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Photo courtesy of The Volunteer magazine, July 1967

50 years on... Remembering the Six Day War

South African volunteers Jackie Riback and Warren Goodman. "Jackie and I were having an afternoon siesta in our army tent on a captured Jordanian police station's soccer field, which was our base for two months immediately after the war ended," said Goodman. See page 10.

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AUTO AFRICA

SA ministers join Palestinian ‘sympathy’ hunger strike

ANT KATZ

Ten Cabinet ministers and deputy ministers took part in a symbolic 24-hour fast in solidarity with the Palestinian hunger strikers in Israeli prisons. They did so at the behest and invitation of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in South Africa, the local arm of the international US-based organisation. A further 40 senior ANC office-bearers and past ministers, also participated.

Topping the list of senior ANC officials who fasted was Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa and his spokesman Ronnie Mamoepa.

The hunger strike in Israel was instigated by five-time convicted murderer and Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, who this week, on his 30th day, ramped up his hunger strike by refusing water. The prisoners are demanding public telephones; longer visits; air conditioning; and better access to educational services, among other demands.

They are also demanding having their own kitchens and being able to cook for themselves, as well as ending solitary confinement.

Barghouti - who refers to himself as the Palestinian Mandela - had been caught on film by Israeli authorities eating in his cell while on hunger strike, which he denied.

ANC senior spokesman Zizi Kodwa, who elected not to fast, told Jewish Report that the ANC members who took part did so to show their ongoing solidarity with the Palestinians.

Health Minister Dr Aaron Motsoaledi was one of the ministers who took part. The fast allowed for the drinking of liquids (unlike religious Jewish



Photo: (Flash90/file)

Marwan Barghouti and Muslim fasts). While not a BDS member, he told Jewish Report while rushing between presenting his budget to the ANC caucus and delivering it to Parliament on Tuesday, he had agreed to a BDS request to participate.

“In fact, I fasted for over 26 hours as I was busy working on my budget that I forgot it was over,” he said laughing. When asked if he knew exactly what the fast was about, he said it was in sympathy with the hunger strikers but he was not aware why they were refusing to eat.

Other ministers who the BDS claimed were participating were Ayanda Dlodlo (Communication and ANC NEC Member); Edna Molewa (Environmental Affairs and Head of ANC International Relations); Ebrahim Patel (Economic Development); Mmamoloko Kubayi (Energy); Naledi Pandor (Science and Technology); and Rob Davies (Trade & Industry).

Deputy Ministers also said to have taken part in the fast according to BDS, included Bongani Michael Mkongi (Police); Buti Manamela (Presidency); and Jeremy Cronin (Public Works).

Parshat Behar-Bechukotai

Yerushalayim, Yovelot and yeomen

Rabbi Ilan Raanan
Yeshiva Shul



The story is told about someone who, during an audience with Baron Rothschild, asked him how much he was worth. The Rothschild wealth to this day remains legendary, so the guest could have, at best, expected an approximate as a reply, if in fact he was going to get one.

Not only did he get a reply. It was an exact reply - to the last cent! The Baron reached for a ledger from the bookcase. The visitor’s intrigue that Rothschild actually kept a precise record of his net worth at arm’s reach, turned incredulous upon hearing an amount that, despite its immensity, could have only been but a fraction of the Baron’s wealth.

Responding to the perplexed look on the visitor’s face, Rothschild explained that this ledger contained the total amount he had given to charity. That amount, Rothschild explained, was truly his and could never be taken away from him. Everything else might be his only today. Conceivably, he could

lose everything tomorrow.

Wealth is transient. So is ownership. In fact, ownership might only be a façade.

The portions we read this week commence with the laws of Shmita and Yovel, the seven cycles of the Sabbatical year culminating in the Jubilee every 50th year.

The most significant aspect of the Jubilee pertained to ownership of the land. When real estate was sold, it would revert to the original owner on the Jubilee. The new owner would be a yeoman for a limited period of time.

Transfer of ownership was subject to the number of crop-years that remained in the 50-year reckoning. The Torah explains: “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine; for you are sojourners and residents with Me” (Lev 25:23).

The lesson of the Yovel is clear. Material ownership is only relative. What is mine, is only mine in terms of your lack of rights to it. And when I sell it, I merely forgo a relative ownership. Absolute ownership is the sole proprietary of the Divine!

The Yovel lesson would concur with Rothschild’s absolute net worth, but would disagree with his explanation. All that was truly his, was what he had given to charity. Never mind the conceivable morrow; the


legendary Rothschild wealth never existed in absolute terms!

This lesson of the Yovel rings true when singling out Yerushalayim. How many times has Jerusalem, the most coveted place on earth, changed hands!


The Biblical conquest of the city is a mystery, both in terms of when and how it was conquered. The Sages of Talmud (Yoma 12a) debate whether the city was ever divided among the Tribes of Israel.

One opinion maintained it was shared between Judah and Benjamin; the other held it was never divided. Who then was the owner? The entire Jewish people? All humanity that originated from its dust, according to one Midrash? Crusades. International ownership. A city shared by three monotheistic faiths. Intifadas. (American President Donald) Trump’s ostentatious visit, and of course the question of the location of embassies.

The exciting Yovel we are about to celebrate of a united Jerusalem in Jewish hands, only through Divine intervention during the Six Day War, contains a humbling message: “The land is Mine” and we are but “sojourners and residents”.



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Cape Town Jews support murdered American woman’s family



Howdy Kabrins, father of the murdered Gaby Alban, outside the Cape High Court; with his wife Linda and Judith Cohen, who started the Justice4Gaby Support Group with Dani Janks.

MOIRA SCHNEIDER
CAPE TOWN

It took just a chance meeting in shul that inspired Capetonian Judith Cohen to galvanise the local community to assist the father of young American Jewish woman, Gabriela Kobrins Alban, who was murdered in Camps Bay two years ago, through the murder trial.

The community has been at his side since the trial began in the Western Cape High Court on Monday, the day after what would have been Gabriela’s 41st birthday.

Gabriela, an only child, had been on holiday with her boyfriend in South Africa in July 2015 when her body was found by staff at the Camps Bay Retreat, an upmarket boutique hotel where the pair had been staying. She had been strangled and had sustained blunt force trauma to the face.

Her boyfriend, Diego Dougherty Novella, was arrested later that day.

It was during a Camps Bay shul brocha one Shabbos last May that a friend nudged Judith Cohen saying: “That’s the dad.” “I said: ‘What do you mean?’ and she replied: ‘That is the father of the young woman who was murdered.’

“I immediately jumped up and caught Howdy Kabrins as he was leaving.”

Cohen, a human rights lawyer, greeted Kabrins and wished him long life. “His eyes filled with tears that he could not hold back and I could see deep pain,” she remembers.

“The next words just tumbled out of my mouth as I asked: ‘Is there anything the Jewish community can do to assist you?’ He replied that he needed people in court on Monday for the bail hearing of the accused.

“I immediately promised him that there would be people. At that stage, I did not know who would come but I had a deep sense of confidence that if I reached out to people in the community they would come.

“I messaged people I knew in the community and moms I

know from Herzlia and immediately received messages of support.”

As a result, there were about 15 in court on the Monday and Tuesday when the accused was denied bail.

And so the seeds for the Justice4Gaby Support Group, co-founded by Cohen and Dani Janks, were sown.

“I was just following the case in the news when I saw a Facebook post saying the family needed support, so I went to court,” Janks recalls the events of a year ago. “Chatting to Howdy outside the courtroom, he mentioned that he wanted to post something on Facebook but he didn’t know how to use it, so I sat with him and set up the Justice4Gaby Facebook page which I now help him manage.”

Along with WhatsApp groups, the tools enable Cohen and Janks to focus on their primary goal: to try and ensure that there is representation in

court at every hearing.

“We’ve kept in touch and every time he’s come back, if I can go to court and support, then I do,” Janks continues. It makes a difference to them to know that there’s someone sitting behind them that’s on their side, especially now her parents are both going to testify.

“They’re not South African, they don’t have any friends or family here,” she adds. Howdy is attending the trial with his wife Linda and Gaby’s mother Doris Weitz and her husband Alex who all made the trip from Los Angeles.

“I think their biggest fear is that justice won’t be served,” Janks states. “They’ve obviously read about other South African cases and they don’t want this guy to get away with it - he comes from an exceptionally wealthy family in Guatemala which is why he didn’t get bail because he’s a clear flight risk.”

On the occasions that Howdy could not be in court, the group would still attend, giving him a live WhatsApp account from inside the courtroom.

Rebbetzin Tanya Ziegler of the Camps Bay Hebrew Congregation recalls the congregation’s involvement began when Howdy attended the shul one Friday night. The Camps Bay Retreat, scene of the murder, is across the road from the shul.

Howdy has made several trips to this country to try and ensure that justice is done, she says, and has been attending the shul for support. “When any Jew goes anywhere in the world, there’s always a community that is there to help them and we have tried to do that for Howdy, to know that he’s not alone, that we’re here as a community and we’ll support him in whatever way we can.”

Congregants have invited him for Shabbat dinners, he has attended a few of the community’s events and Shabbatot and has connected with quite a few people in the congregation, she adds. “People have reached out to him, because it was such a terrible story - no father should have to go through something like that.”

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Nursery schools tackle measles outbreak

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

The City of Johannesburg has launched an emergency measles vaccination campaign with 18 cases of measles having been reported in the province. They’re targeting all children between the ages of six months and 15 years, rather than up to the age of five, which is usually the case, due to the severity of the outbreak.

Left untreated, measles can result in blindness, pneumonia, encephalitis and in severe cases, death.

The Department of Health is urging parents to immunise unvaccinated children and to take those who have been vaccinated for a booster, especially since many children remain unimmunised and could further the outbreak.

In light of this, SA Jewish Report looks at what action Johannesburg’s Jewish nursery schools are taking to prevent children from being infected.

“Everyone should reimmunise their children; the booster is highly advisable and is not harmful,” says Dr Susan Klugman, a paediatrician at the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital.

Dr Klugman has been in touch with Jewish nursery schools to connect them with the Department of Health who can help facilitate free vaccinations at schools.

“I would advise parents that if the school is getting the Department of Health in, they should take advantage of this, otherwise they should arrange it privately,” she says.

“In the meantime, if your child gets a rash and/or a runny nose and conjunctivitis, can’t look at light and is generally irritable, go to the doctor to get it checked out.”



While some Jewish nursery schools say they’re leaving vaccinations to parents and haven’t had enquiries, others have made efforts to arrange vaccinations at school or have sent out messages encouraging parents to take action.

Yeshiva College Pre-Primary School has communicated with parents via WhatsApp and e-mail. “In line with the Department of Health’s vaccination campaign to manage the current outbreak of measles in Gauteng, we recommend all children to receive the measles booster,” says Ruth Kinkel, the school’s principal. “

This won’t be done at our school, but may be done in private or government facilities. Confirmation by the child’s doctor is suggested. It’s very important that children’s vaccination schedules are kept up-to-date.”

King David Linksfield Pre-Primary School has sent out a letter to parents to make them aware of the outbreak and has informed them of private pharmacy clinic, Kloof Road Dispensary Baby Clinic in Bedfordview which is doing the booster at a special rate of R50.

This school is also in the process of finalising plans with Edenvale Hospital to send nursing sisters to their campus to give boosters at no charge, allowing parents the option of having it administered at school, in which case they’ll need to complete consent forms.

“The booster is not compulsory and it is entirely up to parents,” says school secretary PA Jodine Krok who is arranging vaccinations at the school. They’ve also sent communication to parents, telling them to keep children at

home if they have a temperature, which could indicate the first sign of infection.

Sydenham Pre-Primary School says they’ve been advised to tell parents to go to clinics in their areas as those clinics won’t be able to administer vaccines at the school itself.

Some parents are having boosters administered privately, while others haven’t taken action, says the school. While Sydenham has sent out updates and encouraged parents to take action with regards to vaccinations and boosters, the decision ultimately remains at the family’s discretion.

King David Rosabelle Klein Nursery School in Waverley, says it has a high rate of immunisation compliance and the school hasn’t had any measles. However, they’re looking at second level immunisation options in response to the outbreak.

Hirsch Lyons has arranged with the Department of Health to have vaccinations administered at the school but has had issues in confirming a date on which nursing sisters will come, due to a shortage of equipment and administration issues. Parents have, however, been issued with consent forms and some have completed them while others have arranged private vaccinations.

At Sandton Sinai Primary and Nursery School, they have consulted doctors and recommended that parents ensure their children’s vaccinations are up-to-date or take them privately for boosters where they’re available.

While most schools we spoke to do ask to see children’s immunisation records and strongly encourage vaccinations, they do not deny entry to any children whose parents choose not to vaccinate.

To vaccinate or not to - is it a question?

TALI FEINBERG

“Vaccines, as well as the provision of clean water, have done more for human health than any other intervention,” says Professor Barry Schoub, former executive director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases and professor emeritus of virology, at the University of the Witwatersrand.

“Vaccines have saved millions of lives since 1798 when the first human vaccines were introduced,” Schoub points out.

In fact, in Judaism there is a halachic obligation to actively take steps against preventable diseases, says Schoub. “The esteemed sage, the Tiferet Yisrael [Rabbi Israel Lifschitz 1783-1860] encouraged his community to be vaccinated during a smallpox outbreak, even though the vaccine of those days itself carried a risk, but obviously very much smaller than the disease itself.”

Schoub maintains that modern vaccines are extremely safe and effective and are necessary precautions to prevent damage to our children. He insists that the supposed connection between autism and vaccines is a “complete myth.”

“So called research about 20 years ago has been discredited,” says Schoub.

“Extensive subsequent research has conclusively demonstrated that there is no causal relationship - even though the onset of autism may occur coincidentally at more or less the same time that vaccines are administered.”

He says that the persistence of this “smear” has resulted in a substantial number of preventable cases of measles with, in some cases, severe permanent complications and some deaths.

Yet, the issue over vaccinations remains contentious, especially in a world where the Internet is filled with articles and anecdotes on the topic.

A Jewish mother from Johannesburg who asked to remain

anonymous, said that she started to question vaccines when her son spent a year at a school for children with special needs. “Some mothers there were convinced that their kids got autism after the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine.”

“The founder of the school was very anti-vaccinations and that started my questioning and research. I do selective vaccinations and I research them thoroughly.”

This mother allowed her children to have the BCG vaccine at birth, and the first three vaccines on the schedule, but started at eight weeks and not six. “I did not give the MMR at 18 months as it’s a three-in-one onslaught to a young child’s immune system.

There is a group of mothers who communicate with each other around the vaccines. “I’ve noticed specifically the younger moms who are questioning and not vaccinating at all.”

“I did, however, give my son the MMR at 12 years old, as it is dangerous for a teenage boy to get mumps. I did not give the chicken pox vaccine. All three of my kids had chicken pox and they were fine. I also refuse to give the Gardasil (HPV) vaccine to my daughter as there’s a lot of controversy surrounding this vaccine.”

She says there is a group of mothers who communicate with each other around the vaccines. “I’ve noticed specifically the younger moms who are questioning and not vaccinating at all. My generation is still very sceptical. American anti-vaccinators use religious reasons to get out of vaccines, because schools refuse to accept kids if they aren’t up-to-date.

“We are lucky here in South Africa. I have never been asked to present my vaccine card to any school and if they ask me, I just

say we are up-to-date.”

A medical doctor and a Yeshiva College mom, who didn’t want to be identified, says the “anti-vaccination” moms are irresponsible. “They have clearly never seen the consequences of complicated preventable childhood infections. They think that having chicken pox is a joke and organise pox parties so their kids can catch it, but they have never seen a sick kid with chicken pox pneumonia.”

She explains that many of these diseases are worse when adults get them and the risks to an unborn child, if a pregnant woman becomes infected, are very significant.

Many overseas paediatricians refuse to treat unvaccinated kids, she says.

Leanne Novac, a registered nurse from Durban who is anti-vaccinations, says that despite such requirements, she wants to remind people: “Everyone has the right to make an informed decision - vaccination is not mandatory in South Africa.”

Dr Lana Marcus from Johannesburg explains that diseases are kept at bay due to a phenomenon known as “herd immunity”. This means that if the majority of the population is immune to a disease (via vaccination), then those few individuals who cannot be vaccinated (because of allergy, immune diseases etc) are buffered and less likely to contract the illness. However, if the proportion of the unvaccinated group increases, that buffering effect is lost and outbreaks occur.

One person who relies on “herd immunity” is Allyson Ben-Israel. She has an immune deficiency called Hereditary Hypogammaglobulinemia, which means that she cannot produce her own antibodies.

“I cannot be vaccinated myself, so I rely on herd immunity to be safe. Having a limited immune system means I am at risk for developing severe infections,” she explains.

“By not vaccinating you are putting babies, the elderly, or the immune compromised at risk,” she said.



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South African Jewish Report

Do your research before taking a stand!

The list of ANC bigwigs supporting this Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) fast in sympathy with the Palestinian prisoners’ hunger strike is very long and I find it quite distressing.

You may be thinking, but surely this is no surprise, considering how many times we have had ANC officials supporting BDS events and making negative statements about Israel.

That is true, I am not surprised at some of the usual suspects who have taken a clear decision to support BDS. In many cases, those people have really considered the situation between Israel and the Palestinians, done their homework and they had made their decision. While I may not necessarily agree with them, I respect their right to hold a considered opinion.

Then, there are those who seem to know very little, but have decided that Israel is the bad guy and the Palestinians are downtrodden and mistreated. These are eternal activists who latch onto any popular cause in which it appears there are “oppressed” people. So, they would automatically support the Palestinians because everyone else seems to be doing it and frankly they get a lot of media for their cause.

These “activists” are unlikely to be concerned about the Syrian refugees or the way the Syrian government is treating its people, making them want to run away. Then there are the Falun Gong in China who are treated badly and forbidden from following their chosen way of life. I could go on... There are so many unconscionable human rights abuses perpetrated by governments.

But members of the ANC and other prominent South Africans, have got stuck on the Palestinian cause, which is apparently far more fashionable and, clearly, better publicised than the others.

Some of these top officials have made public accusations against Israel that are outrageous and not even vaguely true. Come on, at least they could do some homework before making these statements.

Again, I say, they have a right to their opinions but opinions should only be borne out by knowing the facts.

So, this week, all these people chose not to eat for a day, which in all honesty is not that difficult if you are still allowed to drink. That is beside the point.

I want to know if all of those people fasting are aware of the reasons for the Palestinian prisoners’ hunger strike.

While some of the demands seem pretty genuine, like installing a public payphone for prisoners’ use and improved visitation rights and annual medical examinations. However, Israel complies with international laws about prison conditions. That is a fact and so many of the prisoners’ sound demands are already met.

However, their big requests include: access to 20 TV channels, cancelling disciplinary action against prisoners and installing air conditioners in the prisons.

They also demand to be able to prepare their own food and manage their own kitchen and have free reign of the prison in summer until 22:00. Hmmmm, I am surprised they haven’t asked for room service and an indoor bowling alley.

Okay, yes, I am being facetious, but before our ministers consider going on a sympathetic fast, perhaps they could check the prisons out. Go and visit! Look before you publicly make statements to support the hunger strikers.

Are the conditions so bad, or are we just going to take the word of Marwan Barghouti, a senior member of the West Bank’s Fatah party, who led Palestinians through two intifadas. He is not a detainee, he was tried and convicted in an Israeli court of five counts of murder and of being a member of a terrorist organisation.

Also, he was caught on film eating when he was apparently still on hunger strike.

So, should our ministers and the ANC members who agreed to fast, not be wondering if this is really about prison conditions or just scoring political points?

Once again, I respect people who have thought this through and researched their standpoint before they assume it – whether or not I agree with them. I find it unacceptable that so many others just jump on the popular bandwagon because it seems like the right thing to do.

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



PAULA SLIER

It was 30 degrees in the shade and there sitting on a bench along the Bat Yam beachfront, south of Tel Aviv, was an old man with a brown suit jacket plastered in Russian Second World War medals - the shiny bronzes and silvers pinned to his chest in tight rows.

I stopped my car, jumped out, and ran over to him. “Sir, I want to thank you for what you did,” I said, tears welling up in my eyes as his crinkled, ancient face looked up at me. His brown eyes immediately filled with tears of their own as he shakingly took my hand and kissed it.

“Sbasiba, sbasiba,” I kept repeating the Russian word for “thank you”. As he puffed out his chest, he told me his name was Sasha. For hours he sat alone on that boardwalk in the early morning of May 9, paying silent homage to the victims and heroes of the Soviet Union’s victory over Nazi Germany 72 years ago in the Great Patriotic War.

Throughout that Tuesday of May 9, the day the war with Nazi Germany officially ended, dozens of Second World War Soviet Red Army veterans - many of them over 90 years old - gathered in commemorative events across Israel. Each of them proudly donned his or her medals, while many held photographs of sons, brothers and fathers killed in action.

Amid the larger tragedy of the Holocaust, these are some of the one-and-a-half million Jews who fought in Allied armies against the Nazis. According to Yad Vashem, a quarter of a million of them died in battle or fell into German captivity - most of them soldiers from the Red Army.

Those who survived built a life after the war in the former Soviet Union and when it collapsed in 1991, many of them emigrated to Israel. Today only some 5 000 are still alive in Israel and receive medical and financial benefits from the State. But it wasn’t always this way.

Only in the last two decades has Victory Day been officially recognised by Jerusalem. For years Israeli schools taught that it was the United States that won the war on May 8, ignoring the fact that it was actually the Red Army that liberated almost all the large concentration camps.

“What is important to acknowledge is not only people who died in the concentration camps and battles,” a Russian Member of Parliament told me, “but to remember the importance of victory. Our parents and grandparents were victors and that’s what former Soviet Jews have brought to Israel - the meaning of this victory.”

But, as Napoleon Bonaparte once observed, it is the winners who write history.

Two years ago, the Polish government saw fit not to invite Russian President Vladimir Putin to attend the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The Polish foreign minister explained that “the first soldiers who stood at the frontline and were responsible for the release of the

concentrations camps, were Ukrainian”.

What he failed to point out is that they were part of the Soviet Army as were countless other nationalities - Poles, Russians, Byelorussians, Kazakhs, and more. But politics is politics and with Polish-Ukrainian-Russian relations now seemingly ruptured beyond repair, Red Army veterans have been encouraged not to wear their medals in public in Ukraine and civilians have been attacked for marching in support of the Soviet victory in 1945.

In Ukraine, the honouring of the Red Army is seen as tantamount to supporting Russia. Of course, this is heart-breaking to many war veterans for whom the memory of that common fight is too strong to be suppressed and the sense of pride in its victory too powerful to forget.

Behind closed doors, inside a Soviet-built Kiev apartment, 90-year-old Boris Israel tells me he was not only surprised but also humiliated by the announcement.

“Our pride is hurt,” he whispered, the tears falling down his cheeks. “We were fighting for the sake of the Soviet people and almost every family in the post-war Soviet Union has people who died during the fighting. It’s extremely important for us to celebrate the day,” he reflected sadly.

As we sat around a tiny table in his living room, Israel opened a bottle of vodka and poured generous helpings for the camera crew. We drank while chewing on dark chocolate. Israel fought in the Siege of Leningrad after the Germans imposed a prolonged military blockade against the city for 872 days. His mother died of starvation.

“It’s always been a dream of mine to go to Israel,” he enthused and a month later his daughter phoned me to ask if I could help with travel arrangements.

Another veteran, Avraham, who once headed up the Union of World War Two Veterans in Israel, told me: “Life in Israel isn’t easy. Our grandsons are serving in the Israeli army as officers and soldiers and they are serving as honestly as we did all those years ago. Victory has to be preserved - everybody needs peace - the old and the young.”

His eyes too filled with tears as he recounted religious Jewish children once pointing to his medals and asking how much they cost.

“This is how much they know about the war,” he groaned quietly. “I told them you can buy these medals... but the price is blood.”

Which brings me back to Sasha, that dear sweet old man on the Bat Yam Boulevard. He didn’t speak a word of English and I know no Russian. So, we bonded in Yiddish. “Zei gezunt mein kind (“Be healthy my child”) he blessed me as we hugged and both smiled at the memory of a bittersweet victory still fighting to be preserved.

• 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.



Russian-Israeli World War II veterans wear their uniforms and medals as they wait to march in a street parade marking VE Day (Victory in Europe) in Jerusalem, May 11, 2011. World War II veterans from the former Soviet Union marched in Jerusalem to celebrate the 66th anniversary of the Allies victory over Nazi Germany in 1945.

Behind the scenes at the King David Hotel

NICOLA MILTZ

When the US president comes to town, “it’s sorry for you”, if you happen to have booked a room or two at Jerusalem’s historic landmark King David Hotel, even if you booked months in advance to coincide with Yom Yerushalayim celebrations.

“We were kicked out like dogs,” raged an infuriated Zev Krengel, head of the South African Zionist Federation, who heard at the last minute that his coveted room at the famous hotel was no longer available to him and several other prominent South Africans forming part of the Mizrahi delegation.

A last-minute scramble for rooms kept the South Africans on tenterhooks as their travel agents scavenged for what remained.

“Fortunately our clients have been accommodated at the exclusive David Citadel, but it was an around-the-clock logistical nightmare that took over a week to sort out,” said Israeli tour operator, David Waller, who got wind of the 1 000-strong Trump entourage only a fortnight ago.

“I had to source 45 rooms; it was crazy. There are about 70 South Africans coming for the celebrations and the city is packed with foreigners wishing to be here when Israel celebrates 50 years since the Six Day War.”

The man behind the reshuffling of guests is South African-born Sheldon Ritz, the hotel’s Head of Operations.

“I like to call it transferred out, not kicked out,” says Ritz who has been at the King David for 17 years, diplomatically.

“Fortunately, the majority of guests understand, they know they can’t stay under the same roof as the most powerful man in the world,” he said.

It’s never ever a dull moment for the former Durbanite who made aliyah in 1992 at the age of 26, as he handles all diplomatic visits to the renowned hotel which overlooks the capital’s Old City.

Requests from leading dignitaries and international celebrities range from the absolutely bizarre to the mundane.

“A few months ago the prime minister of Russia requested a ton of pork for his meals. Being a kosher establishment we could not meet this requirement; however, he took his meals at another premises off-site. It does get tricky when guests ask for eggs and bacon in the morning. We don’t like to say no.”

The hotel once had to make special little steps so that Barbra Streisand’s pooch could climb onto her king-size bed.

And he remembers when Jean-Claude van Damme requested a special contraption that would allow him to bungee jump off the balcony for a scene in one of his movies shot at the

hotel.

One guest demanded a specially built mosquito net, afraid that he would contract malaria, while former French President Nicolas Sarkozy insisted on chocolate made with 90 per cent cocoa, which had to be specially imported.

Condoleezza Rice, who has visited the hotel on numerous occasions, prefers Diet Pepsi over the locally available Pepsi Max, so bottles have to be brought in specially for her visits, which Ritz stores for her himself in his office.

During his studies at the M L Sultan Hotel School in Durban, he never thought that one day he would be shaking hands - literally - with the world’s most famous people and attending to their every possible whim and wish.

It is certainly not a job for the faint hearted agrees Ritz, who on any given day could be preparing the red carpet and flags for a visiting dignitary.

“The Foreign Minister of Denmark arrived at 01:30 today and I was there to meet him,” says Ritz who often sleeps in his office on a mattress on the floor and showers at the hotel gym.

For Trump’s visit, all 233 rooms are taken and Ritz will find himself in his office making sure things run smoothly for the duration of the US president’s visit.

During his studies at the M L Sultan Hotel School in Durban, he never thought that one day he would be shaking hands - literally - with the world’s most famous people and attending to their every possible whim and wish.

All American presidents who have served this century, have stayed at the King David.

According to reports, more than 1 000 rooms are needed to accommodate the Americans. At least 11 hotels are involved. The entourage will include US Marines, Navy Seals, Army Rangers and the all-important Secret Service personnel.

The King David is, according to Ritz, “the most secure” hotel in Israel and the presidential suite is bullet- and bomb-proof and poisonous gas-proof.

In addition to security precautions within the hotel, the surrounding streets are sealed off during the visit of a US president.

“Historically when a US president enters the King David Hotel, the environment must be completely sterile - we do not do a red carpet and management and staff are not to be seen. Staff do not even clean the suites.

“We stay in the background and observe on closed circuit TV as he enters.”



Zev Krengel: “I was bitterly disappointed when we got bumped. I was here 10 years ago for the 40th anniversary celebrations and I made sure to book nine months in advance for my favourite room with its ground-level balcony and amazing view. It’s the ultimate position, so beautiful with such heritage.”

Most of the South Africans are now staying at the David Citadel and a special Shabbos dinner and lunch has been planned.

In response to the discontent, Ritz says: “On behalf of the hotel, I extend my sincere apology. It is actually not in our control. The Israeli government and the secret service literally force us to shut down. I wish it was a case of Trump taking one floor and we could open the rest of the floors to guests.”

He remembers with discomfort having to assuage over 100 guests whose check-in plans clashed with the departure arrangements of former US President Barack Obama as Jerusalem experienced heavy winds and a sand storm creating absolute havoc.

“That was Erev Pesach. Our guests had to wait for at least two hours for Air Force One to be out of Israeli airspace before I could allow them to check in, and that was well past 21:00,” says Ritz.

But it’s all in a day’s work for the busy, yet highly competent Ritz, who says he loves his job although it can be “quite tiring”. Fortunately, his wife and two children understand the demands of his job, he says.

Among the guests who had to be moved

out of the hotel because of the Trump visit, were the Premier of Quebec Philippe Couillard who had booked 60 rooms, former governor of Arkansas Mike Huckabee who had scheduled a large dinner party with important guests, and several barmitzvah and other celebrations were also moved.

The Japanese Embassy had apparently been very co-operative and rescheduled a lavish cocktail party to celebrate the 65th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Japan and Israel.

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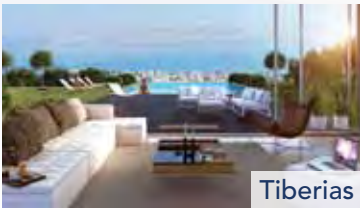
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Bang Bang Betty

Ilanit Chernick (25) is a Johannesburg-born, King David Linksfield and Yeshiva College-educated multi-media journalist at The Star newspaper. Last week, she was caught in the crossfire in service protest, but this hasn’t deterred her plan to make aliyah in July. In the newsroom her nickname is “Bang Bang Betty” and “Burnick”.

1. What drew you to become a journalist?

As a child, I’d always had a keen sense for news and always wanted to be the first one at home to tell everyone what was happening in the world.

However, September 11 was probably the catalyst moment that led me into journalism. I specifically remember watching the events unfold on TV and the rush that came with “reporting” what had happened to my mom. She initially told me to turn off “that ridiculous action movie” because I wasn’t allowed to watch such movies as a kid. When I went back to the TV, I saw reports of a plane crashing into the Pentagon and I desperately ran to her to tell her that now a plane had gone into both the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon - again she didn’t believe me. I turned on the TV in her room and we both watched as the second plane went into the South Tower.

From then on whenever something newsworthy happened, I’d always be the first one to inform my family and to be honest I loved the rush that came with doing so.

2. What do you most love to cover or write about?

I love the adrenaline rush that comes with covering breaking news and protests. Moreover, I think it’s extremely important to highlight the disparities and lack of service delivery that the poorer communities deal with on a daily basis. My biggest hope is that by reporting on their plight, action will be taken by government to fix or rectify the issues faced by poorer communities.

I’m also an avid environment and wildlife reporter.

3. What has been the story you are most proud of to date?

One of my best was an in-depth look into the murder of 14 illegal miners who were killed over gold and turf wars during March this year. It was an extremely dangerous situation to delve into and there were times, while we were out at the mines, where my life was endangered. However, I felt it was important to get the truth out into the public domain of what really happened and why the zama zamas do what they do.

4. What happened to you last Monday?

I was sent out to cover a service delivery protest in Eldorado Park where residents were protesting lack of housing and jobs.

There were continued running battles between police and protesters from all sides and when I ran in with police to report on the situation, two groups ambushed us and started throwing rocks at the media and police.

We were cornered and I was hit in the shoulder and stomach - police then shot rubber bullets and teargas to disperse the crowd and clear a



path for us to get to safety.

A few minutes later, I was behind the police line and the group pushed forward and started throwing rocks, bricks and glass and some were purposefully aiming at the media. My phone rang and I looked down for a second to see if it was my boss calling and in that moment I was hit on the back of my head with a rock. A colleague next to me had screamed for me to “duck” but it was too late.

5. How did you react?

I was a bit shocked, it felt a bit surreal, but it wasn’t a total surprise. I was in a lot of pain and my head felt very heavy - that was more concerning for me than anything else.

My colleagues took me to the paramedics and they suspected I was concussed and insisted I should go to hospital. I decided not to and ridiculously continued reporting for another few hours. With all the adrenaline pumping, I don’t think I realised the seriousness of the injury.

The next morning I went to the doctor due to the unbearable pain, nausea and dizziness I was experiencing and I was told I had a concussion.

6. How did you feel about it?

At the time, I thought I needed to get out of the immediate vicinity, because the situation was becoming too dangerous. In the following days, I realised how lucky I was. What came to mind was how I’d said my morning Shema just before we arrived at the protest as it had been too dark for me to say it when I left for work that morning. I have no doubt that that’s what saved my life.

The hostility towards the media is also a big concern, especially by the very residents whose plea we’re trying to put across.

7. Why are you making aliyah?

I’ve always wanted to live in Israel and experience life there. I wanted to move there after my gap year but realised it was important to get a degree and also chalk up

some experience first. Seven years, two degrees and three years of experience later, I realised it was time to take the plunge and live my dream - if not now then when?

8. How do you feel about leaving South Africa?

It was one of the hardest decisions I’ve ever had to make. There have been moments where I’ve been torn over moving to Israel. I love this country and it’s given me so much and made me into the person I am today - for that I’ll always be grateful and I’ll always see myself as having two homes.

9. How would you describe your relationship with Israel?

Overall I would say it’s good - a little conflicted at times. I truly love Israel and most of what it stands for.

However, I understand that it’s not perfect and just like every country in the world it has its problems. I know I’ll be swapping one set for another. My gran use to always say that “you don’t run from your fate, you run to it”, which is where I think Hashem is guiding me.

Obviously, when it comes to Israel there are certain things I don’t

agree with including some of the government’s policies, but for any citizen of any country it’s par for the course, as the saying goes: “The first step to becoming Israeli is to have an opinion.”

10. What will you be saddest to leave when you get on that plane?

My family. I’m leaving behind my parents and siblings and not seeing them or interacting with them on a day-to-day basis is going to be a challenge.



Marc Lubner wins Conscious Companies Award



PETER FELDMAN

Afrika Tikkun and The Smile Foundation are the first recipients of the newly-instituted Conscious Companies Awards 2017.

“This is probably the most meaningful award I have ever received,” says CEO, Marc Lubner. “It is this very concept of mindfulness that my late dad, preached,” he told Jewish Report.

The awards ceremony, which took place at the Hyatt Regency, in Johannesburg last week, is an initiative that recognises visionary leaders and organisations who create a conscious business environment. It celebrates leaders who steer their companies to prosper, perform and pursue profits while placing a premium on people, community, culture and environment beyond the bottom line.

The awards comprised two categories: companies and non-profit organisations. Lubner’s organisations won in the latter category, beating two other very worthy finalists.

Outreach organization Afrika Tikkun has as its vision “a future where today’s young people are tomorrow’s productive citizens”. It sees its mission as “dedicated to investing in education, health and social services for children, youth and their families through Afrika Tikkun’s community ‘Centres of Excellence’ and strategic partnerships”. Afrika Tikkun believes that “every young person deserves an opportunity to be the best they can be”.

The Smile Foundation treats children with facial abnormalities and offers a comprehensive health care solution for children with facial conditions. Partnering with key academic hospitals in the country, it enables corrective surgery for children who would otherwise be deprived of the gift of a smile.

Lubner told Jewish Report how he had learnt about mindfulness from his father, the late esteemed businessman and philanthropist Bertie Lubner, and how important it was to focus attention on what was happening at that moment and not allow other matters to confuse the issue at hand.

“In that way people who were with him felt they mattered in that moment, and I learnt just how important it was to make people feel like they matter. Indeed, each and every person matters,” said Lubner.

“The award was in recognition of the fact that I consciously make appropriate decisions when considering other people around me, as I genuinely believe every person has value and that our differences bring colour and creativity to life.”

In his speech, Lubner said he wanted to share the award with the other finalists, Imvula Empowerment Fund and Petco, a plastic recycling company, and that they could collaborate with each other.

“My passion as a South African and as a father, is to assist wherever I can to create a better environment both physically through the projects I run, emotionally through the way I hope I treat people, and spiritually through the way I live within my own ethics, non-judgemental of others, but critical of self and always trying to improve the man I am.”

Herby Rosenberg said: “As one of the founders of Afrika Tikkun with Bertie Lubner 23 years ago, I am so proud of him (Marc), and that he succeeded me as CEO. He has achieved wonderful work in carrying out a model with his team that provides long-term sustainability.”

Lubner is also founder of The Smile Foundation, where he acts as executive chairman with a management team running day-to-day activities.

Smile Foundation is a South African NGO with a comprehensive healthcare vision for children living with facial conditions. Smile Foundation together with the country’s academic hospitals, work together to put the smile back onto children’s faces with corrective facial reconstructive surgery and treatments.

He also serves as executive chairman of the SA Israel Chamber of Commerce, which is committed to boosting trade between enterprises in Israel and South Africa by bringing technology into the country from advanced Israeli industries to help with infrastructure.

The first Jews in South Africa



A 2002 photograph of the old Jewish cemetery in Grahamstown. The tombstones have since been laid flat.

Photo supplied

DAVID SAKS

The formal birth of South African Jewry as an organised community is generally considered to be the holding of the first-ever prayer gathering in Cape Town on Erev Yom Kippur 1841.

The year 2016 consequently marked the 175th anniversary of communal Jewish life in the country and was duly marked by a range of commemorative events, including the mounting of a lively exhibition by the SA Jewish Museum.

There were, however, Jewish people in South Africa prior to 1841. In fact, a Jewish presence, albeit very limited, can be traced back almost to the beginning of European settlement at the Cape in the mid-1600s.

Under the regulations of the Dutch East Indian Company, only employees who followed the Dutch Reformed religion were permitted to settle at the Cape. Consequently, one finds no record of anyone openly professing the Jewish faith prior to 1800.

Having said that, a number of people of Jewish origin who had converted to Christianity – either in the Netherlands or in the Cape itself – did find their way to South Africa over the years. The earliest reference to such individuals is an entry in the church register of baptisms dated Christmas Day 1669, in which it is recorded that two young soldiers in the service of the Company, Samuel Jacobson and David Heijlbron, had been received into the Christian faith.

Over the next century or so, there were a number of traditional Jewish names among those arriving at the Cape, including Kilian, Levi, Israels, Elias, Lesar, Abrahams and Raphael.

In addition, a number of long-established South African families have a tradition of Jewish ancestry. The first member of the Wessels family, for instance, is believed to have been a baptised Jew who arrived in 1680.

Particularly intriguing is the case of Adam Tas, leader of the resistance to the corrupt misrule of Willem Adriaan van der Stel in the early 1700s. While never conclusively established, it appears likely that he was at least partially of Jewish origin, which would make him the first of many Jewish-born political activists who have impacted on South African history.

The demise of the Dutch East India Company and commencement of the first period of British colonial rule at the end of the 18th century, finally allowed professing Jews to settle at the Cape. There was hardly a mad rush to do so, but gradually, a trickle of individuals, and in time whole families, made their way there.

One of them was Dr Siegfried Fränkel, South Africa’s first Jewish medical practitioner, who arrived in 1808. Together with two other Jews, Isaac Manuel and Maximilian Thalweizer, he was among the foundation shareholders of the South African College, now the University of Cape Town.

The Solomon family, originally from St

Helena, were prominent citizens of the town, including playing a notable part in the emergence of its independent press. While the younger generation converted to Christianity, they maintained to a degree their ties to Jewish practice and belief.

A cousin of the Solomons, Nathaniel Isaacs, gained a place for himself in South African history as one of the first European traders and explorers in Natal. His memoir, entitled Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa, is one of the classics of early South African travel literature and an invaluable record on Natal prior to European settlement.

Among the British Settlers of 1820, were 17 Jews, members of the Norden, Norton and Sloman families. Of these, Benjamin Norden achieved particular prominence as a businessman and trader, initially in the Eastern Cape and later in Natal and Cape Town. It was in his home that the first Jewish prayer meeting took place. When a congregation was formally established a week later, Norden was elected as its first president.

Joshua Davis Norden, Benjamin’s brother, became a prominent citizen of Grahamstown. He was killed in a skirmish while leading the Grahamstown Yeomanry during the early stages of the Seventh Frontier War, and buried in the town’s Jewish cemetery. The account of his funeral in the Grahamstown Journal is the first recorded description of a Jewish burial in South Africa.

Interestingly, a case could be made that it was the establishment of this cemetery in 1838 rather than the inaugural prayer service in Cape Town three years later, that constituted the first formal act of collective Jewish community building.

Whether one accepts this or not, it provides further evidence of how even prior to the Yom Kippur gathering of 1841, a Jewish presence in South Africa had begun to take root.

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South African volunteers remember the Six Day War

NICOLA MILTZ

Fifty years ago hundreds of South African Jews dropped everything in a heroic bid to play their part in helping to secure the survival of the fledgling Jewish State. They were racing to be a part of what would result in the Six Day War and the miraculous reunification of Jerusalem.

As Yom Yerushalayim 2017 (May 24) approaches, volunteers recall the heady days of their youth and their early Israeli experiences with a combination of mixed emotions and euphoric nostalgia.



It was the bitter winter of 1967, slap bang in the middle of apartheid South Africa, when disturbing news from the Middle East began filtering through to Jews all over the country. War was imminent. The State of Israel was under immediate threat on all fronts. Just 20 years after the Holocaust, Jewish people dreaded another devastating catastrophe. There was a genuine fear that Israel was in danger of being eliminated.

Jews around the world were gathering in groups and mobilising. It was no different in South Africa. Several hundred young Jewish volunteers, literally from Brakpan, Springs and Benoni on the East Rand, to dusty farms in the Free State and trading stores in the Cape, came forward and offered to stop whatever they were doing, to help.

“I would have done anything,” said Meyrick Levitas who was 23 and living in Springs at the time. “I felt it was my duty to do whatever I could to help. That’s how we all felt.”

One volunteer who wishes to remain anonymous, said the volunteers were largely young men and women in their prime, fit and healthy. The majority were students or recent graduates.

“We were ripe for adventure. It was a different time altogether, Israel was perceived very differently than

it is today. It was seen as a sexy thing to do, to go to the homeland of the Jewish people. We were prepared to do almost anything.”

But the war was over before many of them were even issued with their first passport. The war lasted a mere six days; historians agree it was one of the most spectacular military victories in modern history.

This, however, did not stop the adrenalin-pumped-up youths from clambering on board the dozens of scheduled SAA flights out of Jan Smuts bound for the Holy Land.

As one of them put it: “We wanted to be part of a shared experience

other Jew I knew.”

The majority of South African volunteers found themselves on kibbutzim scattered throughout the country.

“It was one of the best periods of my life,” recalls Joan Kalk of Johannesburg who was 21 when she found herself on Kibbutz Neue Yam which was 27 km on the Tel Aviv side of Haifa.

“My first job was on the cottonfields. I remember drinking Turkish coffee at 04:00 before my shift. We were done by 10:00 and went to the beach.”

There was a canning factory, chicken coup and a guest house and her group of volunteers were required to work the entire kibbutz.

“We even cleaned toilets, quite something for spoilt Jewish girls from South Africa! We were young, we had fun, we felt needed and appreciated.”



“It was seen as a sexy thing to do, to go to the homeland of the Jewish people. We were prepared to do almost anything.”

One of the first groups of South African volunteers was approached by the Jewish Agency upon arrival in Israel and asked to serve as civilian aides with the army.

“We thought we were going to pick peaches on some kibbutz,” recalls Levitas,” little did we know we were required to carry out civilian duties with various army units in their job of rehabilitating equipment and stores.”

He and several young men from South Africa in his group, were stationed at the Beit Sefer Ha Shotrim and their job was to do recovery work in the Galilee and Sinai.

“The days were long and hot; we lived in tents and there was no running water,” says Levitas.

Photographs and a small article of his group appeared in the periodical Volunteer, in the August 1967 edition. In it the conditions under which the men worked and lived were shown.

“During their rest days



Photo courtesy of The Volunteer magazine, July 1967

the boys talked of their work and daily routine. They wake at 06:00... their food is accepted as being adequate... much as it is in the South African army.

“Their early morning breakfast is a hasty affair with a wild grab for the small quantity of hot tea and a snatched slab of bread and jam. Out in the field the boys have the same army field rations which in themselves are tasty, but become a monotonous menu of a tin of beans or peas, one of goulash and another of bully beef. A tin of olives rounds off the savouries and great chunks of



bread are eaten with everything.

“My group felt a real sense of involvement in Israel’s struggle,” said Levitas.

In the first printed edition of Volunteer, writers urge kibbutzim not to “lose heart” in their arduous work in the fields and encourages them to be proud of their post-war work efforts.

“Perhaps at this moment you are doing laborious, tedious work in an agricultural settlement and feeling fed up about it, but do not forget that this is still vital work.

“In our eyes, you are very much the individual Jew who, spontaneously and gallantly, rose to the occasion when his people’s existence was threatened. You wished to demonstrate your identity with us by joining in the combat on our

behalf... but the battles were so swift and decisive that they were over before you could arrive. Do not be disappointed or discouraged. You are still needed here.”

According to the periodical, as of July 5 1967, there were over 5 000 volunteers from over 38 countries in Israel, helping to pick up the pieces.

“I was a 19-year-old teenager,” says one Johannesburg-based volunteer who wishes to remain anonymous. “I had never been out of the country and all of a sudden I was on a plane going to a country with a foreign language and culture, into a political zone that I knew nothing about.”

It could so easily have turned out differently he reflects, “Although we won the war, we did not win the peace. Today Israel remains as divisive as ever. Many of us look back with some sadness because although Israel won outright, she remains to this day a very divided country.

“She is no longer the little David against the powerful Goliath. Israel is one of the strongest countries in the world despite her size - and still there is no peace.”

But as Sir Jonathan Sacks says of the time: “...by being born into the Jewish people I was enmeshed in a network of relationships that connected me to other people, other places, other times. I belonged to a people. And being part of a people, I belonged.”

SPONSORED BY



THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Israeli spy’s life ‘at risk’ after Trump’s ‘careless’ intel leak

SUE SURKES

An Israeli spy’s life is at risk as the result of US President Donald Trump’s reported passing of classified information to senior Russian officials last week, ABC news reported on Tuesday.

The spy tipped handlers off about an Islamic State plan to blow up a passenger plane headed for the US by hiding a bomb in a laptop, the network said, quoting current and former US officials.

The New York Times reported on Tuesday that Israel was the country that provided the US with the classified intelligence that Trump shared with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Russian ambassador to the US Sergey Kislyak last week Wednesday.

Deliberation by the US over a possible ban on laptops on all flights from Europe to the US - a move which could affect 65 million passengers a year - was apparently sparked by concerns that an explosive device of this kind could get through airport screening undetected.

The US already prohibits 10 mainly Middle Eastern airports from allowing laptops on board US-bound flights.

Officials said the intelligence provided by the spy was so sensitive that it was shared only with the US and was conditioned on the source remaining secret, ABC said.

Matt Olsen, former director of the National Counterterrorism Centre, told ABC that Trump’s disclosures to the Russians posed a real threat to “future sources of information about plots against us”.

Olsen went on: “Russia is not part of the ISIS coalition. They are not our partner.”

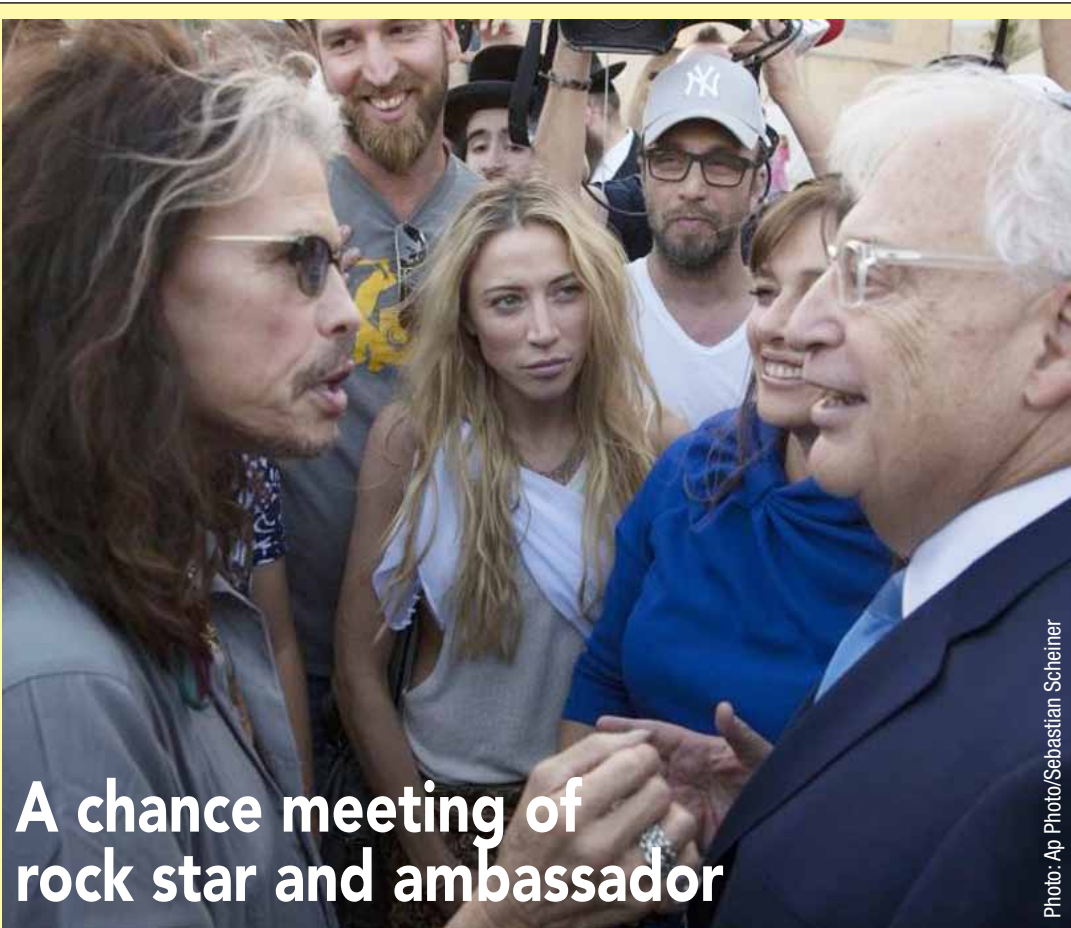
Former US Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro, who was a National Security Council official in the Obama administration, told ABC that the “careless” handling of sensitive information by Trump and his team would “inevitably cause elements of Israel’s intelligence service to demonstrate more caution”.

More than two years ago, IS claimed it had hidden a bomb in a drinks can to blow up a Russian passenger plane over Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula, in which 224 people were killed.

At that time, according to CNN, Israel also provided important intelligence, although in that case, the information about the perpetrators was only obtained after the attack.

Trump said on Tuesday that he had “the absolute right” to share information and had done so in order to encourage the Russians to “greatly step up their fight against ISIS and terrorism”.

White House National Security Adviser H R McMaster called the president’s actions “wholly appropriate”.



A chance meeting of rock star and ambassador

Newly arrived US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman bumped into Aerosmith lead singer Steven Tyler at the Western Wall on Monday. Friedman had just arrived in the country and drove straight to the Wall to pray. Tyler was in the country for an Aerosmith performance in Tel Aviv this week.

ULTRA-ORTHODOX BURN EFFIGY OF ISRAELI SOLDIER

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF JERUSALEM

Ultra-Orthodox revellers set fire to an effigy of an Israeli soldier last Saturday night in the ultra-Orthodox Jerusalem neighbourhood of Mea She’arim, to cheers and claps from the audience.

A video of the display broadcast in Hebrew-language media, showed a man holding a life-sized puppet-like model of a soldier over a bonfire with a long stick.

The model was dressed in an army shirt emblazoned with the name of the Sayaret Matkal elite commando unit on the back. A beard had been drawn on the face of the model in an apparent attempt to make it look like an ultra-Orthodox soldier. The crowd, including a number of children, cheered as the effigy caught alight.

The incident took place as part of celebrations for Lag B’Omer, the traditional date of the death of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai, a first-century sage, which is marked with celebrations and bonfires.

The incident is the latest incident in which ultra-Orthodox Jews have attacked members of the community who join the Israeli military. The ultra-Orthodox have also held dozens of demonstrations to protest mandatory enlistment of religious Jews, following years in which they were allowed to avoid conscription.

The arrest and imprisonment of ultra-Orthodox draft dodgers has raised tensions in the community and a recent series of large demonstrations against the induction of ultra-Orthodox people into the army, saw violent clashes between demonstrators and police.



An Islamic State propaganda video, depicting soldiers calling on Muslims to surrender their foreign passports and join the terror group.

WHAT WE DO: Promote Aliya & Travel to Israel 🇮🇱 Share Israel related information 🇮🇱 Monitoring / Response to Israel related Media 🇮🇱 Support pro-Israel organisations 🇮🇱 Increase support for Israel through outreach programmes 🇮🇱 Engage with key decision makers to communicate our narrative

The news and views expressed on these pages are not the views of the SA Jewish Report nor the SA Zionist Federation. This content originates from the Times of Israel.



SOUTH
AFRICAN
ZIONIST
FEDERATION

JTA STAFF
WARSAW

More than 10 per cent of Central and Eastern Europeans do not accept Jews as citizens of their countries, according to a new study.

The study, released last week Wednesday by the Pew Research Centre, surveyed the residents of 18 countries and found that 80 per cent of respondents would accept Jews as fellow citizens. The remainder was not sure or declined to answer.

Fewer respondents, however, would accept Jews as family and neighbours. Less than half would accept Jews as family and fewer than three-quarters wanted them as neighbours.

The study interviewed 1 500 to 2 500 residents in each of the countries from June 2015 to July 2016.

Jews, however, were more accepted across the region than Muslims and Roma. Only 57 per cent of respondents would accept Roma as citizens, while only 19 per cent would accept

Europeans not so keen on living with Jews

them as family. Roughly two-thirds of the region would accept Muslims as citizens, while only 27 per cent would accept them as family.

In some countries, the number of respondents who do not accept Jews as citizens was far higher than the median, notably Armenia, where a third of respondents said Jews should not be citizens.

Several countries with large Jewish populations before the

Holocaust, also topped the average: Lithuania, at 23 per cent; Romania, 22 per cent; the Czech Republic 19 per cent; and Poland, 18 per cent.

Respondents with more education were more likely to accept Jews as family, neighbours and citizens, the study found.

The margin of error was 3,3 to 4,5 per cent, depending on the country.

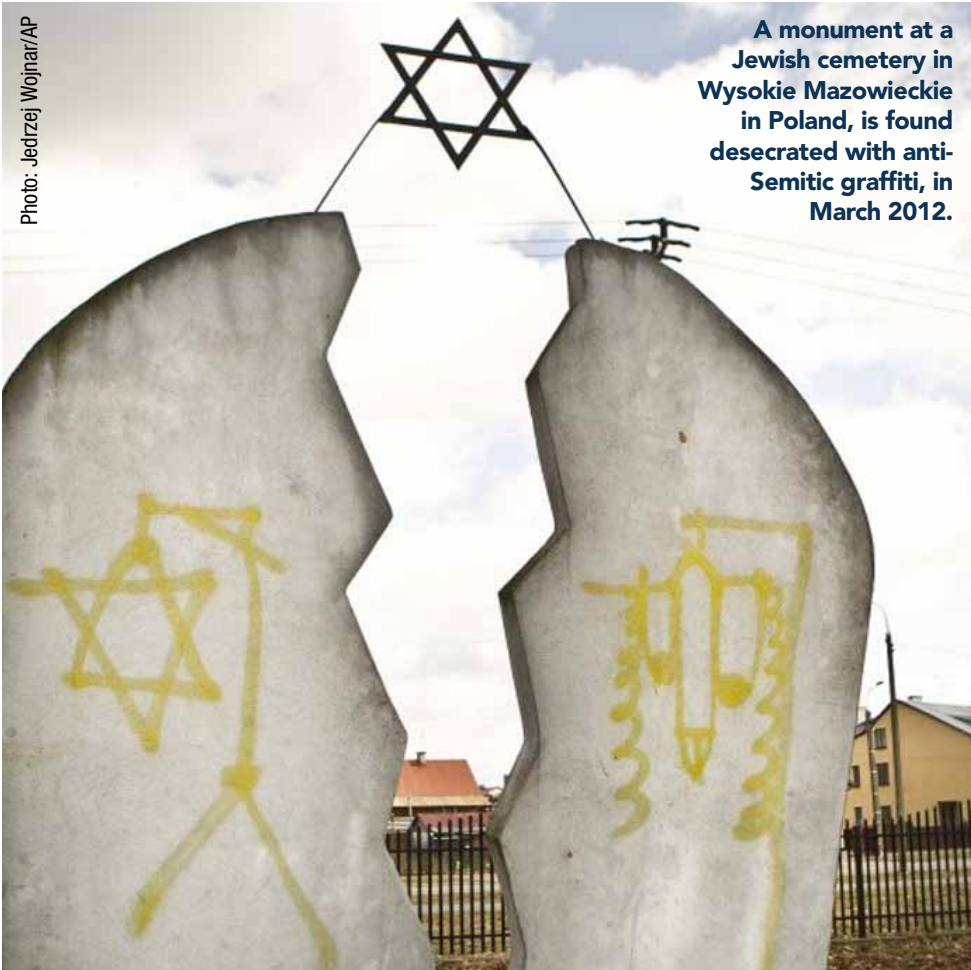


Photo: Jędrzej Wojnar/AP

A monument at a Jewish cemetery in Wysokie Mazowieckie in Poland, is found desecrated with anti-Semitic graffiti, in March 2012.

Criminal probe into Jewish Home minister

MARISSA NEWMAN

Opposition lawmakers have urged the attorney general to open a criminal investigation into Jewish Home minister Uri Ariel and have called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to fire him over his alleged funnelling of millions of shekels to benefit his purported political associates.

A state comptroller report released on Tuesday, accused Ariel of transferring millions earmarked for poor towns in Israel's rural areas to nonprofit organisations run by his political confidants during his tenure as housing minister.

The ombudsman's report urged Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit to launch a probe into the case.

On Wednesday, Yesh Atid leader Yair Lapid, called on Mandelblit to order a police investigation into the affair.

Ariel "took millions that were supposed to be invested in our children's future - the children in Dimona, Kiryat Shemona, the Gaza periphery and the Galilee - and used them in violation of the law to advance political interests," said Lapid in a statement. "We cannot let this pass in silence.

"The police must fully investigate this affair," he added.

Ariel budgeted millions of shekels to nonprofit organisations in the middle- to upper-class areas of Tel Aviv and its suburbs, the report said.

Although the plan broadly sought to develop rural areas, Ariel oversaw the transfer of NIS 29 million (\$8 million), some 46 per cent of the budget, to middle- or upper-class areas in central Israel, the report said. Of that sum, some NIS 10,5 million were earmarked for areas classified as of "high" socioeconomic status.

Hours after the report was published, Ariel released a statement denying a call for a criminal investigation into his

actions.

"The Comptroller did not recommend opening a probe by the attorney general into the actions of the minister," he said, adding that he "respects the findings of the Comptroller and has already instructed the relevant authorities to act according to his recommendations".



Agriculture Minister Uri Ariel

Photo: Yonatan Sindel/Flash90



News and views from the Fed

Low SA anti-Semitic incidents buck world trend

Last week, B'nai Brith Canada released its Annual Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents for the preceding year. Once again, the findings were alarming, showing how anti-Semitism in Canada continues to escalate from year to year.

In 2016, despite the relative calm that prevailed on the Israeli-Palestinian front, the number of anti-Semitic incidents logged, increased by 26 per cent over the previous year and a six per cent increase over the previous high in 2014, the year of the last major Gaza War.

Overall, just under 1 800 incidents were recorded, including scores of physical attacks (often against Jewish children).

Canadian Jewry is not alone in experiencing progressively higher instances of anti-Semitism from year to year. The same is true of other major Diaspora communities, including in the United States, Australia, France and the United Kingdom. There is one country in particular, however, that has consistently bucked the trend and that, surprising though many might find this, is South Africa.

Last year, 50 anti-Semitic incidents were recorded by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, slightly below the 2015 total. In addition to being dramatically lower than those of the abovementioned Diaspora countries (some 36 times lower in the Canadian case), the tally involved no serious acts of violence or vandalism.

Indeed, when several Jewish teenagers were assaulted in a Johannesburg mall two years ago, it was the country's first reported instance of anti-Semitic violence in at least five years.

An interesting question all this raises, is whether the generally friendly attitude towards Israel by countries reporting high levels of anti-Semitic activity, rather than discouraging anti-Semitism, might in fact be helping to provoke it.

It is quite possible that feelings of frustration over their respective governments' Middle East policies may be resulting in anti-Israel activists taking out their anger on the local Jewish community.

In South Africa, by contrast, the government's stance has been consistently pro-Palestinian, even if falling short of actually boycotting Israel, as hard-line activists within the ruling party and civil society are demanding.

Another significant factor is that in South Africa, far-right white supremacists are a marginal, beleaguered presence in a country where whites now constitute under 10 per cent of the population, and while anti-Semitic attitudes are rife in those circles, this seldom translates into actual acts of hostility against Jews.

This is not true in the US, Canada, UK and Australia, where the far-right is a vocal, active presence (albeit still on the fringes of society) and which is the source of a high proportion of the anti-Semitic incidents recorded in those countries.

If the position of South African Jewry in terms of exposure to anti-Semitism is better than that of their counterparts abroad, this is nevertheless no cause for complacency. That the country is not immune to the threat of global terrorism, was demonstrated by last year's arrest of two ISIS-radicalised brothers on charges of planning attacks against, among other targets, a Jewish school and a range of individual Jewish leaders.

For that reason, the Jewish community continues to maintain high levels of vigilance, while taking the necessary steps to provide effective security for all communal installations and events.



Israel urged to bomb alleged Syria crematorium

TAMAR PILEGGI

Opposition lawmakers on Monday called on Israel to destroy the Damascus-area crematorium that Syrian President Bashar Assad is allegedly using to burn the bodies of thousands of executed political prisoners.

Some government ministers also urged action, but said that it was the responsibility of the United States, which made the allegations on Monday.

Yesh Atid party leader Yair Lapid, wrote in a Facebook post that Israel has a “moral responsibility to act when within striking distance of the IDF people are being burnt. We have to wipe that crematorium off the face of the earth.”

Lapid drew parallels between the world’s failure to protect Jews during the Second World War and the international community’s failure to stop the bloodshed in Syria.

“Why did the world know [what was happening], but not do anything? Well now we know, and we’re not doing anything,” he said.

“Chemical weapons and incinerators - both the crematorium and Assad must go. Echoing past horrors, he cannot be a part of the region’s future,” Zionist Union lawmaker Tzipi Livni tweeted on Monday.

Interior Minister and Shas party chairman, Aryeh Deri, also called for the Assad crematorium to be bombed, but urged the US to carry out the strike.

Deri said urging US President Donald Trump to take military action against the Assad regime during his trip to Israel next week, should top Israel’s list of priorities for the visit.

In the US, the head of the Anti-Defamation League also drew parallels between Syria’s alleged use of a crematorium to dispose of bodies, to actions committed by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

Jonathan Greenblatt, the group’s national director, also called on the international community, including Russia, to take action to stop the violence perpetuated by the Syrian government.

As Jews, we are particularly shocked by the extreme brutality of the Syrian regime, which invokes the worst nightmares of Nazi atrocities against the Jewish people,” Greenblatt said on Tuesday in a statement. “The world learned from the 20th century that it did not do enough to stop the crimes of the Nazis which led to the genocide of six million Jews.”

Earlier on Tuesday, Housing and Construction Minister Yoav Galant accused Assad of carrying out a “genocide”, and called for the Syrian leader to be assassinated.

Judah Ari Gross and AP contributed to this report.

Six charged for yelling anti-Semitic slurs on Munich bus



MUNICH - Six people have been charged with incitement to hate after spewing anti-Semitic abuse on passengers in a Munich city bus.

Only two passengers - a couple from Munich - attempted to intervene in the weekend incident.

According to news reports, the alleged perpetrators, all from Munich and Ebersberg and ranging in age from 18 to 33, shouted anti-Semitic insults at passengers on the bus, which reportedly was packed with some 40 passengers.

Police said that witnesses later reported the “most harmless” of the verbal abuse included “Juden raus!” - “get rid of the Jews”.

Most passengers reportedly did nothing. After one woman addressed the group and asked them to stop, they aimed their abuse at her. Police said that her boyfriend’s intervention prevented further escalation.

Anti-Semitic criminality has increased in the state of Bavaria. There were 176 anti-Jewish crimes reported in the state in 2016, an increase of 33 per cent over the previous year. In Munich, the increase was 50 per cent, from 24 incidents in 2015, to 37 last year. All the perpetrators in those incidents came from a far-right extremist background. (JTA)

`If Netanyahu isn’t indicted for graft, I’ll tell all`



IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot, then defence minister Moshe Ya’alon, President Reuven Rivlin and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, at a welcoming ceremony for the new submarine “Ra-hav” at the Israeli navy base in Haifa, on January 12, 2016. PHOTOGRAPH: KOBI GIDEON/GPO

RAOUL WOOLLIFF

Former defence minister Moshe Ya’alon has threatened to “tell all” on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s alleged corruption if the prime minister is not indicted as part of three graft probes involving him or his associates.

“I knew about previous prime ministers who were corrupt for their own benefit, but it’s a completely different thing when a prime minister jeopardises the interests of the country for his gain,” Ya’alon said during an interview broadcast on Channel 2 on Tuesday night.

Ya’alon, who was ousted as defence minister last year, was known to have disagreed with Netanyahu over the so-called “submarine affair”, in which the prime minister’s personal lawyer David Shimron is suspected of attempting to sway multi-billion-shekel deals in favour of German shipbuilder ThyssenKrupp who he represented in Israel. The purchase was opposed by parts of the defence establishment, including Ya’alon.

Following testimony by Ya’alon in January, police opened a full criminal investigation into the affair, now known as “Case 3000”, but stressed that the prime minister was not a suspect.

Netanyahu is, however, a criminal suspect in two other ongoing formal police investigations.

In “Case 1000”, police are investigating allegations that a number of businessmen gave lucrative gifts to Netanyahu and his wife, Sara, over his years in office. Police are also investigating another case, known as “Case 2000”, in which Netanyahu is believed to have offered the publisher of Israel’s biggest-selling daily Yedioth Ahronoth, his help in reducing the readership of Yedioth’s pro-Netanyahu rival paper Israel Hayom in exchange for more favourable coverage. Netanyahu has denied any wrongdoing.

Asked on Tuesday if he thought the prime minister and Shimron were guilty of corruption, Ya’alon said he had “absolutely no doubt, no doubt whatsoever and if he is not indicted, I will go on a speaking tour to tell all. I will reveal

everything.”

Writing on Twitter later, Ya’alon clarified that he had already told the police everything he knew but would “publicly reveal” the information if charges are not pressed.

Responding to the interview, sources close to the prime minister denied Ya’alon’s threat as “utter garbage and completely empty”.

In a statement given to Channel 2 news, the sources hit back with their own threats, promising that Ya’alon’s “brazen lies will soon be exposed as such”. Noting that the Justice Ministry has confirmed Netanyahu is not a suspect in “Case 3000”, the statement added that the former defence minister “would be well advised to find another way for him to [try to] pass the electoral threshold”.

Since resigning from the Knesset in May last year after he was replaced as defence minister by Avigdor Lieberman, Ya’alon has become a fierce critic of Netanyahu and has vowed to form a new party to challenge the prime minister and the ruling Likud party in the next parliamentary elections.

But according to a poll last month, Ya’alon’s anticipated party would fail to garner enough votes to pass the 3,25 per cent electoral threshold and would therefore not enter the Knesset. Likud on the other hand would win a resounding 28 seats (albeit down from its current 30), four clear of Yair Lapid’s Yesh Atid at 24.

Last month Ya’alon said Netanyahu “should have resigned a while ago” as a result of the ongoing criminal investigations against him.

Ya’alon has also said Netanyahu’s refusal to step down despite being a suspect in two criminal investigations, was a result of the problematic political culture in Israel.

“This is a matter of political culture. Obviously there is no smoke without fire,” he said. “In the political culture of Britain or the US, when an issue arises and an investigation is opened, people resign.”

Under Israeli law, a prime minister does not need to step down if indicted and can continue to serve as premier for the duration of a trial.

Belgian Eurovision singer an ardent Jewish Zionist

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF BRUSSELS

Israeli and Jewish music fans tuning in to last Saturday night's Eurovision contest finals, hoping to witness some Zionist triumphs, may have

of days.
"I spoke Hebrew on stage and everyone was shocked!" she recalled. "The audience was great."
Delvaux hopes to make her country proud. "I will be overjoyed if after many years Belgium once again wins the Eurovision," she said. "I would like Belgium to feel some pride thanks to me. That would be wonderful."
Delvaux will be the 23rd singer to perform at the weekend.

Meanwhile the opening act of the show will be Israel's Imri Ziv, who won a trip to the finals of the song contest last Thursday night, after belting out an assertive rendition of his dance anthem "I Feel Alive" during the second night of the semifinals at the International Exhibition Centre in Kiev.
Israel first appeared in the Eurovision in 1973 and it will be the country's third straight appearance in the finals. Israel won the competition three times, most recently in 1998, when Dana International, a transwoman, won with "Diva".
Another contestant to cheer on this weekend, is Roma singer Joci Pápai, 35, the first Roma to represent Hungary in the continental song competition among 42 countries.
Roma and Jewish groups in Hungary celebrated Pápai's



Belgian Eurovision contestant Blanche.

win. "If he wins that contest, and because of this Hungary would be the host of the next contest, then it would be really something," Adam Schonberger, a Hungarian Jew who runs Aurora, an organisation that encourages dialogue and co-operation between Roma and Jews, told JTA last Friday.
Schonberger noted, however, that deep-seated anti-Roma prejudice among segments of the political right in Hungary, would likely make it difficult for many Hungarians to rally around Pápai if he wins in the finals at the weekend.

Iconic New York deli to ship its delicacies overseas

KAREN MATTHEWS NEW YORK

Katz's Delicatessen has been urging customers to "send a salami to your boy in the Army" for generations. Now, the New York City restaurant, where everyone's favourite scene from "When Harry Met Sally" was shot, is expanding its shipping capacity so it can send perishable delicacies like pastrami and corned beef around the globe.
The plan to offer a taste of authentic, old New York by mail, is part of an ongoing effort by Katz's young owner to modernise a business that hasn't changed much since it was founded on Manhattan's Lower East Side in 1888.

"I can't necessarily replicate the entire experience for you, wherever you are at home," said Jake Dell, 29. "But I can give you the food. I can bring it a little bit closer to you."
A granddaddy of New York City's vanishing Jewish delis, Katz's has become a draw in recent years for tourists looking for bits of the old, immigrant experience in a gentrifying neighbourhood where gleaming condo towers are replacing old tenements.
And unlike some New York City eateries packed with tourists, it is as popular with foodies as it is with the masses of out-of-towners.
Visitors and locals filled the 300-seat restaurant last week Thursday, polishing off 15,24 centimetre-high sandwiches under the gaze of the celebrities whose photos line the walls.
Waiters threaded their way through the packed dining room amid the clatter of tables being cleared. A sign hanging from the ceiling indicated the spot where Meg Ryan was sitting when she acted out a fake

orgasm in the 1989 film about Harry and Sally.
Dell represents the third generation of his family to run Katz's. He celebrated his barmitzvah there. And as owner, he's balancing tradition with some gentle changes.
A new 2 788 square metres shipping facility in Hackensack, New Jersey, will open sometime in the next year. Katz's is also opening a takeout-only outpost in Brooklyn's new DeKalb Market Hall next month.
Katz's, lucky to own its building in a city where rent increases have a habit of putting even iconic spots out of business, also recently gave itself a financial cushion by selling off adjoining properties and air

rights to a condominium developer.
"We're looking at ways of connecting to people that want this food," Dell said. "There's really no limit to the amount of pastramis I can send to people."
Katz's began encouraging customers to "Send a Salami to Your Boy in the Army" during the Second World War and the business still ships salami overseas. But cured meats that require refrigeration, are shipped only within the United States.
A triple classic sandwich combo includes a ,45 kg each of sliced brisket, pastrami and corned beef, a loaf of rye bread, one ,45 kg of mustard and 1,89 litres of pickles.
Dell isn't sure exactly when the expanded delivery service will start or which countries he'll market to first.

"Canada seems to be the easiest first step," he said. "South America has a strong passion for cured meats. The UK and Australia have been clawing out to us and just craving this food. But it's difficult and navigating those customs waters has been an eye-opening experience. I hope to get there soon."
Customers leaving the restaurant said they'd be in favour of global expansion.
"The food is delicious. Why not let everybody enjoy it?" said Christine McGee, of Indianapolis.
"Each time I'm in New York I have to visit at least once," said Yaakov Sabbagh of Jerusalem.
Would he order the food from home? "If it comes to Israel, yes, definitely," he said.



Katz's Delicatessen has been a staple on the Lower East Side of Manhattan since the late 19th century.

Art and halacha a good fit for Rabbi Uzvolk

SUZANNE BELLING

Entering the workshop of Rabbi Azriel Uzvolk, spiritual leader of the Victory Park Hebrew Congregation, was akin to being transported back in time. This rabbi was recently accredited by the Beth Din in Johannesburg as its seventh scribe, or sofer.

Surrounded by turkey and goose feathers or bamboo, from which he fashions his quills, and bottles of ink, he puts the finishing touches to a mezuzah. He is able to write a sefer Torah from the beginning, create tefillin and repair, check and write mezuzot.

“Although I have given up my part-time kodesh teaching career, I know I will never be bored and lack something to do,” Rabbi Uzvolk said.

Being a scribe requires a variety of skills - fine-motor co-ordination, an artistic bent and a thorough knowledge of Hebrew and halacha.

His father, the late Benny Uzvolk, recognised his son’s talents. While Rabbi Uzvolk was a student at Torah Academy, one of the first intake of pupils at the school’s inception, his father sent him to the Yeoville Recreation Centre for adult art lessons.

It was a varied journey for Rabbi Uzvolk since matriculating. He toured art galleries with his parents. His formal studies were at the University of the Witwatersrand, where he obtained a B Sc degree in computer science and economics.

A sofer cannot make one mistake as the Sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzot have to be perfect or they are rendered pasul (not kosher).

“Sometimes if there is a letter which cannot be easily identified, we bring in a child, who has good eyesight, to judge.

For a year, he studied at the Har Etzion yeshiva near Efrat in Israel and at Shilo, as he believes “the frontline of Jewish survival is in the classroom”.

He furthered his Jewish studies at the Chabad Tzemach Tzedek in Israel and the Kollel Yad Shaul in Johannesburg under Rabbi Boruch Grossnass.

He obtained smicha from Rabbi Zalman Nechemiah Goldberg in Jerusalem and for many years taught half days at his alma mater, Torah Academy, founded by his late father-in-law, Rabbi Nachman Bernhard. He is married to Laia, Rabbi and Joan Bernhard’s daughter, and they have eight children.

Included in his career was being youth rabbi at Yeshiva College, associate rabbi to Rabbi Yossy Goldman at Sydenham-Highlands North Hebrew Congregation, being rabbi of the Beit Mordechai Shul in Gallo Manor and teaching at the high and primary schools at TA from 1989 to 2015.

“Two years ago, I was burnt out and lost my passion for teaching. I needed a second job to supplement my income and strongly considered going back into computers. But then I decided to combine my love of art with halacha.”

It was a tough road. He studied at the Va’ad Mishmereth Stam in Israel and “it wasn’t so simple”. He was given both oral and practical exams, but found he was not totally proficient enough to qualify and “went back to the drawing board”, assisted by Rabbi Ryan Goldstein, who writes ketubot, and scribe Rabbi Yisroel Drutman.

A sofer cannot make one mistake as the Sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzot have to be perfect or they are rendered pasul (not kosher). “Sometimes if there is a letter which

cannot be easily identified, we bring in a child, who has good eyesight, to judge.

“There are so many fields - preparing the parchment, the ink, the quill, making the battim - boxes which house the tefillin, preparing the straps, binding the parshot in the tehillin, and mezuzot, writing and checking. Each one of these areas is a speciality in its own right.

“The same can be said about life and I am grateful I have found this particular vocation - a path which is both holy and productive, artistic, yet exact.”

- The other six scribes in Johannesburg are Rabbi Chaim Klein, Rabbi Dov Kazilsky, Rabbi Simcha Frenkel, Rabbi Gary Braude, Rabbi Yisroel Drutman and Rabbi Yehoshua Abrahamson.

Scribe Rabbi Azriel Uzvolk, putting the finishing touches to a mezuzah.



Photo: Suzanne Belling

CELEBRATE

50 YEARS OF A UNITED

JERUSALEM

YOM YERUSHALAYIM

ON THE YESHIVA COLLEGE CAMPUS

TUE 23 MAY

Jerusalem Light Show

Live Kotel Coverage!

Food Stalls!

Mini Light Rail Rock Climbing

Live Band!

Camel Rides!

TEFILLAH CHAGIGIT

17h15 Mincha followed by a video presentation and Festive Ma'ariv at

17h45

Mizrachi Shul

CELEBRATION

50

bring the whole family and come and celebrate Jerusalem!

Free Entrance

18h30

Yeshiva College Parking Lot

Wed 08h00 - Shacharit in YC Main Shul

24 08h30 - Musical Hallel

May 09h45 - YY50 Flag Parade

"אם אשכח ירושלים"

"If I Forget You Jerusalem" - Psalms 137

MIZRACHI

BNEI AKIVA

Glenhazel Shul

FAHMAN

SAUJS

SOUTH AFRICAN ZIONIST

VCF

SAUJS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE YOUTH OF:

Linksfield Senderwood Hebrew Congregation

Beth Hamedrash Hagadol Sandton Shul

Sydenham Highlands North Hebrew Congregation

Pine Street Shul

Waverley Shul

The Achievers buzz is becoming palpable...

ANT KATZ

There is a palpable buzz around the Jewish Report offices as “Galaxy of Stars” - the theme for the 19th annual Absa SA Jewish Report “Jewish Achiever Awards” this year, begins to rumble.

Nominations are coming in, people are booking seats and tables to ensure they are there, at the social event of the year and advertisers are already ensuring that they will feature in the annual prestige publication that goes with the awards.

Each year the SA Jewish Report hosts the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards, which reaches a crescendo at the plushest of plush black-tie gala banquets.

Send your nominations to: nominations@sajewishreport.co.za and please be sure to include: the nominee's name, telephone number and e-mail address; and the award for which the nominee is being nominated; and a short motivation for each nomination. You may nominate as many people in as many categories as you wish.

- 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 remarkable contribution made by Jewish women in all spheres of South African leadership.
 - Young Jewish Entrepreneur award, going to one of South Africa’s leading Jewish rising entrepreneurs.

- The Jewish Report humanities awards are:**
- The Lifetime Achievement Award in Honour of Helen Suzman, going 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, Sports & 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 the lives of the people of South Africa.

To book your tables, send an e-mail to rsvp@sajewishreport.co.za and we will get back to you.

To benefit from our early-bird special by booking your advert or advert-and-table-combo and in the process enjoy the 2016 prices, send your e-mail to advertising@sajewishreport.co.za and, again, we'll get back to you. But this must be booked and paid for before June 20 - or you may not qualify for the 2016 prices!

Lag B'Omer around the country

Cape Town



Durban



Pretoria



DIANE WOLFSON

The Pretoria Jewish community did not allow the wet weather to dampen their spirits or affect their Lag B'Omer celebrations last week. After a delicious braai (under cover), and an hour of drumming with Brothers In Beat, a large crowd gathered outside to watch Saul Wolfson light the bonfire. As always, a fun evening was enjoyed by old and young.

Sandton



Lag B’Omer fire overcame the winter cold



Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein and Rabbi Dovid Hazdan



The parade that united the community



The parade



Enjoying the parade



Rabbi Yossi Hecht and Terence Noche

RABBI DOVID HAZDAN

The fire of Lag B’Omer could not be suppressed by the freezing cold, rainy weather over the last weekend in Johannesburg. And although the turnout was less than expected, still over 1 000 people from more than 50 shul communities, braved the elements to show their Jewish unity, resilience and pride at the Concert in the Park last Saturday night.

They were treated to Israeli star Amiran Dvir, accompanied by the Jonny Sklar Band, and a musical havdalah led by Shmuli Brill. Following the address by Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein, the Chayeinu Hope Tour (Israeli children with cancer who were being treated by the South African community) arrived and led the crowds in reading Tehillin, praying for all who are in need of healing.

They ignited the Great Park Forest with dancing and an overflowing expression of gratitude to the South African Jewish community.

The Maccabi torch which is presently in Johannesburg and on its way back to Jerusalem, was lit after brief comments by



RABBI PINI PINK

Those passing by James and Ethel Gray Park in Johannesburg last Sunday, were in for a surprise as the Lag B’Omer Jewish Unity Parade, with participants from many Jewish day schools and synagogues, paraded through the street showing their Jewish pride.

“Lag B’Omer is traditionally a day of unity and celebration,” said Rabbi Michael Katz, a director of Chabad House. “The parade offers the community an avenue to show our togetherness, and put our Jewish pride on display.”

The parade kicked off at the park with the participation of the South African Police Marching Band, the SAPS horses, and the Bambanani and Torah Academy Marching Bands. Floats from Torah Academy Girls’ High and Boys’ High Schools, highlighted the procession, along with Rebbe’s Bikers group and members of each of Johannesburg’s Chabad Houses.

The parade made its way to the Great Park Shul forest where it was officially opened by Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein and the junior mayor of Johannesburg, Joseph Joffe.

Everyone enjoyed the exhilarating African Acrobats and a show by the Soweto Gum Boot Dancers. This was followed by a fun fair for the children to enjoy for the rest of Lab B’Omer day.

“There was an unbelievable communal spirit despite the weather,” said Jamie Frankel. “It was just a beautiful vibe - unforgettable.”

Chad Cohen said the children had a terrific time. “Just seeing all those smile - at the parade and at the funfair - was so heart-warming.”

Desmond Hyman, vice chairman of Maccabi South Africa.

Blankets were sold and helped protect everyone against the cold as they huddled close to the numerous bonfires scattered around the Great Park Forest, which was magically lit up by thousands of fairy lights.

Hundreds of blankets sold will now be distributed to needy children with the assistance of Afrika Tikkun.

The band continued to entertain the young Jewish professionals who danced and revelled to midnight.

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What DNA says about the Jews

NIA MAGOULIANITI-MCGREGOR

“I might mispronounce a few words,” laughs Rabbi Mendel Rabinowitz of Greenside Shul.

Since he was opening for Professor Scott Hazelhurst, all set to talk on a history of the Jewish people from the perspective of DNA sequencing technologies, who could blame the rabbi? Most of us don’t know our genomes from our garden gnomes.

But Hazelhurst, professor of bioinformatics in the School of Electrical and Information Engineering at Wits, and at the Sydney Brenner Institute for Molecular Bioscience, is set to change all that.

Hazelhurst is, as he says, “involved in large-scale sequencing and genotyping of populations to try to understand its diversity”.

Genotyping determines differences in the genetic make-up of an individual by examining their DNA sequence, then comparing it to other sequences.

While his research focuses on the genetic causes of disease, this same data can be used to explore population histories. “This can complement historical and archaeological records or, on occasion, contradict them,” says

Hazelhurst.

“DNA is a reflection of who our ancestors were, or more precisely, where our ancestors were. There is no such thing as a Zulu genome or Jewish DNA or Kohen gene. That’s fiction. Although DNA helps us understand population history, DNA doesn’t define who we are.”

We do, however, find that different communities have different genetic characteristics.

Hazelhurst provides a whirlwind history of the world: Seventy thousand years ago modern humans left Africa. Over the next 30 000 to 40 000 years, they spread across the rest of the world. Between 25 000 and 10 000 years ago, the ancestral populations of modern people in the Middle East and a large part of the Mediterranean, settled.

“Around 20 000 years ago they settled in Arabia and about 12 000 years ago in the Levant - a geographical term used to include Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, southern Turkey and Jordan. These two populations form the basis of the Jewish people and people of the Middle East.”

Historically, says Hazelhurst, “most Jews have lived outside of the Land of Israel, and in contact with other people across the world who have affected them”. This includes

an exile to Babylon, then Egypt and later “there is a significant diaspora across Persian, Greek and Roman rule, so that before the fall of the Second Temple, it moves across the Middle East and the Mediterranean.”

Hazelhurst introduces his audience to “Autosomal DNA” - which is 97 per cent of DNA (one copy from each parent), the Y-chromosome - inherited from father to son, and mitochondrial DNA, inherited maternally, but seen in all genders.

Autosomal DNA data shows, he says, a “remarkable continuity” in Jewish genetic history. “Despite a long separation in different parts of the world, of people in contact with other populations, many Jewish groups including Ashkenazi and Sephardic, are more similar to each other than their host populations.”

There are, of course, links. Y-chromosome data shows most Jews come from areas like the Middle East and Levant greater than 2 000 years ago.

Focusing on the Ashkenazim, Hazelhurst says the first real records dating to the 10th century, show they settled in the Rhineland (now eastern France and western Germany).

“There are tantalising historical clues,” says Hazelhurst, about where



Professor Scott Hazelhurst

they came from. The one that stands the test of mitochondrial DNA evidence, according to him, is the “Italian Hypothesis”.

“While maternal founders of Sephardim were from the Middle East, we see strong evidence of a majority European female founder for Ashkenazim. Roughly 80 per cent of mitochondrial haplotypes (a group of genes) probably come from European origin and probably greater than 2 000 years ago.

“There is a clear social story - which is only a probability.” He says it makes academic sense.

“There was a large Jewish diaspora right across the Mediterranean before the fall of the Second Temple and by halfway through the first century, the Jewish population of

Rome was about 50 000 - making it as Jewish as Johannesburg is today.

“The Italian Hypothesis suggests Jewish men on the move - maybe for business purposes - marry local women who convert. After a few generations that process stops and people marry entirely within the faith.”

Autosomal data is consistent with what the mitochondrial results show regarding ancestry.

“Disturbingly, a recent paper suggests that in the 12th or 13th centuries, the population size of the Ashkenazi drops to a few thousand. It’s a record of something catastrophic happening. Many genetic diseases may be traced to this genetic ‘bottleneck’ rather than to recent events,” posits Hazelhurst.

We need more people to be sequenced, he says. “While taking DNA from skeletons that are up to 10 000 years old is controversial, it’s revolutionised our understanding of European history.”

A member of the audience asks: “Does this mean a non-Jewish woman doesn’t have to convert if she’s found to have a Jewish DNA?”

Hazelhurst comes full circle: “No. DNA does not define who we are.”

• *Prof Hazelhurst will be speaking at Limmud in August.*

Finding long lost relatives through a competition

ANT KATZ

Hundreds of Jewish families around the world found each other and connected for the first time, because of a 22-year-old international creative schools competition.

While the “My Family Story” competition - of which two global winners were King David School pupils - was judged on content and creativity, those who didn’t actually win, still felt like winners because of their familial finds. In many cases they found family members they didn’t know existed.

One of the two local winners,

Leah Meyerowitz of Sandton, says it was exciting to discover “some new branches to the family tree - even ones that my grandfather never knew about”. Her project, called “My Grand Family”, helped them to trace previously unknown relatives to Israel.

Leah and her mom, Pam, are going to Israel next month as part of their prize - and they plan to connect with some of their long-lost relations when they are there. “It will be my first time in Israel,” says an elated Leah.

In all, over 200 Jewish families from the two King David campuses and Yeshiva College, embarked

on the exciting journey of exploration into their families’ Jewish roots - in collaboration with Partnership2gether (P2G) and the Israel Centre SA.

The global educational programme is sponsored by Beit Hatfutsot - The Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv.

The second of the 50 global Diaspora winners is Josh Goldberg of King David Linksfield. His mom, Tarryn, who will be accompanying him to Israel in June, said his success in the data mining of Beit Hatfutsot’s database, really helped the family follow their roots. Some of the names were known to them, but not how they all fitted in.

“It was sad to find out things like information on my father’s close family members who didn’t survive the Holocaust,” Tarryn said, adding that it had still been a great experience for the whole family in finding both roots and branches of their family tree.

“My mom was one of 10 siblings, says Tarryn. “I don’t think she knew that, because her mom died when she was very young and the family was split up.” Her mom had been brought up by an aunt.

The whole family had been enthralled and got involved, says Tarryn, whose younger son Adam, 10, did the collage.

Linksfield runners-up were twins Judd and Tyler Sandler. Their mom, Lauren, said the twins had a good foundation to work on as her parents “had started putting together family trees”. Her dad had gone back six generations.

Despite these, says Lauren, having the Jewish database, helped find a lot that the grandparents had



Leah Meyerowitz built a grand piano out of pizza boxes and called her project: My Grand Family. “I used the keys to represent each branch of the family,” she said.

not known about. Lauren found out there had been other twins in the family. The project lived on the family’s dining room table over an extended period of time and, after a party, they named remaining helium-filled balloons for each new patriarch they found.

“I have to say that it rekindled something in my whole family - and all our friends,” says Lauren. She tells an amusing story about when one of the balloons started deflating, one of the twins said he wondered if the long-dead but new-found patriarch (the balloon was named after) “would make it through the night!”

P2G co-ordinator at the Israel Centre, Taryn Gingell, told Jewish Report: “Every child was enriched by the experience of exploring their roots and we are hoping that other Jewish day schools from around the country will participate next year.”

About the competition

Two winners were selected from each participating school. They were

each videoed showing their projects and the six videos sent to Israel to participate in the 2017 international contest.

Leah and Joshua, accompanied by their mothers, will now join the other 48 winners, to take part in the two-day celebration to be held at Beit Hatfutsot in June. There, Leah and Joshua will unveil their winning entries to thousands at the museum, as well to a global audience.

The “My Family Story” competition was introduced to South Africa last year. Sarah Rosenthal was a winner from South Africa then. She says the competition captivated the Jewish world. She was among 155 institutions and over 20 000 Jewish students from 28 countries who participated last year.

Israel Centre shaliach, Aviad Sela, sums it up: “It’s a project that connects thousands of people around the world.” Every single parent and child said that they saw it as meaningful, says Sela.



Josh Goldberg worked around well-known images of piles of eye-glasses at concentration camps. He made a cabinet of old glasses, each representing a branch of his family tree.

Beliebers lose their faith

HOWARD SACKSTEIN

When the British rock band Queen performed on stage, it was a staggering display of grit, sweat and energy. Zanzibari-born Freddy Mercury would throw his perspiration-soaked towels and outlandish costume accessories into the crowd, driving fans into an ecstatic state of euphoric frenzy.



Justin Bieber

Picture: Alon Skuy/The Times

By the end of every show, each member of the audience recognised that Mercury had surrendered every part of himself to the crowd. The Justin Bieber Purpose Tour was not that show! More than a performance of the band Queen, Justin Bieber at The FNB Stadium in Soweto, this past Sunday, was more like the British Queen - she arrives, she struts around, she waves, she leaves, but the bottom line is, she doesn't do much. Bieber arrived in South Africa after his second set of concerts in Hayarkon Park in Tel Aviv. During his latest concert in Israel, a religious woman, three weeks overdue, gave birth during the show. Bieber and his Jewish manager, Scooter Braun, toured Israel together,

posting Instagram pictures of himself and Bieber taking helicopter tours of Israel and swimming in the Dead Sea. Braun who discovered Bieber on YouTube when the waiflike Canadian superstar was only 12, met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and wrote: "Such an incredible week. Although passions run high in this region, I walked away knowing that

Israel is a beautiful and open society. "Great food, great music, great innovation and great people. As the grandson of Holocaust survivors, I know the importance of the State where the Jewish people can forever be safe." During Bieber's first tour of Israel in 2011, he commissioned a Hebrew tattoo on his left ribcage which says "Yeshua", translated into English as Jesus. A number of Bieber's tattoos are religious in nature; Justin is a devout Christian. Scooter Braun revealed in 2010 that, for luck, Bieber reads the Shema before he goes on stage. "First he says a Christian prayer, then he says the Shema," says Braun. "Justin heard me pray, he gets why I do it and now he does the same."

Tens of thousands of Johannesburgers rushed the stage in the freezing cold and frigid rain at the weekend, to watch Bieber's second appearance in the City of Gold. Amid a staggering display of lasers, pyrotechnics and lighting which flayed across the misty arena, an understated Bieber arrived on stage in a nondescript tracksuit to underwhelm his audience with a lacklustre performance. Bieber who successfully transitioned from a teen idol to a serious musician with his 2015 album "Purpose", is a master musician, who clearly did not want to spend the night with his South African fans. One of the few interactions between the bored superstar and his audience, was when Biebs asked his fans to stop throwing light wands at him. Strutting around the stage, the occasional dance move with his high energy athletic dancers and picking up a guitar, was simply not enough to make this more than a pedestrian performance. Bieber ambled around the stage aimlessly and purposelessly. He appeared bored with both his audience and his performance. Absent from the concert was the sparkle and magic that has made him the most popular entertainer of his generation. One of Bieber's best songs of the evening was his massive hit "Sorry", which has been watched more than 2,5 billion times on YouTube. Is it too late now to say sorry? 'Cause I'm missing more than just your body, oh Is it too late now to say sorry? Yeah, I know-oh-oh, that I let you down Is it too late to say I'm sorry now? Sadly for Bieber, the answer from the crowd was evident: Yup, it's too late to say sorry, the Beliebers have lost faith.

Aimeè stimulating debate through theatre

PETER FELDMAN

Johannesburg actress and playwright Aimeè Goldsmith is determined to stimulate debate on a range of social issues through her work. Only in her 20s, she is already leaving her mark on the local theatrical landscape with thought-provoking productions on issues from war to social injustice. Among these was her recent "Cheers to Sarajevo", which she co-wrote and in which she played a Bosnian woman during the war. However, in her latest offering, Ask Walter, she wanted to "create a more light-hearted piece, something fresh." Ask Walter, which opens this week at Auto & General Theatre on the Square in Sandton was conceived, by Goldsmith in 2010 when she was in final year drama at Wits University. After Cheers to Sarajevo, she returned to the drawing board with Ask Walter and began writing a new script for it with her fiancé, Zee Ntuli, a filmmaker, director and writer. Goldsmith also directs the play. "We knew we wanted to keep the character of Walter from the first draft," she told Jewish Report, "We then came up with a basic premise and storyline. From there we auditioned actors, three of whom were in the original cast. "We wanted the characters' voices to be authentic and therefore we embarked on a workshop process." The lead character Walter, is a psychology major who dropped out and then miraculously landed his own TV talk show. He is incompetent and out of his depth, but he knows how to bluff. However, the situation spirals out of control when the show's first guest arrives. The comedy features Jeremiah Mtonga, Ricci Lee Kalish, Arthur Bongani Zith, James Reynolds and Denel

Honeyball. Writing plays is not an easy task, Goldsmith admits, and she says she finds it a daunting and sometimes lonely process. "I am inspired by interesting characters, usually ordinary people in extraordinary situations, the condition of the human psyche and of course history, hence Cheers to Sarajevo, and my upcoming project Anochi - a piece about the Holocaust. "We are at an exciting time in the development of South African theatre. Places like Theatre on the Square are willing to produce new cutting-edge work. That is what South Africa needs, fresh new voices as well as seeing itself as part of a greater whole, to tell stories about the world, and avoid being an insular industry. "I've been acting for 14 years and started at the Johannesburg Youth Theatre under Joyce Levinsohn. I performed in a number of productions there until I matriculated. At King David, my drama teacher, Clara Taub, instilled in me a passion for theatre." Goldsmith is also working with a group of professors from Ottawa in Canada on a research project about women in genocide. "This is aimed at encouraging women to speak about war rape experiences in order to seek justice and healing. "I will be working on the Yugoslav wars and the genocide in Bosnia with Dr Tatjana Taskeva. "As the 'born free' generation in South Africa, our responsibility is to honour the freedom Struggle and its heroes by attempting to forge a new future that embraces our diversities. It is important that we don't romanticise our past and forget its destruction." Ask Walter runs at Auto & General Theatre on the Square until June 4.

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Walls, walls, walls: the spirit of the day



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

Two presidents who excel in shamelessness, loom over South African Jews’ minds: the United States’ Donald Trump and South Africa’s Jacob Zuma. Both are unpredictable, of questionable ethics, arrogant and cannot admit they are wrong; neither are very intelligent and both are damaging their countries.

When Trump arrives in Israel next Monday after visiting Saudi Arabia and before going to the Vatican - his trip encompasses key centres of Islam, Judaism and Christianity - he enters a minefield that has stymied the dreams of previous US presidents to go down historically as having ended the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Trump touts himself as the ultimate deal-maker. Does he have a policy or is he winging it? Does he favour a two-state solution, or will he give West Bank settlers the carte blanche he implied during his campaign which led far-right Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett - who opposes a Palestinian state - to proclaim: “The Palestinian flag has been lowered from the flagpole” and Culture Minister Miri Regev to declare jubilantly: “Obama is history, now we have Trump!”

They may be disappointed. Last week a senior member of the US delegation making preparations for Trump’s visit, outraged Israelis by saying Jerusalem’s Western Wall - the Kotel - is “not your territory, it’s part of the West Bank”.

Although the White House said it was unauthorised, tempers ran high. Trump after all believes in walls: he wants to build them around America to keep Mexicans and other “undesirables” - such as Muslims - out.

His arrival coincides with the 50-year anniversary of Israel’s Six Day War victory over invading Arab armies and the dismantling of the wall which split Jerusalem for 19 years.

The war’s consequences have divided Jews worldwide. Many on the right believe the victory was G-d-inspired; others on the left, while celebrating Israel’s survival, see

it as the beginning of the bitter Palestinian occupation, which has even resulted in Israel building a long wall separating it from the West Bank to prevent terrorism.

Israel won the war but has yet to win the peace, in contrast to the Berlin Wall’s falling in 1989 which reunited Germany.

Trump seems an unlikely person to bring resolution. But with such a maverick, no-one knows what may emerge.

At home, South Africans are trying to build a different kind of wall - a legal one - to hold off Zuma’s bizarre behaviour and prevent the country’s decline into another African kleptocracy like Zimbabwe.

Clearly the president has gone rogue and no longer cares what citizens or ANC members think of him. Meanwhile, a South African equivalent of the Arab Spring threatens to erupt as extreme poverty and inequality become too much for the masses to bear while political leaders luxuriate in expensive mansions at state expense.

There are spots of hope. Such as Monday’s fascinating Constitutional Court debate over whether the coming no-confidence motion against Zuma in parliament should be conducted by secret ballot, as opposition parties want.

This would allow ANC members who oppose Zuma, to vote freely without fear of recrimination. The Concourt remains a fiercely independent bastion of democracy - a legal wall against Zuma’s abuse of his position. Will it hold?

Both Trump and Zuma see their countries’ constitutions as an inconvenience rather than a jewel. Both recently fired literally overnight very senior public figures for what seems like selfish reasons - Trump fired FBI head James Comey, apparently for pursuing an investigation of Trump’s links to the Russians; Zuma fired respected South African Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan who was holding the fort against the economy’s collapse, but was blocking Zuma’s personal ambitions. Opposition to both men is rising and may eventually bring both of them down.

Building and dismantling walls is part of the game. The implications are huge.

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

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Sticking to our guns on Israel

We are currently experiencing one of those waves of anti-Israel commentary that occur from time to time in our media. One of the topics that have gained a fair amount of traction is the hunger strike by convicted Palestinian terrorists in Israeli jails.



Above Board
Jeff Katz
National Chairman

We have also seen the appearance of a number of overtly partisan opinion pieces condemning the creation of Israel and the supposed swing towards moderation by Hamas.

The Board, working together with the SAZF, has devoted a great deal of effort to countering this bias, arranging for responses - usually written by members of our staff - to appear in the relevant publication or releasing press statements presenting the Israeli perspective when required.

In the environment in which we live, it is inevitably an uphill battle, but our voice is being heard on a regular basis and the other side is certainly not having everything its own way.

Our South African Jewish heritage

There will always be times when we are called upon to respond to attacks on our deeply-held Jewish loyalties and beliefs. This must never, however, be allowed to interfere with our living a full, committed Jewish life, whether in the religious, Zionist, cultural or other such fields.

While upholding the safety and civil rights of SA Jewry is the central mandate of the SAJBD, our work is not exclusively reactive and defensive. We also involve ourselves in a range of heritage and education-related initiatives, sometimes independently, at other times in collaboration with our affiliate organisations.

Our members regularly speak at

communal gatherings, we have a weekly ChaiFM show on topics of Jewish interest hosted by Charisse Zeifert and our journal, Jewish Affairs, is acknowledged to be South Africa’s leading Jewish historical, cultural and current affairs journal.

Most recently, as reported last week, we partnered with the SA Jewish Museum in bringing the acclaimed “Goldene Medina” exhibition to Johannesburg.

Important though it is not to allow negative sentiment against our community to impact on the way we conduct

ourselves as Jews, a note of caution should be sounded. Standing up for who we are does not mean neglecting to take necessary and sensible precautions in the way that we conduct ourselves in the public realm.

This relates in particular to how we use online communications. Community members need to be constantly aware that whatever they post on the social media and other online platforms, is thereby placed in the public domain, accessible to anyone who might try to use such information to cause harm to them or to the Jewish community at large.

In addition to possible acts of anti-Semitism, this may involve attempted fraud, sexual grooming and other such dangers. We therefore need to be very circumspect about the kind of information that we post online, whether personal or community-related.

Additionally, we should decide who we want to have access to what we publish, and implement the necessary safeguards to prevent other Internet users from doing so.

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

This column is paid for by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

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

Letters

PARTS OF BIBLICAL ‘REDEMPTION’ ARE WITH US

Chabad has launched a new course called “Survival of a Nation”. I attended the first lecture, run by Rabbi Ari Kievman, which explores the incredible, miraculous journey through the history of our people and homeland.

Rabbi Kievman gave us 90 minutes of inspirational words, describing the Divine history and destiny of Eretz Yisrael. I have been associated with Chabad for almost 30 years and have always been under the impression that they are not overenthusiastic about aliyah until the arrival of Mashiach. Rabbi Kievman’s first lecture dispelled my opinion, until he mentioned that in spite of all the achievements - both physical and spiritual - made by Israelis, living there is still like living in the exile. He stated that until the Temple is rebuilt and Mashiach arrives,

Israel will still be a state of exile.

Speaking to many Chabadniks who share the view that Israel is still exile, I understand why they do not encourage aliyah.

In my opinion, any Torah leader in the Diaspora who agrees that Israel has flourished tremendously since its rebirth in 1948, in spite of all the wars and setbacks, but still insists that it is still “exile”, is doing a great disservice to the thousands of young Jewish boys and girls who might be contemplating aliyah. How can anyone say that the ingathering of the exiles now taking place - from 600 000 in 1948 to seven million at present - is not the beginning of the process of geulah (redemption), but that we are still in galut?

Choni Davidowitz
Golden Acres, Johannesburg

SIMPLISTIC DONALD TRUMP A COLOSSAL CASE OF BUYER’S REMORSE

President Donald Trump isn’t an idiot; he just talks like one. One analysis, citing “a cramped simplistic vocabulary, found that Trump talks just below a sixth-grade reading level”.

His followers, embedded with the intellectual level of a can of sardines, are intoxicated by his incendiary language, as they see him as the saviour of America’s forgotten men and women.

The forgotten are angry white voters who from day one refused to accept Barack Obama, a black man, as president of the United States.

Trump understood the raw emotions of his followers and used a litany of linguistic contrivances to exploit their prejudices to the fullest. One merely has to look back on his campaign of relentless

deception, to undermine the legitimacy of the nation’s first black president.

Was it the cynical start of his campaign for president to curry favour with the missing white voters from elections in 2008 and 2012?

As far as his followers are concerned, Trump can do no wrong, despite his blatant anti-truth-telling shrouded in a mix of repetitive short sentences, characterised by empty adverbs and adjectives.

Trump comes across as spiteful, vengeful, arrogant, boastful, naive, and a serial prevaricator. He doesn’t fit the mould of a normal president - what you see is what you get.

Since the presidential election, the majority of the American electorate believe Trump is bad for

America - a colossal case of buyer’s remorse. And with each passing day, he is proving to be unfit for the job.

There are signs that Trump’s presidency is in trouble. A case in point is the FBI’s criminal investigation into collusion between the Trump campaign and the Russian government to derail Hillary Clinton’s election. It is ongoing despite Trump’s bombshell in firing FBI Director James Comey.

The firing reeks of a cover-up reminiscent of Richard Nixon’s firing of Archibald Cox, the special prosecutor in the Watergate scandal. Will Trump suffer the same fate as Nixon?

Errol Horwitz
Cape Town

OneFamily launches ‘Jerusalem Forever’ project in SA



“Jerusalem Forever” by artist Julian Grabman.

OWN CORRESPONDENT

OneFamily is launching a new project alongside Johannesburg-born artist, former King Davidian Julian Grabman, selling prints of his famous watercolour “Jerusalem Forever”, half the proceeds will go to OneFamily’s programmes, helping victims of terror in Israel.

OneFamily, a global organisation provides ongoing financial, emotional and legal support to victims of terror and their families, including Jews and non-Jews, orphans, bereaved parents, parents of injured children, widows and widowers, young adults, and youth.

OneFamily CEO Chantal Belzberg says she is “very excited” to launch the Jerusalem Forever

watercolour in Johannesburg “as the starting point towards opening doors to OneFamily, and extending the reach of the family from Canada to America and from Israel to the UK and now to South Africa.”

She adds: “This project will allow the community to identify with the aims and goals of OneFamily, to restore the normal daily lives of the victims of devastating terror attacks in Israel. With your continued support we will be able to achieve our objectives.”

About the painting: Painted in Israel in the summer of 2014, overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem, this painting’s imagery is a spiritually symbolic sign of solidarity with Israel’s victims of terror, who depict the full spectrum of emotional colours.

Potential traffic jam on the Kosher Strip

Those who frequent the Kosher Strip in Glenhazel, need to find alternative parking next Monday, because KosherWorld is upgrading its parking. Their parking will be closed to make way for the upgrades, which could result in chaos when the normal traffic flow around peak hours hits the Strip.

New parking booms will be installed at the entrance and exit of the KosherWorld Centre. The tarmac will be resprayed and repainted with new road markings. The new entrance to KosherWorld will in future be on Summerway and the exit will be on Long Avenue.

KosherWorld Centre management apologises for the inconvenience and asks that Yeshiva parents, kosher consumers and restaurant patrons are aware of this so that they can make alternative arrangements.

World News in Brief

Cyclists pay tribute to champ who saved Jews

ROME - Italian and Israeli cyclists are paying tribute this week to Gino Bartali, an Italian cycling champion who saved hundreds of Jews during the Holocaust and in 2013 was recognised as a Righteous Among the Nations.

Bartali, who died in 2000, smuggled in his bicycle frame Resistance messages and false documents for Jews, when riding through central Italy, supposedly as part of his training schedule.

On Tuesday, members of the Israel Cycling Academy, Israel’s first professional cycling team, for the second consecutive year retraced one of Bartali’s routes - the 190 km from Florence to

Assisi. The previous day they joined city officials and Jewish representatives at a commemorative ceremony in Florence.

Italy’s annual Giro d’Italia cycling race, which marks its 100th edition this year, started the day’s ride on Wednesday from in front of a cycling museum dedicated to Bartali in his birthplace, Ponte a Ema, on the outskirts of Florence.

Bartali was a three-time winner of the Giro d’Italia, one of cycling’s Grand Tour races, following a route in stages around the country. (JTA)

Danish teen convicted of planning to bomb school

HOLBAEK - A Danish court has convicted a 17-year-old girl of planning to bomb two schools in Denmark, including a Jewish one, using homemade bombs.

The girl, who was not named in the Holbaek District Court on Tuesday because she is a minor, was convicted of “attempting a terrorist act”, which can carry a life sentence, according to reports. She is scheduled to be sentenced later this week.

A convert to Islam, the teen reportedly expressed sympathies for the Islamic State in posts on social media.

Prosecutors had said she was inspired by the terrorist who killed a volunteer security guard at a Copenhagen synagogue in 2015. (JTA)

Blankets for Africa to warm your heart

CAROLYN STEYN

It was a day of human warmth, generosity, kindness and compassion when “67 Blankets for Nelson Mandela Day” visited three Jewish NGOs. On May 8, hand-knitted and crocheted woollen blankets were delivered to three Chevrah Kadisha organisations, Kadimah, the Junction and Selwyn Segal. Two hundred blankets were distributed to people in need, just before the chilly winter begins.

Each blanket is handmade and donated to worthy recipients in the name of Nelson Mandela and the humanitarian values he stood for. 67 Blankets says every day can be a Nelson Mandela day. The main organisers of 67 Blankets, Carolyn Steyn and her staff and Kevin Friedman, handed out blankets to each recipient at the Chev.

Kadimah and the Junction are protected employment workshops where people have the dignity of doing work in a protected environment. The Chev NGOs cater for both the Jewish community but also reach out to some township areas.

At the Chev function at the Junction, Miriam Merkel from Golden Acres, was honoured for organising numerous blankets. She has a knitting group at Golden Acres, that meets every afternoon to knit blankets. She was honoured as an “Ambassador for 67 Blankets”.

Steyn explains that people who knit are called “Knit Wits for Madiba”.

Each blanket is handmade with love and given with love to keep people warm. Every blanket is different and personally given from one individual to another, which emphasises human kindness, interaction and the uniqueness and value of each human being.

“67 Blankets” was founded three years ago, by Steyn in response to a challenge from Zelda la Grange (Mandela’s former PA) to knit 67 blankets for Nelson Mandela Day. Steyn set up a Facebook group where people quickly pledged to knit. The organisation has grown in strength. This year 30 000 blankets will be distributed to needy recipients in South Africa.



Eighty-six-year-old Golden Acres resident Miriam Merkel, with Kevin Friedman from 67 Blankets for Nelson Mandela, with the blankets they are donating.

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KD Linksfield grade 3s excel internationally



The group of KD Junior Primary Linksfield learners with their certificates that acknowledge their remarkable achievement in the 2016 International Benchmark Tests.

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Over a third of King David Junior Primary Linksfield’s grade three learners, who wrote the 2016 International Benchmark Tests, achieved “Certificates of Distinction”. The average scale

scores reflect that King David exceeds international standards in English and maths. The assessment report provides information about the performance of the school in comparison to other schools in South Africa and internationally.

Junior Council award for giving back

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Johannesburg Junior Council environmental committee chairperson Jaymee Gobetz – a Crawford College Sandton pupil – won the “Most Dedicated Chairperson” award for her role. Hers is one of five portfolios on the council and her committee was also recognised for the successful “Walk for Woodrock” event, in which they single-handedly raised R60 000 for Woodrock Animal Rescue’s clinic dream project. The environmental committee’s slogan was: “Driven by passion for the environment and all living things”. The Johannesburg Junior Council (JJC) is a non-profit organisation and NGO that consists of inspired leaders in grade 11 from around 40 schools around Johannesburg. Jaymee says that she was privileged to work with such an enthusiastic, loving, warm group of people who were totally dedicated to the committee. She also made special mention of her co-councillor, Amy van Druten, who was always extremely driven and committed to the environmental committee.



Lag B’Omer at Sandton Sinai

AMY JAFFE

Sandton Sinai Primary School celebrated Lag B’Omer with a fire dancer and by roasting marshmallows on the braai. Everyone had a marvellous time.



Georgia Ross (grade 3); Amber Ross (grade 3); Keira Sorour (grade 4); Sarah Orkin (grade 4); and Kami Lowenstein (grade 4).

Yeshiva’s Saul and Aviel soar at International Bible Quiz

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Two grade 10 Yeshiva College learners excelled in the recent International Bible Quiz in Israel. Saul Joseph achieved 9th place in the Bible Quiz, which took place on Yom Ha’atzmaut, on national television in Israel and Aviel Abrams achieved first place in the Diaspora round of the Quiz - an exceptional achievement! These learners went through multiple rounds of the National Bible Quiz competition in South Africa before reaching the final rounds in Israel. Following the preliminary rounds in Israel, Saul made it into the international finals, comprising four representatives from Israel and 12 from around the world, competing for the ultimate Bible Chattan/Kallah title. Aviel won the Diaspora round of the International Quiz, where he competed against the next top 16 participants from the countries outside of Israel. Both Yeshiva College learners have brought incredible nachas to their families, to their school, their community and indeed their country.



Sydenham tots bask in the warmth of a bonfire

SUE BENJAMIN

Sydenham Hebrew Pre-Primary School littlies celebrated Lag B’Omer with a bonfire and a “red-hot” Shabbos table at school last Friday. Everyone dressed in the warm, fiery colours of red, orange and yellow. The children heard the story about Rabbis Akiva and Shimon Bar Yochai and the miracles that took place on Lag B’Omer. A bonfire was lit and the kids danced around the fire, singing songs about treating each other with love and respect. The highlight of the morning was when everyone was encouraged to hug a friend in a show of unity and friendship before sitting down to enjoy roast potatoes around the fire.



Getting ready for the celebrations are Sam Meisel; Jaryd Bass; Tyler Michel; and Kobi Saloner.

Friday (May 19)

- Mina Lopato Nursery School is having its Open Day today. Come visit the school, on the premises of the Greenside Shul, anytime between 08:15 and 12:30. Come and meet new principal Leanne Uptier Beer and her staff. Contact: (011) 447-8028 or info@minalopato.co.za
- UZLC hosts Dr Judy Jaye on “Pass the Salt Please and Say No More”. Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45-14:00. Contact: Gloria 072-127-9421 or (011) 485-4851.

Sunday (May 21)

- Bet David hosts a “Talk and Tea” social afternoon with guest speaker Mordechai Perlov. No charge. Venue: Bet David, 3 Middle Road, Morningside. Time: 15:00. RSVP/enquiries: Sharon admin2@betdavid.org.za
- 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.

- Cape Town Holocaust Centre hosts the launch of the book “East West Street” by Philippe Sands. Venue: 88 Hatfield St, Gardens. Time: 15:00. Light refreshments will be served. RSVP: Dianne (021) 462-5553 or admin@holocaust.org.za
- Second Innings hosts a talk by Judge Robert Nugent on “Courts, Constitutions and Cabin Boys” at The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres, 85 George Ave, Sandringham. R20 member, R40 visitors, including tea and light refreshments. Contact: Linda Fleishman (011) 532-9701.

WHAT'S ON

Wearing slippers to aid kids suffering from life-threatening diseases



Photo: Jerthro Levy

NURIT JOSELOWSKY

King David Linksfield participated in Slipper Day on May 12 by wearing slippers to school, to contribute towards fulfilling the dreams of children not capable of having a “normal life”.

Through Slipper Day – a fundraising project of the Reach for a Dream Foundation – the school raised over R7 000 for Reach for a Dream. The founder of Reach for a Dream, Mervyn Serebro, shared an inspirational story with the school.

Reach for a Dream enriches the lives of children between the ages of three and 18, suffering from life-threatening diseases, by making dreams come true and as a result, distracting them from the needles, medication and hospital environment. These young children are under extreme pressure to deal with these medical issues and are in desperate need of all the encouragement they can get.

Slipper Day, a fundraiser for Reach for a Dream, encouraged learners and teachers to buy a R10 wristband and wearing slippers to school on that day.

Kevin Klaff; Jamey Wolpe; Nurit Joselowsky; Lorraine Srage; Julia Sotiranakos; Melissa Green; and Mervyn Serebro at King David High Linksfield Slipper Day.

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Wearing furry footwear for a very good cause



Girls from KDVP Primary School, show off their furry footwear.

Photo supplied

OWN CORRESPONDENT

King David Primary School Victory Park, joined the Reach for a Dream Foundation and supported Slipper Day on Friday, May 12.

This was a fun and easy mitzvah for the school to support children fighting life-threatening illnesses. The children turned up in all types of furry footwear and enjoyed a festive spirit at the school.

WHAT'S ON

Monday (May 22)

- Yad Aharon & Michael hosts a ladies event, “Shavuot: Mystical & Physical with guest speakers Yocheved Bacher and Sara Evian and an opening address by Rebbetzin Gina Goldstein. Venue: HOD Hall. Time: 19:00. Cheesecake and Jozi Blue coffees will be served. Awesome prizes to be won, as well as a cheesecake. Cost: R150 (incl raffle ticket to both draws), R50 for students and bobbas. Proceeds towards Shavuot food hampers for 550 recipient families. RSVP: Jody (011) 485-2076 or Jodye@yadaharon.co.za
- UJW hosts Franco Broccardo on “Caesar Crossed the Rubicon and Italy was Born”, a concise survey of the first 2 066 years. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 10:00. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office (011) 648-1053.
- JWBS hosts “The Agony and the Ecstasy of Speaking on Holocaust Remembrance Day in Germany” with Marlene and

Wednesday (May 24)

- In the ORT2TALK series, Sivan Finhasi of Sivana Diamonds, discusses: “Are Diamonds an Investment or Just a Girl’s Best Friend?” Venue: ORT SA, 44 Central St Houghton. Time: 18:30. Donation: R100. (A pair of earrings to be won.) Contact: (011) 728-7154.

Friday (May 26)

- Shalom Masorti Seniors Club meets on the last Friday of each month. Tea will be served, and there will be a selection of board games to play, cards and of course the usual convivial, friendly atmosphere. Dave Rappoport will speak about “The Lewandowski Chorale” and the recent concert attended in Berlin. Contact: Esther (011) 485-5619, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday mornings.

Lael Bethlehem. Venue: Waverley Shul Hall. Time: 19:30. Information: (011) 485-5232.

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Taking water polo to the Maccabiah

JACK MILNER

David Nivison is probably one of those rare water polo players who did not come to the sport through swimming. But no matter how he got there, this 17-year-old now plays for South Africa and is the captain of this year’s Maccabi water polo team.

“I attended Reddam House in Constantia and they had encouraged pupils to play water polo,” explained the Capetonian. He came to water polo from other land-based team sports, having been a great goalkeeper, but not a big fan of swimming.

“Anyway, as a goalkeeper, I don’t have to do much swimming.

“It’s a great team sport. I’ve met so many people and made a lot of friends all over the world. It’s a sport that keeps you fit and active and that’s why I enjoy it.”

David now attends Bishops in Cape Town and is in grade 11 and in the past few years water polo has taken him to places as diverse as Hungary, Malta and most recently, the Czech Republic.

David has excelled to such an extent that he is currently a member of the South African national under-17 squad. The



South African under-17 goalkeeper David Nivison keeps another ball out of the goal during water polo action.

South Africans have been invited over the past couple of years to participate in the EU Nations Cup. Last year the tournament took place in Malta and the South Africans lost in the final. This year they came home from the Czech Republic as gold medallists.

“I don’t know why we get invited to the tournament,” said David. “We are the only non-European Union country to be there. But we are always seen as one of the favourites. But this is Tier 2 of the competition, so we don’t come up against the really strong countries.”

The recent tournament was played at Brno in the Czech Republic and on their way to the final, the South Africans beat Wales 13-1, Lithuania 17-6 and then beat Switzerland 13-10.

In the semi-final they had to beat the home team, which they did, 12-6. The final was against England who had also not lost a match in the competition. The South Africans went on to beat England 8-6 in a hard-fought final, to grab gold in the 12-nation Brno tournament.

It was a tight encounter all the way through and it was only in the final two chukkas that the South Africans edged ahead, with scores of 3-2 and 2-1.

Now David is about to face a very different sort of test as captain of the South African Maccabi water polo team that will compete in Israel in July. South African water polo teams have an excellent record at the Maccabiah and in fact they won gold medals at the first four events held after the establishment of the State of Israel.

Last year David had his first trip to Israel to visit his brother who was studying in Tel

Aviv. “I loved it and I can’t wait to get back there again. I’ve been extremely excited and I just want exams to be over and I’d be in Israel already. I believe it’s like the Olympics.”

The majority of the water polo team are based in Cape Town. “We’ve been training together so we’ve got to know one another well. The balance of the team, I think, are from Johannesburg. I don’t know any of them but I understand they have been practising together as well.

South African water polo teams have an excellent record at the Maccabiah and in fact they won gold medals at the first four events held after the establishment of the State of Israel.

“We will probably have a camp beforehand where all of us will get together. As captain, my first job will be to bring the team together. We will be meeting up in Johannesburg; we will all take the same flight out.”

As far as he knows there will be six countries participating in the event. “I’m not sure who all of them are or how good they are, but I would imagine Hungary and the United States are the teams to beat. They are usually, very good.”

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