod and Chris (18) from Dimona, expressed their gratitude, saying they don’t take this experience for granted and want to thank those who “woke up one day and decided that they wanted to make our lives easier”. They marvel at the views and beauty of Cape Town, which they say are unmatched in America or Europe.

David (15), from Netanya, lost his father just days before the trip - another challenge for a boy who has had cancer return for the second time. “Everyone is happy all the time on this tour. It will give us strength to continue,” he says.

Rafi Druion, a South African studying at yeshiva in Israel and a madrich on the programme, explains that some children are more ill than others, and that this trip helps them to let go of their daily challenges.

Some participants are in wheelchairs, some need assistance with daily tasks, and they all help each other. All medications are administered by nurse Shulamit, who has been volunteering with the programme for almost 20 years.

“Chaiyanu goes beyond this South African trip,” explains Shulamit. “We are by the families’ sides from the moment of diagnosis. Our volunteers are often teenagers who support other teenagers, almost becoming like a brother or sister. There is so much stress on a family, often with other children at home, and we fill in those gaps, allowing the parents to go home when needed.”

In supporting children, the organisation spends time with them whenever needed, hosts birthday celebrations and Rosh Chodesh parties, provides school tutorials and computer technology, liaises with the school, gives gifts

for the chaggim, and takes them to ‘Camp Simcha’, two-weeks of recreation in the United States, as well as the “Hope Tour” to South Africa.

In supporting the parents, Chaiyanu provides legal counsel, medical and emotional counselling, group and individual support, family fun days, connecting with other parents, and medical advocacy - finding the right doctors, the appropriate treatment centres and health organisations throughout Israel and the world.

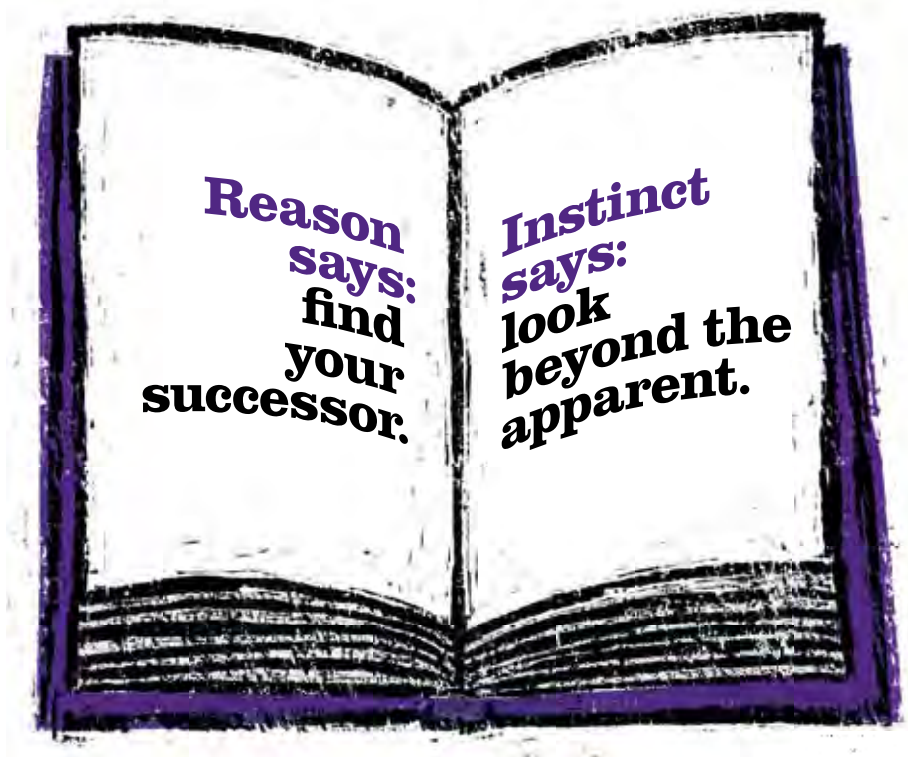
While in South Africa, the participants will go on safari, go up Table Mountain, have helicopter rides, enjoy a Lag B’Omer party, and be hosted in the homes of South African families, among numerous other activities and excursions.

The Jerusalem teenager, Aviram, expresses particular excitement at seeing the animals on safari.

“I see the light of joy in their eyes,” describes official tour photographer Yossi, as he snaps the participants climbing into Ferraris and Porsches under the South African sun, sometimes with a drip or wheelchair in tow. “Everywhere else I’ve been, I’ve never seen hospitality like in South Africa”, he adds.

“When they come off the plane, they are frail, but by the end of this trip they are full of energy,” says Ronit Belesi from Johannesburg, who has been volunteering with the organisation for four years. “It’s like giving water to a plant, and suddenly they bloom. They are like sunflowers,” she smiles.

As the teens are whisked away in fast cars by new friends, the delight on their faces shows that this tour has achieved its aims: to give them the time of their lives in the care and generosity of the South African Jewish community.



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THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Knesset advances ‘Jewish state’ bill

MARISSA NEWMAN AND
RAOUL WOOLLIFF
JERUSALEM

The Knesset plenum on Wednesday approved in a preliminary reading a bill that would enshrine Israel’s status as a Jewish nation-state in its Basic Laws, following a stormy session that saw three Arab lawmakers escorted out of the chamber.

Forty-eight lawmakers voted in favour of the so-called Jewish state bill by Likud MK Avi Dichter, and 41 Knesset members opposed it.

Israel’s national identity is mentioned in a number of the country’s laws, but the 11 existing Basic Laws deal mostly with state institutions and Israel’s democratic character. The nation-state bill, proponents say, would put Jewish values and democratic values on equal footing. Critics, however, say the bill effectively discriminates against Israel’s Arab and other minority communities.

Ripping up the text of the bill, Joint (Arab) List MK Jamal Zahalka screamed “apartheid, apartheid” and called Dichter a “fascist and a racist” before he was removed from the plenum.

Joint (Arab) List MKs Abd al-Hakim Hajj Yahya and Hanin Zoabi were also booted from the plenum for disrupting the session.

Dichter, a former chief of the Shin Bet security agency, lamented the “disinformation” about the bill, denying that it downgrades the status of Arabic in Israel as an official language. He also dismissed claims the law compromises the rights of Israel’s Arab minority, saying it merely anchors Israel’s Jewish status, while protecting the rights of other groups.

“I heard the yelling about an apartheid state. I think you are confused; in 1947 the UN decided to build a Jewish state here,” added Environmental Protection Minister Ze’ev Elkin (Likud), who also endorsed the bill and was the author of one of its earlier versions in a previous Knesset.

The Yesh Atid and Zionist Union opposition parties voted against the bill. Both parties have said they would support the version of the bill formulated by Likud MK Benny Begin,

which is simply a paragraph-long affirmation that Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people.

According to the language of Dichter’s bill, the law is needed “to protect the status of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people in order to anchor in Israel’s Basic Laws the values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence.”

According to the proposal, while every individual has the right “to preserve his culture, heritage, language and identity”, the right to realise self-determination “is unique to the Jewish people”. In another controversial clause, Arabic is changed from an official language to one with “special status”, which would ensure its speakers the “right to language-accessible state services”.

Dichter has rejected the claim that his bill is discriminatory. “It does not give preference to Jews over non-Jews. It gives preference to the Jewish state by preventing it from becoming something else,” he said emphatically. “It will not be Muslim and democratic, not Christian and democratic and not Hindu and democratic. It is a Jewish and democratic state and everyone knows that.”

Slamming the criticism of the Hebrew language clause, Dichter said it was “bullshit” to suggest his bill downgraded Arabic.

With no legislation defining the status of either Arabic or Hebrew, Israeli law relies on a British Mandate ruling defining both as official languages of Mandatory Palestine. “So, we said, let’s just go with the current reality,” Dichter said. “Hebrew is the language of the State but Arabic should have a special status above other languages. And that’s exactly what we wrote.”

The proposal also enshrines Israel’s state symbols and anthem, says the Hebrew calendar is the official one, affirms protection of all holy sites, and calls on courts to draw from Jewish law in cases where the existing Israeli legislation falls short.

The bill was brought to the plenum as a private bill, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s blessing.



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Head of the Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee Avi Dichter, attend a Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee meeting at the Knesset, on March 8, this year. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

UK LABOUR STUDENT LEADER RESIGNS OVER RACIST TWEETS



A student activist for the UK’s Labour party who was chosen to introduce party leader Jeremy Corbyn as he launched a nationwide local election campaign last month, resigned on Monday over a series of anti-Semitic and racist social media posts she wrote several years ago.

Bethany Barker (19), general secretary of the University of Nottingham Labour Students Committee, stepped down after the comments resurfaced in recent weeks.

Among the tweets that Barker posted was a comment that called a yarmulke a “Jew cap”. In another, referring to Norwegian far-right terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, who killed 77 people in a bomb and shooting attack in 2011, she wrote: “Breivik should go get slaughtered by a load of Muslims and get forced to live in a synagogue.”

Other posts carried derogatory terms and references to black people, including an expletive-laden comment expressing her hatred of the BBC’s main broadcasting channel, BBC 1.

The comments were posted between 2012 and 2014 on a Twitter account that has now been deleted.

In a statement, Barker apologised for the “disgusting comments” and asked forgiveness for the mistakes of her juvenile past.

WIFE OF PALESTINIAN HUNGER STRIKER WANTS POPE TO INTERVENE

The wife of the leader of a hunger strike by hundreds of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, has written to Pope Francis calling on him to intervene “before it is too late”.

Fadwa Barghouti, wife of Palestinian leader and prominent prisoner Marwan Barghouti, has called on the Pope to “speak up, because freedom and dignity are G-d-given rights, and no human group should deprive another of these rights”.

“Your call for respect of the rights of the Palestinian people, including the rights of our political prisoners, would allow the voice of those placed in isolation to reach the world,” the letter says.

The Vatican has recognised Palestine as a state.



The hunger strike began on April 17, led by Barghouti, who is serving five life sentences over his role orchestrating deadly terror attacks in the second Palestinian intifada.

Israeli authorities say 894 Palestinian prisoners have kept up the strike, though Palestinian officials say it is more than 1 000.

The Israel Prison Service said on Wednesday that Marwan Barghouti will be permitted to meet with representatives from the International Red Cross organisation.



SOUTH
AFRICAN
ZIONIST
FEDERATION

Erdogan lashes ‘racist’ Israel, calls to flood Temple Mount

reaching the Strip’s Hamas terrorist rulers.

Israel reacted quickly and angrily to Erdogan’s comments, calling them “baseless slander”.

“Anyone who systemically violates human rights in their own country, should not preach about morality to the only democracy in the region,” the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

“Israel strictly adheres to protecting full freedom of worship for Jews, Muslims and Christians - and will continue to do so despite this baseless slander,” the statement said.

Erdogan also warned Israel against the planned Muezzin Bill

“Anyone who systemically violates human rights in their own country, should not preach about morality to the only democracy in the region,” the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

meant to limit the volume on Muslim calls to prayer, saying he would not allow mosque loudspeakers to be silenced.

“The fact that such an issue is even coming to the agenda is shameful,” he said. “The fact that those who talk about freedom of thought and faith at every opportunity actually approve this step by remaining silent is noteworthy. Inshallah, we will not allow the silencing

of prayers from the heavens of Jerusalem,” Erdogan said.

Israel is pushing a bill that would ban religious institutions from using loudspeakers at certain hours, a move seen as targeting Muslim mosques who issue a pre-dawn call to prayer.

Critics say the bill is anti-Muslim, but proponents say it is about noise control and quality of life for people who live near mosques.

But Erdogan issued a challenge to Israel, saying that to move against the mosques would be a strike against freedom of religion.

“Why are you afraid of the freedom of faith if you believe in your faith? I am now reminding Israeli administrators: If you believe in your faith, then why are you afraid of the sound of our prayers?” he said.

Erdogan also spoke about the debates over the possibility of moving the US embassy In Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, saying they are “extremely wrong” and should be dropped.

US President Donald Trump had promised during his election campaign to move the American embassy to Jerusalem, whose status is one of the thorniest issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Erdogan said everyone should be careful on issues that concerned the status of Jerusalem, warning that even “relocating a stone” in the city could have serious implications.

“The debates over the possibility of US moving its Israel embassy to Jerusalem are extremely wrong and should certainly drop from the agenda,” the Turkish president said.



News and views from the Fed Hamas’ smoke and mirrors

No organisation better deserves the title of “South African Friends of Hamas” than the Media Review Network (MRN).

For decades, the lobby group has sought to portray Hamas as being a democratic, human rights-driven liberation movement equivalent to the African National Congress. What has stymied its efforts, however, have been the actions and ideologies of Hamas itself.

Whereas the ANC pursued negotiations for as long as it could before reluctantly turning to violent resistance (initially at least aimed at avoiding bloodshed), Hamas has from the outset had terrorist violence as its core strategy and it still refuses to negotiate with the “Zionist entity”.

So far as ideologies are concerned, merely comparing the ANC’s Freedom Charter to the Hamas Charter, demonstrates the absurdity of equating the two movements.

“Our struggle against the Jews is very great and very serious,” the Hamas Charter declares. It goes on to invoke a general end-of-days massacre of Jews by Muslims (Article 7) and list the “evil and contemptible ways” in which Jews have caused wars, revolutions and global corruption through their control of the media, finance, secret societies etc. (Articles 17, 22, 28, 32).

It is difficult to portray Hamas as being no more than ANC cadres in kefir when its founding Charter is effectively an Islamist paraphrase of Mein Kampf.

In view of this, when Hamas recently released a document purportedly outlining a more pragmatic agenda, the MRN’s Suraya Dadoo predictably rushed to herald it as a “seismic change” in which Hamas had endorsed the “two-state solution”.

The problem is that the document says nothing of the sort. Admittedly, the Hamas Charter’s crude anti-Semitism is absent, but the Charter itself has not been superseded. As for endorsing a two-state solution, it is repeatedly stressed that the entire area between the Jordan and the sea is inalienably Arab Islamic territory.

The establishment of “the usurping Zionist entity” does not annul the Palestinians’ right to the entire land (Section 2), Israel’s establishment was “entirely illegal” (18) and there is to be “no recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist entity” (19). No-one can doubt from this that Hamas’ goal remains a one-state endgame in which the Jewish State is destroyed and replaced with a single Arab-Islamic polity.

At the heart of this rejectionism is a bizarre culture of denialism concerning pre-Zionist Jewish links to “Palestine”. Section 7, for example, stresses the religious connections of Islam and Christianity, while signally omitting those of Judaism (which, of course, are of far greater antiquity).

This refusal to recognise that Jews also have historic and spiritual claims to the land - a denialism which, in view of the historical record can only be due to psychological rather than intellectual factors - makes it impossible for Israel to be viewed as being anything more than an illegitimate usurper state that must be eradicated.

At best, Hamas now merely appears to countenance the establishment of a Palestinian state as one stage in its long-term aim of pursuing Israel’s ultimate destruction. As such, its “new” manifesto actually only reveals how little, if anything, has changed.

A Palestinian man walks past the Dome of Rock at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound before the Friday prayer in Jerusalem's Old City on January 13, this year.





UK cans Prince Charles’ visit to Israel

TAMAR PILEGGI AND RAOUL WOOLLIFF
LONDON

A potentially historic visit to Israel by a senior member of the British royal family scheduled for later this year, has reportedly been cancelled by the country’s Foreign Office over fears it would anger the UK’s Arab allies.

The Sun tabloid reported last week Sunday that Prince Charles will not visit Israel in the autumn of this year for a trip that was planned to coincide with the 100-year anniversary of the Balfour Declaration.

Though never officially confirmed by London or Jerusalem, a senior British Jewish community leader told The Times of Israel last November that plans were underway for a member of the royal family to visit Israel in the first-ever official visit.

In March, in a meeting with UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, President Reuven Rivlin publicly extended an invitation to Prince Charles to visit Israel during the centennial year of the 1917 signing of the Balfour Declaration.



But according to The Sun, the Royal Visits Committee, the branch of the Foreign Office that co-ordinates trips on behalf of the royal family, nixed the visit in an apparent effort to “to avoid upsetting Arab nations in the region who regularly host UK Royals”.

The report said Rivlin’s invitation never reached the office of Prince Charles.

The UK Foreign Office, in a statement to The Times of Israel, denied a visit had ever been planned.

“Her Majesty’s Government makes decisions on royal visits based on recommendations from the Royal Visits Committee, taking into account advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Committee never proposed a royal visit to Israel for 2017. Plans for 2018 will be announced in due course,” a spokesman said.

While royals have visited Israel in the past, no representative of the British monarchy has ever come to the country on an official “royal tour”.

Prince Charles’ attendance at Shimon Peres’ funeral last year and the funeral of slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1994, did not include diplomatic meetings and are not considered official royal visits.

Hunger striker takes fight over ‘get’ to Knesset



Zvia Gordetsky launches a hunger strike outside the Knesset after being refused a religious bill of divorce - a get - for 17 years.

MARISSA NEWMAN JERUSALEM

Outside of Israel’s parliament, an Israeli woman who has been denied a religious bill of divorce - a get - for 17 years, entered the sixth day of a hunger strike on Monday, imploring lawmakers to find a way to free her.

“I’ve reached a point where I can’t wait any longer. I’ve waited too long,” said Ukraine-born Zvia Gordetsky, now 53, whose husband has opted to sit in jail since 2000, rather than give her a divorce.

She was hoping that lawmakers could help her by paving the way to retroactively annul her nuptials, but last Sunday that was shelved for the next three months by ministers.

Gordetsky first asked for a divorce “because of a tragic incident of domestic violence” in which she lost a baby, days before she was due to give birth.

After hearing her account and the testimony of her husband, a rabbinical court ordered him to give her a divorce within 30 days or face a prison sentence, she said. He showed up to the hearing with a bag packed for jail, she said.

Imprisoned ever since, including a stint in solitary confinement, Gordetsky’s husband recently had his phylacteries confiscated, under a new law aimed at further pressuring incarcerated recalcitrant husbands with religious sanctions.

Last week Wednesday, Gordetsky parked herself outside the Knesset in protest of her agunah or “chained” status, under which she may not remarry in Israel, where religious courts have final say on matters of personal status.

The rabbinate, which she described as supportive of her case, imposed all the

sanctions at its disposal, she said. “But it didn’t resolve the problem.”

Gordetsky was pinning her hopes on a bill, introduced by Zionist Union MK Yael Cohen-Paran that would pave the way to annulling marriages using a mechanism known as hafka’at kiddushin, supported by a minority Jewish legal opinion.

The Ministerial Committee for Legislation, a key panel that lends legislation coalition support, on Sunday postponed the vote by three months. According to a spokesperson for Cohen-Paran, the opposition lawmaker will likely bring the bill to a plenum debate on Wednesday.

However, the bill - endorsed by more than a dozen opposition lawmakers, but no coalition MKs - is highly unlikely to advance, given the opposition by ultra-Orthodox lawmakers to legislation that alters the religious status quo, under which “personal status” issues of marriage and divorce are handled exclusively by the rabbinical courts.

Zehava Fisher, an activist accompanying Gordetsky, argued that the law would not compromise the rabbinical courts’ standing, as it would be conditioned on a religious ruling from the rabbinical judges to the husbands ordering them to divorce their wives. If they refuse, the law would then go into effect, expropriating assets in the amount detailed on the marriage contract.

According to Fisher, “there are rabbinical judges who support it. At least six. One openly - Rabbi [Eliyahu] Abergel - and five secretly. But they exist.

“This law could be passed by the British parliament, because it isn’t a religious law,” she added, maintaining that while the Knesset would carry out the legal mechanism of separating her

However, the bill - endorsed by more than a dozen opposition lawmakers, but no coalition MKs - is highly unlikely to advance, given the opposition by ultra-Orthodox lawmakers to legislation that alters the religious status quo, under which “personal status” issues of marriage and divorce are handled exclusively by the rabbinical courts.

from her husband’s assets and debt, it would remain up to the rabbinical courts to decide whether the woman may then remarry.

Every six months for 17 years, Gordetsky’s husband is summoned for a hearing by the rabbinical courts to demand he issue the divorce. According to the agunah, he repeats that the authorities “won’t break me”.

For 17 years, she sought out rabbis for Jewish legal loopholes. “Their final answer was that the man gives the get,” she said.

The mother of four, who moved to Israel from the former Soviet Union in 1990 and got married at 19, was adamant on Monday that she would stay put and refrain from eating until “a solution is found”.

“My sons, whom I raised with dedication, serve in the army, protecting the State of Israel,” she said. “I want the State of Israel to protect me.”

Hot kids’ toy to stop violence

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
NEW YORK

The inventor of the original version of the latest craze in children’s toys, the fidget spinner, says she got her idea for the device more than two decades ago while on a visit to Israel during which she heard about Palestinian youths throwing rocks at Israeli police during clashes and

demonstrations.

Catherine Hettinger, who lives in Orlando, Florida, said she wanted to come up with a device that would distract and soothe children, ostensibly from the violence they were witnessing.

“It started as a way of promoting peace, and then I went on to find something that was very calming,” she told CNN Money in an interview last week Friday.

In a separate interview with the UK’s Guardian, she said the product was a result of a “horrible summer” when she was suffering from health problems while caring for her young daughter.

“I couldn’t pick up her toys or play with her much at all, so I started throwing things together with newspaper and tape then other stuff,” she said. “It wasn’t really even prototyping, it was some semblance of something, she’d start playing with it in a different way, I’d repurpose it.

“We kind of co-invented it - she could spin it and I could spin it, and that’s how it was designed,” she added.

It wasn’t clear if that summer consisted of the trip to Israel.

The spinners consist of two or three prongs with a centre bearing. An individual grips the centre while spinning the prongs.

Her patent on the device, first imagined sometime in the 1980s, expired in 2005 and independent makers ran with the product. It eventually became wildly popular this year and the spinners made the list of Amazon’s top 20 best-sellers in the toys and games category as of May 2.

Hettinger said she didn’t renew the patent because she could not afford the \$400 fee at the time. “I just didn’t have the money,” she told the Guardian in the interview.

“It’s challenging, being an inventor,” she said. “Only about three per cent of inventions make any money. I’ve watched other inventors mortgage their houses and lose a lot. You take roommates, you get help from friends and family. It is hard.”

But she says she is not upset by the product’s success despite her non-involvement.

“Maybe if it was some kind of exploitative product - like a new style of cigarettes - and my only motivation was to make money, I’d have a different attitude,” Hettinger told CNN.

“But I am just thrilled.



A woman holds a fidget spinner, on May 5, in the Brooklyn borough of New York City.

“When you start seeing these things flying off the shelf at your local 7-11, you know things are heating up,” she joked.

Hettinger’s first spinner was introduced in 1993 and her patent was approved in 1997, but her version of the product did not take off, despite her best efforts to sell it.

In the interview, Hettinger added that she wasn’t sure why it became popular some 20 years later, but that the collapse of the US economy - and much of the world’s - may have had something to do with it. Perhaps, she speculated, people were looking for more ways to soothe their nerves.

The device, she said, has been a source of relaxation for her.

“That was always the concept - to help people. I experienced it for myself. There’s a real need for this,” she said.

The toys are available in different materials, colours, designs and settings.

They are said to be so popular that schools in the US and the UK have banned them, saying they are too distracting.

But Hettinger said she knows of instances where the toys have been beneficial.

“I know a special needs teacher who used it with autistic kids, and it really helped to calm them down,” she said.

Bieber’s baby: First song sends woman into labour



Justin Bieber’s first song of his Tel Aviv concert last week, was enough to send a 23-year-old concert-goer into labour. But to be fair, the ultra-Orthodox woman was three weeks overdue.

Despite her pleas to medics to let her stay after her waters broke, Reut Ziskind from Bnei Brak was rushed to the Me’ayanei Hayeshua Medical Centre last week Wednesday night where she delivered a healthy baby girl.

“When I bought the tickets I was sure I would give birth before or after the performance,” she told Ynet news. “I never dreamed I’d actually give birth during his performance.”

She told Channel 2 that she had some discomfort on the morning of the concert, but didn’t want to miss out because of that. But as soon as Bieber came onstage and began his first song her waters broke.

“I was not having contractions, so I didn’t think I should have to miss out,” she said. She even argued with the ambulance crew to allow her to stay until the end of the concert, but to no avail.

Some 50 000 fans, mostly teenage girls and young women, packed the venue in Tel Aviv’s Hayarkon Park for Bieber’s second concert in Israel. (His first was in 2011.)

Ziskind denied there was any incongruity in a religious woman attending a concert of the one-time teen heartthrob.

“I’m a modern ultra-Orthodox woman,” she told Ynet. “You would be surprised, there are a lot of ultra-Orthodox women who love Justin Bieber.”

The first-time mother said that at first she was very upset that she missed the show, “but now I am happy because I have an amazing daughter.”

And did she name her baby after her idol?

“If I would have had a boy I would have called him Justin,” she said. “But I had a daughter and we named her Hadar.”

Study finds missing protein may contribute to Alzheimer’s

SHOSHANNA SOLOMON
TIMES OF ISRAEL

Researchers at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) say they have verified the absence of a protein in Alzheimer’s disease patients, and that absence likely contributes to the onset of the debilitating disease.

The common consensus is that ageing is the result of DNA damage accumulation - essentially the body’s

failure to implement processes to completely repair its DNA.

According to the Alzheimer’s Association, of the estimated 5,5 million Americans living with Alzheimer’s dementia in 2017, 5,3 million are 65 years and older and the remaining 200 000 have younger-onset Alzheimer’s. One in 10 people aged 65 and older, 10 per cent, has Alzheimer’s dementia.

According to the study, published

last month in Cell Reports, one of the key components in this DNA repair process is the protein SIRT6. BGU researchers determined in mouse models that high levels of SIRT6 facilitate DNA repair while low levels enable DNA damage accumulation.

“We analysed samples from patients with AD and found a remarkable reduction in SIRT6 at both protein and mRNA levels,” they wrote. “Together, our findings indicate that SIRT6

protects the brain from naturally accumulating DNA damage, in turn protecting against neurodegeneration.”

The researchers also tested their hypothesis on neurodegenerative diseases besides Alzheimer’s, and found a deficiency of the SIRT6 protein in patients.

“If a decrease in SIRT6 and lack of DNA repair is the beginning of the chain that ends in neurodegenerative diseases in seniors, then we should

be focusing our research on how to maintain production of SIRT6 and avoid the DNA damage that leads to these diseases,” lead author Dr Deborah Toiber of the BGU Department of Life Sciences said in a statement.

Toiber’s lab is one of only a handful worldwide looking at the effects of SIRT6 in the brain and its connection to neurodegenerative diseases, the statement said.

The controversial Pawn Star



PETER FELDMAN

Roy Peretz, the colourful personality from the Pawn Stars SA, doesn't know the meaning of the words "political correctness".

He calls it like he sees it, without any sense of "niceties" - and somehow this has ensured that he has a strong following, not just on television, but on radio too.

The Spanish-born Peretz, who spent his early years in Israel, came to South Africa in 1988.

"I owned a chemical engineering company in Israel. The South African government at the time was looking for investment into the homelands. They would give us special concessions and I thought a move there would be financially viable.

"I sold the company after 10 years. I had an eye for the pawn shop business and I was knowledgeable about watches, gold and jewellery. So I opened Cash Inn in Hyde Park and it became a big success."

The success of the American version of Pawns Stars, prompted A+E Network in London to do a South African version and the local TV production company, Rapid Blue, was instructed to find South Africa's own pawn stars.

"One day I got a phone call from Rapid Blue who wanted to see me about a show. They told me we were one of several pawn brokers in the running. Eventually they chose us, a group of Israelis, and our crazy chemistry obviously struck the right chord."

Almost overnight Peretz and his team became celebrities. People turned up at the shop to see if they were real. The show had 1,4 million viewers

in South Africa and more than four million combined viewers in the UK, Europe, South America and parts of Asia. A second series was also filmed.

"One day I received a call from football star Frank Lampard who played for Chelsea and who was a motorbike enthusiast. He had seen a rare Royal Enfield 1929 bike with sidecar on a show and wanted it. When he phoned me I thought somebody was playing a joke. He paid a lot of money for the bike and we shipped it to him in the UK."

Peretz has also become an outrageous and often controversial voice on ChaiFM, dispensing his own "pearls of wisdom" to an ever-growing following.

Listeners either love him or hate him, but they cannot ignore his outspoken right-wing views and the many un-PC comments that escape from his lips during the two radio shows he hosts.

He has ruffled feathers in many quarters and though he has apologised on air for some of his antics, he won't change his approach or style.

"I speak from the heart," he says matter-of-factly, "and it doesn't matter whether people agree or disagree with me. I encourage people to respond because I love nothing better than to debate an issue. I'm not afraid to air my views on South African politics, on Donald Trump, on Israeli politics and even on sexual matters."

He said candidly: "I have a lot of people who love me but I am proud of those who hate me. It means that I have managed to touch them."

Chauvinism is a topic close to his heart and features prominently in his discourses. He admits with an impish grin, with his tongue firmly in his cheek: "I hate women but I like girls."

Peretz loves to talk and engage with people, a trait that is vital in his kind of business, running the Cash Inn pawn shop, in Jan Smuts Avenue, Johannesburg. He is a true master in the art of "haggling" and those who have seen Pawn Stars SA on History (DStv channel 186) will understand this.

Peretz, with his slicked-back hair, gold medallion around his neck and regulation embossed black shirt, with his business logo, hotly refutes the assertion that he's on a gigantic ego trip. He sees himself more as an educator and entertainer, and his massive popularity surfaced recently when he received a standing ovation from 2 000 people at a motivational talk in Johannesburg by internationally recognised American wealth coach, JT Foxx.

"It was an amazing experience. I never thought that one day I'd be a public figure."

Friday (May 12)

- UZLC hosts Mo Skikne on “Chaim Potok - Author”. Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 – 14:00. Contact: Gloria 072-127-9421 or (011) 485-4851.

Sunday (May 14)

- Big Band Music Appreciation Society meets at its new venue, Beit Emanuel, Slome Auditorium in Parktown. This programme, compiled by Ruth Diskin, comprise DVDs - Songs of the Century - swing, best of the Big Bands and an audio tribute to Helen Forrest. After Interval - DVD - Salute to Django Reinhardt, audio on Claude Bolling and more DVDs. Contact: Marilyn 072-243-7436 or Jack 082-450-7622. Meetings at 14:15 sharp.

Wednesday (May 17)

- Chev Social Services hosts an Enrich 2017 Talk on “Is anybody out there?”

When dealing with life’s challenges, who do you call? With a diverse panel: Dr Jonathan Moch, Serenne Kaplan, Nan Sauer, Liora Leslie, Natali Swil and Dr Kerri Sacks. Venue: The New Arcadia Day Care Centre, 1 Long Avenue, Glenhazel. Time: 19:45. Cost: R50. Booking: (011) 532-9616 or enrich@jhbchev.co.za

Thursday (May 18)

- Expat Adv Gidon Cohen speaks about the economic uncertainty in South Africa and what our options for a better future Israel. Venue: Jo’s at KosherWorld. Time: 18:00. Cost: R80/head (incl light snacks) Bookings: (011) 440-5544.
- 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

WHAT'S ON

- Hebrew Club meets on the 2nd floor at Beyachad from 11:00 – 12:00. All fluent Hebrew-speakers are invited to Hebrew lectures on economy, history, technology, family memories, etc. Information: Abigail (011) 640-2376 or 072-432-9198.
- Jewish Genealogical Society of SA hosts David Saks, Associate Director & Senior Researcher SAJBD, historian and publisher of many books and articles, on “The Unrealised Dream - Jews and the Communist Movement in South Africa”. Venue: HOD, Time: 19:30. Cost: R25.00 (incl tea & refreshments). RSVP: Hannah (011) 485-2188 or jgssa16@gmail.com

Sunday (May 21)

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Rebbetzins answering a different calling

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

While they don’t always stand in the limelight, there’s no denying that being a rebbetzin is demanding. Just raising (often very large) families is a fulltime job. Add to that, supporting a busy rabbi, addressing the needs of the community, providing spiritual guidance as well as regularly entertaining the kind of crowds that would send even the most experienced of cooks into a tailspin, and you have a packed plate. Yet among South Africa’s already inspirational rebbetzins are women who are doing all of this and maintaining demanding careers.

Rebbetzin and fashion entrepreneur Sarah Feldman, who together with her husband Rabbi Osher Feldman, serves the community of Cape Town’s Gardens Shul, is no stranger to juggling responsibilities. In addition to her many shul responsibilities, she’s a mother of four. “Finding the time to start up and run a fashion brand was never going to be easy,” she says. But it was a calling she couldn’t ignore. “Being frum does not mean being frumpy and after running a lifestyle blog called Rabbi’sWife.com and being consulted by women across the world, I realised the demand for stylish modest fashion,” says Feldman.

With this in mind, she started her own line, the “Sarah Feldman Cape Town” fashion brand (www.sarahfeldman.co.za). Her brand has steadily grown, with Feldman currently launching two “pop-ups” in Australia. “I see my business as an extension of my work as a rebbetzin,” she says. “I believe in a Judaism where one should



Mashi Lipskar



Aviva Thurgood

feel and look good and that includes health, fitness and the way we dress.” It’s this philosophy that helps Feldman manage her many roles. “I exercise daily and eat a mainly plant-based diet, which keeps my mind and body healthy and active.

“This together with finding some form of regular ‘me time’ plays a major role in helping me to stay focused and manage the workload.”

Staying healthy is also an effective strategy for rebbetzin, practising physiotherapist and second black belt karate Dan, Aviva Thurgood. She’s married to Rabbi Sam Thurgood who leads Beit Midrash Morasha @ Arthur’s Road in Sea Point.

“I’ve found running on the promenade, hiking and general exercise is an essential part of my sanity,” she says. “I don’t view exercise as a luxury, it’s a priority.”

This has helped her manage her practice, motherhood and her work with the shul. “It’s always been important to me to have my own identity and a place where I can express myself in an area other than the community,” she says.

“I’ve found working as a physio to be fulfilling, meaningful and stimulating. I love community work, but having an outlet and personal space, gives me a chance to take a break and define myself in other ways as well.”

Having worked fulltime for the last three years, she’s recently cut back her physio hours, yet still teaches eight Pilates classes, treats about 28 patients a week and also takes her daughter to extramurals and on outings.

On coping she says: “I couldn’t do anything without my incredible support system which includes my husband, in-laws and nanny. Some weeks are crazier than others, but I find

that focusing and being fully present for each part of the day, really helps.

“When I’m at work, I’m at work and when I’m home, I’m with my family or community. Having clear boundaries is essential for me. It’s not about doing what society or everyone else says, it’s about what works for you.”

Widely known for her weekly ChaiFM radio show which she sees as a “very big shiur”, highly regarded public speaker, writer and



Sarah Feldman

educator rebbetzin Mashi Lipskar says that while her work extends beyond the shul, all she does is aligned to community.

Alongside her husband Rabbi Mendel Lipskar, executive director of Chabad of South Africa, rabbi of the Shul @ Hyde Park and co-founder of Torah Academy School, the rebbetzin has long been involved in education and still teaches at the school.

Asked how she finds a balance, she says: “We’re human beings and sometimes we’re our own worst enemies, that’s the human journey. But you have to prioritise according to what you’re passionate about. And thank G-d if you have a spouse who’s a friend and a partner, you can give objectivity to one another.

“You also have to be connected to your Source by studying the wisdom of Torah. In doing so, you’re in a great space for being honest about how you define yourself and divide your time. For me teaching children is just a joy and a privilege. You have to be happy; when people are happy, they can do so much more than if they’re not.”

In terms of juggling work and motherhood, Lipskar who now has nine adult children and close to 50 grandchildren, says she sometimes wishes she’d spent more time



Natalie Altman

at home with her kids. “I think the primary role is to be a mother, because no-one else can do that. Yet, I think that when your kids know that they are your love and your priority, then the time that you do give them counts for a lot. In order to be the best mom, you also have to take care of yourself. What teaching gives me in personal growth is phenomenal - it keeps me growing and fresh.”

Also in the educational space, Rebbetzin Natalie Altman who’s currently expecting her sixth child, is the principal of the Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School in Cape Town. She also manages the school’s Jewish and secular studies curriculum.

A renowned educator, speaker and spiritual leader, she sees working in education as her calling. Overseeing all 140 learners in the preschool and primary school, she works from 07:30 to 16:30 each day.

“The biggest gift I have in terms of managing my time, is a very involved husband [Rabbi Jonathan Altman] who’s a very active father. We share everything, finance, household and children.

“An exceptionally supportive staff and board, as well as a support system of friends, are also critical ingredients. My parents are also very supportive, although they live in Johannesburg.

“Having a functional public transport system that takes my high school-aged children to and from school, is also highly valuable. I also exercise three times a week, which helps me take time for myself. My generally calm temperament also helps. I think in life, when you’re given it, you get through it and then you look back and you’re not sure how!”



What makes Jewish moms unique?

PETA KROST MAUNDER

Jewish mothers are traditionally a breed apart from other mothers, no matter where in the world we live, how rich we are or our political leanings. We are believed to be overprotective of our kindelach forever. Even when they are adults with their own children, and possibly grandchildren, we are quick to tell them they need a jersey, a job or a life... And when they don’t listen, we are quick to lay on the guilt, every Jewish mama’s strongest weapon. I could go on because not only am I a mom, but I have a very precious mom and four sisters who are moms and some of my best friends are moms too.

Instead, I put out a Facebook message on Joburg Jewish Mommies to ask other moms what they think is special, unique and different about Jewish mommies. This is what they said: Anni Williams said Jewish moms have a “constant desire for their children to be better than they were” and for their kids to be able to “accomplish anything that they can dream”. Laura Bark Sher says Jewish moms are so caring. “I would take a trigger for my three children. I encourage them to live their dream and never give up. They have their independence but I will always be there for them.” Avital Furman-Maraney agrees with me in saying that “there is only one thing that makes Jewish

mom’s special: a healthy dose of ‘Jewish mother’s guilt’”. Aviva Egdes says that Jews are a nation of compassionate people and we feel particularly deeply for our children. “We are proud and grateful of their achievements, and devastated by their pain. We feel their every emotion. Intuition, or gut feel, an understanding on a subconscious level,” she says. Hanna Yudelman Green says we “know” the right way to make chicken soup and kneidl and “we want to give everything to our children” even if it means sacrificing so they can have. Pamela Penn Cohen agrees: “We self-sacrifice for our children.” Says Jacqui Rozen: “Only a Jewish mother would drive back to school in a flurry if her kids forgot

their lunch boxes, jacket or PT kit at home.” Michele Rootenberg believes Jewish moms often micromanage their children’s lives. In the process of doing what we can to keep them safe and happy, we tend to get over-involved and become “helicopter (hovering) parents”. “Our children are our greatest joy and our life’s work,” says Michele. “We see them as blessings and not as encumbrances. We often feel guilt that we are not good enough

parents. We tend to be very loving to our offspring and delight in feeding them.” And boy, do we love feeding them! G-d forbid they should be hungry for a moment. Sharon Lefkowitz says: “It is all about the love, the unconditional giving” and wanting our kids to have all the good things in life so they can grow into “mensches”. We give the CIA and FBI a run for their money when it comes to solving our children’s problems, says Danielle Sacks. That’s right, Nici Ezra says: “We are fighting with them and fighting for them. There is nothing so fiercely protective as a Jewish mom!” I couldn’t have said it better. Happy Mother’s Day to all the Jewish moms!

Palestinian flag flies over Dublin City Hall



The Palestinian flag, far right, flies over Dublin City Hall on Tuesday.

Photo: Twitter

MICHAEL RIORDAN
DUBLIN

The Palestinian flag on Tuesday flew over City Hall in Dublin, a day after the city council capped a month of stormy debate with a decision to raise it. It will remain through the end of the month.

Pleas by Israeli Ambassador to Ireland, Ze’ev Boker for impartiality, fell on deaf ears ahead of the vote on Monday. Likewise defeated was a proposal by a Fine Gael party councillor to include a clause calling for both Israeli and Palestinian flags to fly in acknowledgment of “the suffering of civilians on both sides”.

Presented in early April, the original proposal called for the Palestinian flag to be flown for 28 days beginning May 15; the dates were subsequently amended.

In a letter to council members before the vote, Boker said many Israelis who came to Ireland to work and have since made their homes here, would be offended by the flag.

“What sort of message does this vote send to them?” he asked, warning that the unprecedented flying of the Palestinian flag would be “highly politically charged”.

There are now up to 1 500 Israelis living in Ireland, with most having arrived in recent years to work in the IT sector.

Ireland was the first European country to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation and has traditionally been one of Israel’s

harshest critics in the EU. In separate 2014 motions, the upper and lower houses of Ireland’s parliament urged their government to recognise the state of Palestine. Also in 2014, the country accorded the Palestinian delegation in Dublin diplomatic status.

In February, Boker reportedly informed Jerusalem of Ireland’s intention to recognise Palestine in the wake of the passing in Israel of a controversial law legalising settlement homes built on private Palestinian land in the West Bank.

The flag-raising motion was proposed by councillor John Lyons of the left-leaning People Before Profit party, and passed by 42 votes to 11, with seven abstentions. The motion had the support of Sinn Fein and other left-wing parties. The larger centrist Fine Gael and Fianna Fail party councillors opposed the motion.

According to the Irish Times, Lyons said the move would support communities living under a form of “apartheid, worse than South Africa”.

After the passage of the motion, Lyons said the flag raising is a “small gesture of solidarity from the elected representatives of Dublin City with a people struggling for self-determination, freedom and dignity in the face of the most horrendous Israeli occupation and apartheid system”.

The controversial meeting on Monday of the city council was briefly adjourned when a member of the public complained that a number of

supporters of the motion were either members of, or supporters of, the Irish Palestinian Solidarity Campaign (ISPC). One council member had also acted in the past as a paid consultant to the Ireland Palestinian Alliance Committee.

Councillors supporting the motion to fly the Palestinian flag in the capital, said they intended it to “mark the 50th anniversary of the occupation of the West Bank and highlight international support for the Palestinian people”.

After the vote, ISPC Chairman Fatin Al-Tamimi, an Irish citizen of Palestinian descent, said in a statement that Palestinian Dubliners would hold their heads high knowing that the people support their struggle. She said she found the result “deeply emotional on a personal basis”.

The decision to fly the flag was condemned immediately after the vote by grassroots pro-Israel group Irish4Israel’s spokesman Barry Williams. He told The Times of Israel the Palestinian flag raising “would have an extremely negative impact on Dublin’s international image and tourism.

“I was amazed to hear so many members of the council display such ignorance about the conflict,” Williams said. “No Palestinian flag has ever been flown over City Hall before and it should remain just our county and EU flags’ honour.”

• *Times of Israel staff contributed to this report.*

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(Due to time limitations, we might not be able to respond to all applicants; as such, if the applicant does not hear from the Shul within two weeks, it should be assumed that the application has been unsuccessful)

Lenk looks at achievements in South Africa

DIANE WOLFSON

Israel’s exports to South Africa have grown tremendously over the last few years, with more irrigation equipment, more technology and more innovations from the “Startup Nation”, according to Israel’s Ambassador to South Africa Arthur Lenk at the last Yom Ha’atzmaut celebration he’ll host in South Africa before heading home.

His message was a positive one of how Israel has made the desert bloom and how the country is keen to share its success stories.

He told his guests - who included diplomats, representatives of the South African government and civil society, as well as Jewish and religious leaders - how hard his team had worked to promote trade and food security in South Africa.

Lenk told of the “achievements” in his four years in South Africa, sharing Israel’s experience in water management and innovation and how last year, instead of the embassy hosting a Yom Ha’atzmaut party, they held “Israel Water Week” events in three cities in South Africa to show

how Israel defeated drought and showing how South Africa can do it too.”

This paved the way for a number of official delegations to visit Israel over the past year. Lenk said that through an agreed work agenda signed by Directors General of Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and South Africa’s Department of International Relations and Co-operation, in March 2016, he is “glad that a number of official delegations have visited Israel since and that others will hopefully attend “Israel’s flagship WATEC conference and exhibition in September, to see how we desalinate, recycle and carefully manage every drop of water”.

Lenk told how his team had offered agribusiness seminars from Mpumalanga to the Western Cape. Through a typical Lenk “hands on, show and tell”, he has even installed a greenhouse in the embassy grounds of local food production with Israeli technology.

An innovative and inexpensive children’s wheelchair developed

in Israel, was also on show. Twelve of these have been donated locally with plans to include these “Wheelchairs of Hope” at the new Nelson Mandela Children’s Hospital in Johannesburg. These are also to be integrated locally and across Africa.

Lenk spoke of the “increasing trade, exports and tourism between the two countries, that Israel’s relationship across Africa has gone through an impressive renewal. African states have more and more, been seeing Israel as an apt model of transformation success. How a small state with significant local and regional challenges, can go from simple agriculture to being a world leader in advanced technology.

From exporting oranges, to research and development for a company like Apple,” quipped Lenk as he encouraged all to come to Israel to see for themselves.

Other aid to Africa was encouraged with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu having visited four African countries in July last year alone, with more to follow shortly. Leaders of nearly every political party in South Africa have visited Israel in the past two years, along with dozens of African leaders, some of whom were accompanied by Lenk.

Lenk and his guests drank a toast to friendship, co-operation and success between the people of Israel and of South Africa.



King David Linksfield Primary School choir singing at the embassy of Israel in Pretoria.

SA ambassador on ‘growing warm’ with Israel

DIANE WOLFSON

Having grown used to the South African government’s negative attitude towards Israel, it was refreshing to hear Ambassador Themba Rebushe, the acting deputy director general of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation for Asia and the Middle East, describe a growing warmth between South African and Israel.

Representing the South African government at the Israeli Embassy’s Yom Ha’atzmaut celebration in the embassy gardens in Pretoria last week Thursday, Rebushe spoke positively about the increased tourism and trade exchanges in both directions.

He confirmed that trade relations are expanding with the total trade amounting to just more than R8 billion in 2016, while Israel topped the list of foreign tourists from the Middle East visiting South Africa in 2015/16, with almost 20 000 Israeli tourists coming to this country during the same period.

Rebushe recalled that “diplomatic relations between South Africa and Israel began in 1949 when Israel established a consulate-general in Pretoria. It was upgraded to an embassy in 1974.

“South Africa, on the other hand,

established a consulate-general in Tel Aviv in 1972 which was also upgraded to an embassy in December 1975.”

Rebushe acknowledged the role played by Jews in South Africa from as early as the 1920s when they first migrated in great numbers from Eastern Europe. “They quickly became part of the nation while some emerged as prominent South Africans, struggle stalwarts, such as Esther Barsel, Helen Suzman, Denis Goldberg, and many others,” Rebushe said.

“In fact, some of them were instrumental in the establishment of the Communist Party of South Africa in 1921.

“It is important and must always be remembered, that during our struggle against apartheid, many South Africans of Jewish origin took part in the liberation struggle, some of them paying the ultimate price for our freedom.

“Some, like Eli Weinberg, arguably the best photographer of our struggle history, lie buried alongside his comrades in Morogoro, Tanzania. Today we pay tribute to the Jewish men and women who made sacrifices in order for us to be where we are today.”

Rebushe said South Africa remains convinced that for both Israel and Palestine to achieve a lasting peace, the implementation of the two-state solution is the only viable route to follow.

“Given South Africa’s history, in terms of our vision of an African continent and the world at large which is prosperous and peaceful, it is, therefore, natural that we would wish to see the same applies in the Middle East, particularly in so far as it relates to the Middle East peace process.

“South Africa remains convinced that for both Israel and Palestine to achieve a lasting peace, the implementation of the two-state solution is the only viable route to follow. We don’t believe that lasting peace in the Middle East is possible without

resolving this current impasse,” he added.

“South Africa appreciates the opportunity to discuss these and other issues of importance with Israel and is particularly pleased with the outcomes of the meeting that took place last year between our former director general, Ambassador Jerry Matjila, and the former director-general of Israel, Ambassador Dore Gold,” said Rebushe.

Before conveying South Africa’s best wishes to Israel on its 69th birthday, Rebushe took a moment to acknowledge Ambassador Arthur Lenk’s efforts. “I wish to take a moment to thank you for your dedication and spirit in which you act with regard to the sometimes difficult issues that we have.”

Letters

VOLTAIRE PENS FAMOUS QUOTATION ATTRIBUTED TO BEATRICE HALL

I refer to Mark Oppenheimer’s article “Enabling artistic freedom and tolerance” in last week’s Jewish Report.

He attributes a quotation to Beatrice Evelyn Hall who in reality derived her quotation from François-Marie Arouet known by his nom de plume Voltaire, the French Enlightenment writer historian and philosopher.

The quotation by Voltaire was adapted many years later by Beatrice Hall: “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”

Chaim Cohen
Bedford Park, Bedfordview

A TRIP DOWN EASTERN CAPE MEMORY LANE

The article in the Jewish Report of May 5, “Jewish life in small Eastern Cape towns”, prompted memories of my late father, Reverend Moses David Klaff.

He assisted in the mayoral services in Queenstown for Mr M Paul on the two occasions that the latter was inducted as mayor- in 1954 and 1955. Mr Paul was the owner of a hotel in Queenstown.

My father also assisted at the Civic Divine Service held in Queenstown on Sunday, March 3, 1957.

Our cousins - Morris and Nettie Shapiro - lived in King William’s Town (another small town in the Eastern Cape) and ran a successful textile company from the mid-1920s - King Clothing Manufacturers.

Morris semi-retired in 1962 and after his wife’s death in 1969, lived with his daughter, Toonie, in East London. He was still active in various projects until his death in 1991.

Sheila Meyerowitz (née Klaff)
Johannesburg

DARK CLOTHES ON A FRIDAY NIGHT NEARLY CAUSED AN ACCIDENT

I nearly drove into two people walking home from shul last Friday night. I was driving slowly; they were wearing black, walking on a dark road...

I entreat my frum brothers and sisters to take better care of themselves by doing any or all of the following:

- * Wear something luminous or wear an item of clothing that will show up in the dark; a scarf will do very well.
 - * Walk on the side of the road facing oncoming traffic.
 - * Try to stay as close to street lighting as possible.
- These are simple measures which would make people safer and would surely not infringe on their Shabbat observance. Please, be safe.

Elaine Glogauer
Johannesburg

Taking yiddishkeit to AfrikaBurn

KIM FELDMAN

AfrikaBurn takes place every year without fail and thousands descend on the Tankwa Karoo National Park, where unless they bring it, they won't have it for a week. Among the throngs are Jews, who make it their home for the duration, bringing their own idiosyncrasies along.

Radical Inclusion. Gifting. Decommodification. Radical Self-Reliance. Radical Self-Expression. Communal Effort. Civic Responsibility. Leave No Trace. Participation. Immediacy. Each One, Teach One.

These are the principles that guide AfrikaBurn - a seven-day experiment in creating an alternate world in the desolate Tankwa Karoo. A pop-up village in the great outdoors. A world filled to the brim with art, creativity, and community.

AfrikaBurn is found only once a year about 110 km from Calvinia; about 120 km from Sutherland; about 160 km from Matjiesfontein; and about 180 km from Ceres. There is no formal entrance or exit for this event.

Ask any "burner" and they will tell you it's not a festival, it's not the music or the art or the desert; it's the people, a smorgasbord of humanity that packs up their lives to create a new world.

The AfrikaBurn story began more than a decade ago. "The seed germinated all by itself, it wasn't referencing Burning Man; they didn't even know what Burning Man was back then," explains Jonathan Hoffenberg - aka Ranger Bob. It was about a few friends creating a safe space for people to express themselves - without cops or security, only rangers, volunteers from within the community.

Jono, a King David alumnus - was there from day one. He grew the movement as the portfolio head for Health and Safety. The AfrikaBurn movement is "based on the values of family and community, it's how our identity is shaped", he says.

It is where he came to be forever known as Ranger Bob. "Bob is an everyman, every man is a Ranger," he says. He is Ranger Bob and an ever-present figure in the AfrikaBurn landscape.

"Judaism is inherently burner," explains Jono, "it's being aware that you are in an amazing space but one needs to be wary and self-reliant because of the dangers of the world." He was drawn to the desert, that feeling of being small to the forces of nature. "You can't help but feel primal when you're in that space."

Eitan Stern has been going for as long as he can remember and after that first year, he has never looked back. "It's like Rosh Hashanah, it's on the calendar. It is just something you do."

A DJ in "Jews for Techno", he helped create the Golden Calf Cult, a theme camp situated in a far-off corner of the desert during AfrikaBurn. "It's a story of people in the desert looking for something, waiting for something to arrive,



The Golden Calf



Lighting candles at Kneidel Meidels

so we had a big party." There is humour in everything Eitan does. He finds his art - and identity - in the space between the serious and the fun. This year his mom finally came along too.

Another Jewish mother who came to the "Burn" at her sons' insistence, is Sue Buchalter. "I didn't take my children, my children took me." Her two sons (both in their early twenties) had come previously. They then took their father the following year, and finally convinced their mother to come the next.

She felt privileged to be there, alongside her family. It was something they could all experience together - to be part of the freedom, part of the joy that is AfrikaBurn.

It had been a long week, but Friday night came and they instinctively did what they always did. They lit candles, together with some friends and fellow members of the tribe they had met there and she watched her husband bless her two boys.

"Here we were in the middle of the desert, and we didn't lose any part of ourselves. I had tears in my eyes watching my family; it had a profound effect on me."

A young couple walked past and she pulled her partner inside and asked to join, "My mother will be so happy," she said. Here was a

Jewish girl from America, with her non-Jewish boyfriend, celebrating Shabbat in the desert.

"That young girl walked past and recognised something of herself in what we were doing."

Karen Kallman was convinced to go by her husband, and with her youngest child only one and half years old, the family of seven headed off into the desert. The art, the creativity, the self-expression and the environmental aspects drew her in.

In 2016, AfrikaBurn fell directly over Pesach. After having been for two years, they could not imagine missing it. As a religious family, they decided they would spend the entire chag in the desert and go up early (before the official start) and have seders there. And so, the Kneidel Maidels were born. Gifting soup and kneidlach throughout the week as well as a Friday night meal where everyone is welcome.

"Wherever we go, we take Shabbat with us." Her kids see it as part of the greater experience of AfrikaBurn. "They love gifting Shabbat, and in the end, it is the best thing they have ever gifted. It was so affirming, to see everyone embrace [Shabbat] and us [as Jews]."

It wouldn't be there if we didn't gift it, explains Karen, summing up the heart of AfrikaBurn.

It is created and defined solely by the people who attend. The old, the young, the families and the lone sharks. It is this community of kindness, of sharing, of openness and tolerance that creates the magic that brings people back, year after year.

From the Kneidel Maidels to the Golden Calf, from the hordes of Israelis to Ranger Bob, Jews have always had, and always made, a home at AfrikaBurn.



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The Buchalter boys

Macron’s French win: Viva la dance!



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

Among the people relieved at political centrist Emmanuel Macron’s victory in the French presidential election on Sunday, are arguably South African artists - including many Jews - who have benefited over the years from French support.

Macron won 66 per cent of the vote, against far-right nationalist Marine Le Pen’s 34 per cent, which is nevertheless a significant percentage and also revealed the uglier, chauvinistic side of French society. Their contrasting world views are not just political, but about values - Macron’s belief in creative, positive engagement with the world, versus Le Pen’s emphasis on French machismo and rejection of “the other” - such as immigrants and refugees - entwined with grandiose patriotic posturing. Her supporters have compared her immoderately to French historical

heroine Joan of Arc.

Last week a moving ceremony at the French Embassy in Pretoria showcased French openness when South African dance guru Georgina Thomson, long-time artistic director of Johannesburg’s annual Dance Umbrella, was knighted by the French ambassador, along with Soweto-born dancer Gregory Maqoma, artistic director and founder of Vuyani Dance Theatre.

The latter is a protégé of contemporary dance pioneer Sylvia Glasser, who started the mixed-race company Moving into Dance Mophatong in the garage of her Johannesburg home in 1978, seeking out talented young black and white dancers and turning them into skilled professionals - a brave act at a time when the apartheid regime frowned on such inter-racial activities.

Other protégés of Glasser have thrived in France, including Vincent Mantsoe whose company Association Noa is based in Saint Pont. Glasser was knighted by the Netherlands in 2014 for her achievements.

Backing for South African arts has brought French artists to South Africa and promoted local artists internationally. In 1991 the iconic

“white Zulu” singer Johnny Clegg, was knighted by France for his courageous voice against apartheid in its darkest years, and legendary South African choreographer Robyn Orlin received the French Order of Merit in 2009 for her “spirited and dedicated work in the sphere of arts and culture”. A similar honour was given in 2013 to Johannesburg-based artist William Kentridge.

Provocative performance artist Steven Cohen, who broke new ground for his genre locally, was headhunted by Paris-based Ballet Atlantique’s Régine Chopinot in 2002 and now lives in Lille, France.

His seminal work Golgotha, which debuted at the prestigious Fest d’Automne at Paris’ Pompidou Centre, was billed by critics as the definitive 9/11 artwork in its engagement with loss.

Cohen’s confrontational work later offended some Frenchmen in 2013 when he tied a rooster - the “Gallic rooster” is a French symbol of nationhood - to his genitals at the Place de Trocadéro, known as the Human Rights Square near the Eiffel Tower, and subsequently was fined after a trial, for indecent exposure.

As today’s politically tense South Africa attempts to clarify its own distinctiveness, and as militant “anti-colonialism” among certain political activists wants to cut off European influence in all spheres, engagement with the French and other countries is doubly important.

While nurturing indigenous, local arts is crucial to South Africa’s quest for a new identity, so is openness to the best of world culture, of which the French are a great example.

The rise of ultra-nationalists globally such as Donald Trump in the United States and Theresa May in the UK, with their inward-looking ethos, will endure for the foreseeable future. A Le Pen win would have given another boost to this phenomenon and conceivably raised questions about continuing international support for the arts. For now, for Jews, growing anti-Semitism in France is causing extreme unease, which has led many Jews to emigrate. Macron’s win, however, seems to be an encouraging sign from the liberal centrists that they are still a force to be reckoned with.

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

Community Columns

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

‘Goldene Medina’ also gives voice to ‘ordinary’ Jews

There was a time in South Africa’s history when there was strong opposition to Jewish immigration throughout society and across the political spectrum. In the 1930s, this led to the passing of legislation with the primary aim - subsequently achieved - of substantially reducing the number of Jews allowed to enter the country.

Today, the opposite is true. It is not uncommon for political leaders who address our communal event, to express concern over perceived high levels of Jewish emigration as well as a desire that more Jews should choose to make their homes here.



Above Board
Jeff Katz
National Chairman

Cape Town in bringing the “Goldene Medina” exhibition up to Johannesburg, where it is being hosted at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre until June 18.

The exhibition has had an enthusiastic reception, for which credit is due to Museum Director Gavin Morris and everyone else involved in putting it together. Their challenge was to bring to life our community’s history in a way that would go beyond a simple display of facts, figures and, personalities, and they did so admirably.

What they have come up with is people’s history at its best, an innovative, thoroughly engaging interpretation of the unfolding South African Jewish story.

Traditionally, historical perspectives on South African Jewry have focused on the lives and achievements of our business leaders, famous politicians, cultural icons and similar such individuals.

This exhibition, by contrast, presents things that the average South African Jew will readily identify with: “barmy” lessons, end-of-year Zionist youth camps, Jewish day school memories, growing up in a small-town community and various other commonly shared experiences.

The exhibition has mostly been constructed around first-hand stories, published writings, personal interviews and other primary sources. As such, it gives a voice to those “ordinary” Jews who seldom appear in the history books, and captures something of the feel and flavour of what being a Jewish South African was and is all about. I would recommend that everyone go and see it while they have the opportunity.

• 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

‘Walking in the light of G-d’

I have just returned to my desk after attending an annual event celebrating International Nurse’s Day. The highlight is always the moving ceremonial signing of the Nurse’s Oath, when each nurse reaffirms her (or his - there was one male nurse) commitment to this noble profession.

At the Chev we employ 120 qualified nurses across our various facilities (in addition to more than 100 care workers). This morning’s group comprised 50 nurses who entered the hall singing “Walking in the Light of G-d” as they made their way to the podium to light their candles and sign their pledges.



ChevrahKadisha
Partners in Chesed
Michael Sieff

We all know that the nursing profession demands much more than a capacity for hard work.

In my speech I pulled up Maslow’s well-known Hierarchy of Needs - a motivational theory in psychology showing a five-tier model of human needs usually depicted by a triangle.

It starts with our most basic human need for physical survival and safety, moving up to our need for love and belonging, self-esteem and finally self-actualisation.

Though the work of providing physical care to patients and residents is taxing, at the

Chev we encourage our nursing staff to pay attention to the higher level needs as well. This is how they can turn a job into a calling and stretch themselves to meet the highest levels of dedication, devotion and self-sacrifice.

Nursing Manager Prudence inspired the team by talking about the qualities that must make up the letters of the word NURSE - Nurturing, Unconditional, Responsibility, Selflessness and Empathy. “Real integrity,” she said “is doing the right thing, even when nobody will know about it.”

This attention to both fundamental and higher human needs is taught throughout the Chev Group to staff in every sector to raise the level of service we provide.

But nursing does stand out in a league of its own. As the manager of Sandringham Gardens said: “It’s not everyone who has the privilege of welcoming new life into the world and holding someone’s hand as they cross over from this world into the next in their old age.”

That truly is thought-provoking, and inspiring.

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

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Benita Levin

“The biggest challenge for you is going to be the culture shock,” a wise Israeli diplomat warned me, when he heard we were making aliyah. Our paths had crossed in the working world in South Africa, and I knew him to be professional, charismatic and trustworthy.

I remember thinking that learning a new culture at this stage in our lives would be part of the adventure, when starting out in a new country. Surely it can’t be too different? After all, if you love shawarma, are happy to have salad with your eggs at breakfast time and are open to having friends over for coffee after 10 at night, aren’t you half way there?

The first taste of what he may have meant hit me with a thud when I waited in a queue in a nearby supermarket - and by waited, I mean South African style, standing patiently behind the lady in front of me. The woman in front launched into a loud argument with the cashier, and then directed her frustration at two managers standing on a raised platform at the back of the shop.

Soon, all four were shouting as the disgruntled shopper pointed to an advert in a newspaper clipping. One didn’t need a thorough knowledge of the language, to work out what the dispute was over. All this time, I wondered if any of the four women involved in this increasingly heated argument were aware of the growing queue in the supermarket. It seemed they weren’t, or if they were, it wasn’t a priority at the time.

The real surprise wasn’t the fact that the “dispute” continued in public for several minutes. It wasn’t the fact that those involved didn’t seem to hear the heckling from some agitated customers. It was the way the shopper responded when the situation was finally resolved.

She packed her groceries into her bag, smiled at the cashier and cheerfully said “Yom Tov”! Without turning to look at the queue, she waved at the two managers, smiled and left.

The three women who’d been arguing with her all said goodbye and carried on working, as if nothing had happened. As a life coach, I had to marvel at the way they immediately resumed their duties. No anger, no rolling of the eyes, no chirping... just back to business as usual.

Is this seat taken?

Recently, I was sitting in an empty coffee shop, working on a laptop. I’d chosen what looked like a quiet table in the corner, with a sea view. An elderly woman came up and asked in Hebrew if she could join me. The ever-polite South African response was “of course” - but I was confused because there were several empty tables in the room.

Soon, her friends joined and there I was sitting with three chatty, effervescent women deciding on what they should order for lunch. Another scenario I’d never experienced in South Africa. It felt rude for me to continue typing, so I closed the laptop, smiled and drank my coffee.

Who will catch me when I fall?

Many locals here have advised that the generally reserved and well-mannered Anglos quickly learn to speak up, hoot back in traffic and stand their ground in a busy queue. But we’ve also been repeatedly reminded that the so-called Israeli “sabrá” is tough on the outside and soft on the inside.

Walking down Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem one night, we heard a thud behind us. An elderly man had tripped while walking with his wife. Seemingly out of nowhere, a well-built man in his forties raced to help the gentleman to his feet. He asked the frail man several questions to make sure the man wasn’t hurt, before watching the couple walk away.

It’s that kind of “culture shock” that will help balance out the many different, new “scenarios” that lie ahead.

New word for the week - makolet - mini supermarket.

Favourite phrase of the week - Yom Tov - not reserved just for festivals, but just an everyday greeting. “Have a good day”, said at the end of a chat, or apparently after resolving an argument.

Smile of the week - sitting inside a government office in Kvar Saba, waiting for my number to be called so I can collect a travel document. Out of the blue, the couple next to me ask if I’m South African? (They recognised the accent.) They had just landed from Cape Town this week to start their aliyah. You can take a South African out of Africa, but they will always find each other...

Community

Networking rebbetzins

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Last Sunday’s Rebbetzins Conference at the HOD hall in Johannesburg, attracted 70 of the country’s approximately 140 rebbetzins. “It’s something I put a lot of effort and thought into and I think it’s important that we, rebbetzins, get together whenever we can to catch up, share ideas and resources and just have a great time,” says Rebbetzin Gina Goldstein, wife of Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein, who spearheaded the Conference.

The annual event brings together rebbetzins, young and old, from various communities to discuss what’s new and relevant and to hear from different guest speakers.

Initiated by Rebbetzin Goldstein almost 10 years ago, the conference fills a vital need. “To nurture leaders is so important,” she says. “To support each other has proven to be so beneficial. It’s so good to know that no matter what we may be working on in our individual communities,

we’re all on the same team - we’re one big family.”

The latest conference saw four speakers sharing news, ideas and different ways of thinking. Speakers included Chief Rabbi Goldstein, renowned clinical psychologist Leonard Carr, Gary Kayle of the Money School and Rebbetzin Goldstein herself who spoke of her latest project which was still in its infancy and soon to be revealed.

“There is always a good feeling of connectedness about getting together with like-minded women facing similar challenges, including all the good, the bad and the ugly,” said one attendee, Rebbetzin Raisy Hecht. “It is ultimately very empowering and there is a sense of camaraderie among us,” she added.

“Most of all, we had fun,” said Rebbetzin Goldstein, “There was lots of laughter! It’s such a beautiful, non-judgemental supportive network of women, all doing similar things but in our own way.”

The rebbetzins were treated to some pampering manicures to end off the morning.

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Leonard’s ‘Holocaust dance’

Canadian Irene Lilienheim Angelico wrote a letter to the iconic Jewish singer Leonard Cohen – who like her and most South African Jews – was of Lithuanian descent. She sent it to the Canadian Jewish News around Yom Hashoah Here is a shortened version of it.

Dear Leonard Cohen,

“Dance Me to the End of Love”, you once explained, “is a love song inspired by the Holocaust”. The Nazis often forced string quartets to perform as they sent prisoners to their death. “Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin,” you said, is about “the beauty there... at the end of existence.”

I began this letter before you died. It is about your ancestral home, Vilnius, or Vilna, as the Jews called it, where your family was close to coming to the end of its existence.

My husband Abbey and I were invited by the human rights festival, Inconvenient Films, to show our documentary Dark Lullabies, about the effects of the Holocaust on the next generation of Germans and Jews. You had been so warm in your response to the film, I wanted to return your generosity by telling you about the extraordinary event that happened in Vilnius.

As you know, Vilnius was part of Poland before the Second World War. It was called “Jerusalem of the North” because of its vibrant cultural and intellectual Jewish life. But then the Germans and their collaborators created the Vilna Ghetto.

It was there that my parents were imprisoned after fleeing Warsaw. It was there that my mother audaciously removed her yellow star, risking death, to leave the ghetto and bring back a doctor to set my father’s broken leg. It was there my father’s twin sister Eda, her husband and their sweet little seven-year-old

Misia, were selected for death. My father never forgave himself for not being able to save them.

The trip to Vilnius was also a pilgrimage to my parents’ past. Today Lithuania has a population of just over three million, mostly Roman Catholics and a tiny remnant of the Jewish community.

Although Lithuanians collaborated in killing over 90 per cent of their own Jewish population, they never acknowledged any responsibility. For 75 years and three generations they said nothing, learned nothing and changed not at all.

Then, last August, the Jewish community organised a march to commemorate the massacre in Moletai, just outside of Vilnius. There, in the summer of 1941, the Lithuanian police rounded up all the Jews of the village, locked them in a synagogue without food or water, then forced them to march to their deaths. They shot over 3 400 Jews into a pit - an atrocity followed by 75 years of silence.

The Jewish community organised the march to mark the anniversary. They expected 200, maybe 300 people to come, including the victims’ relatives from other countries. But then something unprecedented occurred. It began with an article the beloved Lithuanian writer and film director Marius Ivaškevičius wrote about the event.

“I’m not Jewish, I’m Lithuanian... I don’t know, perhaps I am naïve, but for some reason I believe our generation can end this nightmare...



That time in Molėtai. Four o’clock. August 29. We will go visit those who have been waiting for us three-quarters of a century.

“I believe that as they were doing, they nonetheless knew the day would come when Lithuania would turn back to them. And then they would return to her. Because Lithuania was their home. Their only home, they had no other.”

Three thousand Lithuanians came out to march with the Jewish community. They came to recognise those murdered as their own - their own loss, and their own pain.

There were many young Lithuanians - priests, monks, and high-ranking officials including the president, ambassadors, ministers, the army chief and the 83-year-old first president of post-Soviet Lithuania. There were people from Poland, Russia, Latvia and Belarus who came to march with the loved ones of the massacred Jews.

Some non-Jews wore yellow Stars of David. Afterwards, everyone waited patiently to light a candle and place a stone on the memorial.

It took three generations for Lithuanians to begin to come to terms with their country’s role in the Holocaust. There were two emotional screenings of Dark Lullabies in Vilnius and the festival organisers ended up adding a third. The

audiences that attended were almost all young people, who evidently felt they could not move forward without facing their past.

After one screening, a beautiful girl in her mid-twenties stood up and said: “We always thought this happened to the Jews. Now we realise that this happened to our own citizens, to us.”

So, their process of questioning and healing begins.

The list of people who trace their ancestry to this small town, those who the Nazis and Lithuanians wanted to annihilate, includes many ordinary folk and many of the greatest Jewish minds of our time.

[That list] includes you, the great Canadian poet-novelist-singer-songwriter-gentleman. How many other great and future leaders, thinkers, artists, parents, teachers and children did they kill?

In his commentary, Ivaškevičius wrote about your song and about the stunning loss of talent and intellect that was and almost was destroyed.

“Leonard Cohen is also from here. You must surely have heard his love ballad, ‘Dance Me to the End of Love’, and perhaps you have even danced to this song. If not, give it a listen. It turns out it’s about our Jews... in detention waiting to be brought out and shot:

Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin

Dance me through the panic ’til I’m gathered safely in

Lift me like an olive branch and be my homeward dove

Dance me to the end of love.”

With love,

Irene Lilienheim Angelico

Community



Shmuel Montrose of Jozi Blue; Gila Zulberg and Tamara Assness of “I Love my Community”.

Order one, pay for two

OWN CORRESPONDENT

“I Love my Community” is a Chesed project, run by Gila Zulberg and Tamara Assness, aiming to reach out and help those less fortunate in the Jewish community (order one, pay for two, donate one!)

One such beneficiary is Yad Aharon & Michael where Jozi Blue’s patrons are encouraged to “Pay-It-Forward” when they buy their coffees.

On Tuesday March 28, Jozi Blue set up shop at Yaddies and 100 complimentary coffees were enjoyed by recipients.

Seniors join WIZO to celebrate Israel’s 69th

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Residents of Elphin Lodge, Tarentaal and Inyoni Creek celebrated Yom Ha’atzmaut with WIZO Johannesburg this year.

Children from King David Sandton’s choir entertained the guests, singing festive Hebrew songs. Andrea Wainer (co-chairman of WIZO Johannesburg) spoke about Israel’s 69-year journey and the sense of hope the people of Israel have for peace in the region.



Members of WIZO Johannesburg executive committee.

UJW Pretoria - giving for 69 years



Ciska Lewis, vice chairman UJW, Pretoria, handing over a gift to guest speaker, Ayellet Black, deputy Israeli ambassador. DIANE WOLFSON

The Union of Jewish Women Pretoria tackle a host of outreach programmes, that include sponsoring 10 orphans at Sunnyside Primary School and other monthly food and grocery donations. The UJW Pretoria held its 69th AGM last week and Chairman Sivea Stein made a presentation to Jaffa (Pretoria’s Jewish retirement home) of an evac chair which was graciously accepted by Lesley Beckbessinger on behalf of the management committee.

Donations were also made to the Israeli Fire and Israeli Soldier Appeals. The guest speaker, deputy Israeli Ambassador Ayellet Black, spoke on Israel and the UN and answered numerous questions from the floor.

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