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south african Jewish Report

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Photo: Jason Crouse

The community stands together

Generation Sinai at King David
Linksfield. Errol and Melissa Lever
with Jesse and Shayna. See page 16.

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Zuckerberg uses Hebrew prayer to inspire Harvard '17

RON KAMPEAS
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Mark Zuckerberg's commencement speech at Harvard last week was so, well, Zuckerbergish.

Self-deprecating jokes about his awful dating technique? Check.

Self-deprecating references to not having completed Harvard? Check.

Parent-deprecating jokes about their gimlet-eyed view of his success? Check.

A rousing call to the students to commit social justice? Check.

A recitation of the Mi Shebeirach prayer? Ch– Wait, what?

Zuckerberg closed the commencement by saying that he draws strength from the Jewish prayer traditionally used as a plea for healing.

He pronounced its name in Hebrew but did not describe its conventional use. He appeared to cite the translation by Rabbi Drorah Setel of Rochester, New York, set to music by the late composer Debbie Friedman.

“As we sit here in front of Memorial Church I'm reminded of a prayer, Mi Shebeirach, that I say whenever I face a big challenge, that I sing to my daughter thinking of her future when I tuck her in at night,” he said.

“And it goes: ‘May the source of strength, who’s blessed the ones before us, help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing.’ I hope you find the courage to make your life a blessing.”

Zuckerberg also joked about his nebbishy beginnings (ignored because he turned up to his first Harvard class with a T-shirt inside out and backwards) and his meet-cute first encounter with



his wife, Priscilla Chan (whom he described as “the most important person in my life”).

(Was that the rain she wiped from her eyes?)

They met in line for the loo at a party. Convinced he was about to get the Harvard boot (he wasn't), he said: “I’m getting kicked out in three days, so we need to go out on a date quickly.”

He took shots at “The Social Network”, the 2010 movie that chronicled his rise. (“FaceMash”, the prank website he created with other Harvard classmates, was not the basis for Facebook, he said, debunking one of the movie’s assertions.)

He called out his parents for not, perhaps, taking enough pride in his post-college career.

“I swear, getting into Harvard is the thing my parents are most proud of me for,” he said and looked to the audience. “My mom is nodding!”

And he encouraged students to pursue a

“higher purpose”, to “take on big, meaningful projects,” citing as examples combating climate change, addressing education disparities, curing disease and defending democracy.

“Every generation expands the circle of people we consider part of us,” he said, “and in our generation, that includes the whole world.” (JTA)

Shabbat Times this week		
Starts	Ends	
17:05	17:57	Johannesburg
17:27	18:21	Cape Town
16:46	17:39	Durban
17:07	17:59	Bloemfontein
16:58	17:53	Port Elizabeth
16:51	17:45	East London

Parshat Nasso

Tabernacle inauguration offering and priestly blessing

Rabbi Sa’ar Shaked
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Parshat Nasso is the longest of the 54 portions of the Torah, holding a record 176 verses. Many matters are discussed in it, mainly and most lengthy, the inaugural offerings of the “Nessi'im”, the chief heads of the 12 tribes, each bringing a ceremonial offering on behalf of their tribe.

It is a repetitive catalogue, very detailed, making the point that all tribes had contributed equally to the establishment and the initiation ceremony of the Tabernacle; thus it truly belongs to the entire nation.

This reading is also famous because we

use it as a reference point during Chanukah, a festival which echoes the original inauguration ceremonies taking place in our parshah. On each of the eight Chanukah days, we

read from this story.

During the first seven days, we read about two Nessi'im each day, and on the eighth day, which is the “Zot Chanukah” itself, we read the final five in one go.

The clear majority of the commandments described in our parshah, are rooted in the reality of the Tabernacle and the social order of that ancient agricultural society.

Nothing of that order exists as a practical reality among Jews, since the destruction of the Temple. However, there is one exception to this - a very significant one, namely the priestly blessing (Numbers 6:22-27).

Till our days it is still a vibrant, authentic and actual part of our liturgy. It is interesting to witness how, out of hundreds of verses in the Torah which deal with the many details of the Avodat Korbanot, worship through sacrifice, and out of the many matters described in this parshah, only those six verses, sealing Chapter 6 of the book, only

those verses became meaningful and reflective in the religious daily practices of generations of Jews.

It is among the last remnant of the priestly culture and almost the last duties to be fulfilled by people who hold a family tradition of being a “Cohen”, a priest.

The blessing itself is known as “the Triple Blessing”, HaBracha HaMeshuleshet, based on its three lines.

The first one is aimed at bestowing the blessing and to keep it. The commentaries say it refers to the material blessing which enables one the availably to engage with Torah - this and the sustenance of that material blessing.

The second verse leads us to the next level, namely the illumination of Hashem and His merciful love.

Finally, the last line is the upliftment and the eternal blessing of peace, the ultimate quality and attribute of Hashem, as it is said: “Great is the peace that Hashem’s name is peace.”

Right picture but wrong caption
Last week's Parsha Bamidbar in Jewish Report, was written by Rabbi Aharon Rose (correctly pictured) and not by Rabbi Ilan Raanan, as erroneously mentioned in the accompanying caption. We apologise for the error.



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Community unites in prayer and deeds for Hugo

NICOLA MILTZ

A week ago a freak accident involving a young Jewish boy, sent ripples of anguish and unendurable pain throughout pockets of the country, resulting in a groundswell of faith and unity and random acts of kindness.

Warm-hearted Hugo Paluch, 14, of Yeshiva College, went to school last week Friday, with so much to look forward to: his birthday and one of his favourite Jewish holidays - Shavuot - a time of deep spirituality, togetherness and festivity.

His joy was cut short after a catastrophic accident which took place on the busy school playground during the break. Instead of breaking challah around the Shabbos table that night, he was fighting for his life in the Milpark Hospital's intensive care unit.

While on the field, boys were playing with a goal post that had become loose, toppling over, and severely injuring Hugo. It is every parent's worst nightmare to receive "that" call, which changes things forever.

The accident was witnessed by countless children, all helpless and stunned in disbelief. Desperate scenes of early panic and shock ensued as Hatzolah's rescue team attended to the boy's serious injuries.

At the time of going to press shortly before Shavuot, Hugo's condition was described as critical.

In the hours and days following the accident, the heavily traumatised, tight-knit school and shul community, has been left with a profound sense that the world they once knew has slipped away, leaving behind instead a raw vulnerability and sense of loss.

"This is the manifestation of unimaginable fears for us as parents and educators, and we all share in the immense pain of the family and community," said Rabbi Leron Bernstein on behalf of Yeshiva College. With the family's blessing, he spent the Shabbat by Hugo's side.

"The trauma of this event has far-reaching effects, given that we are a close-knit community and our children are all our family," he said

in a letter to parents.

Within minutes of the accident, Hugo's Hebrew name was changed to include Chaim, signifying the seriousness and touch-and-go nature of his condition. With barely a few hours to spare before sunset, the community was galvanised into action. Dozens of WhatsApp groups were created asking people to daven and pray, during candle-lighting, for the complete recovery of Chaim Ze'ev ben Nicole Elizabeth.

Educational psychologist and board member of Yeshiva College, Sheryl Cohen, says this event has been deeply felt by all.

"It touches the most sensitive spot of communal human vulnerability and this fact alone is both unifying and terrifying," she said.

After an agonising weekend children returned to school on Monday.

Support counsellors were brought in to offer group and individual sessions as well as staff debriefing across the campus, catering to a range of ages.

"We are making our way through the student body gradually so as to provide every learner with the appropriate high-quality support," said Rabbi Bernstein in his letter.

He said the school was "pouring immense resources" into providing the necessary care.

Cohen discussed with parents how to support children during a trauma, expressing that there was no right or wrong way.

"It is personal," she said, and elicits a wide-ranging set of responses.

"When this level of trauma occurs, there is an overwhelming sense of helplessness. The human psyche struggles to sustain that level of helplessness. The mind strives to create balance by creating a more powerful feeling. As such we might begin to ponder about "what should have; could have; would have happened..."

She said one might seek this power through "shouting; shaming and blaming".

"One might blame others or even blame oneself ("how can I carry on my day when this is what has happened?") These are negative defence mechanisms, which have a



The challah bake held this week in the name of Hugo Paluch

sense of 'power' but will leave you feeling more vulnerable."

She strongly encouraged parents to allow their children to share their stories and engage on all levels about their feelings and responses to the tragedy.

Describing Hugo, Rav Bernstein said: "He exemplifies the greatest values of Torah, charity and kindness," and he implored the community to "increase in these values in his merit and in the merit of the community as they united in love and in support."

Taking Rabbi Bernstein's words to heart there has been a grassroots movement which has harnessed the community into drawing on every possible reserve in its bid to offer comfort and support to those affected.

Special prayer groups, including at the hospital on Hugo's Hebrew birthday, and lectures by spiritual leaders as well as charity drives and challah bakes in his name, have spread throughout parts of the country.

In one Morningside Tehillim group, at least 50 women - the majority of whom had absolutely no connection to Hugo and his family - gathered to pray in unison for his complete recovery.

One woman who attended Monday night's challah bake said: "Hundreds of people came, we were sharing dough, some were singing songs, others were praying, it was very moving."

Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein said: "I know Hugo Paluch personally and he is an astounding person, a talented young leader who is an activist for good, working on projects to make the world into a better place, and raising funds for many worthy causes.

"Hugo is a very special young man, who brings happiness to his family and all who know him. I know of countless stories of remarkable acts of kindness of his. His parents, Dov and Nicole, are beloved friends to me and my family and to so many others, and our special community's inspiring and united response to this tragic accident is testimony to the greatness of the Paluch family. Our hearts and prayers are with Hugo and his family at this time."

The boys and girls of grade 8 at Yeshiva College, started a blanket drive, aiming to collect 1 800 blankets "as Hugo loves charity" said a Facebook advert for the drive.

"We are helping him do more

in the hope of a fast recovery," it continued.

Parents have followed a special daily "action plan", inspiring children to "Let's make miracles today!" by praying harder, and doing more good deeds in Hugo's merit.

For example on Monday the message read: "When you wake your kids this morning, pray by saying thank you for giving me a new day! A fresh start!"

It encouraged learners to say one blessing out loud during breakfast and shout Amen; and to refrain from bad-mouthing someone - loshon horah - for one hour between 10:00 and 11:00 that day.

On Wednesday the message to parents said: "Let's say nice, kind things today and not complain about the small stuff... make people feel like they matter."

The intensely private family has been comforted by the community's ongoing support and solidarity. Friends close to the family have fiercely guarded their privacy throughout.

Said Cohen: "There is no inoculation for trauma. It's about going through it and the power of unity; the power of prayer, the power of support carries us all."

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Joel Harris 082 926 0287 | Marco 082 048 2644

ON SHOW THIS SUNDAY

Glenhazel – Late R5 Millions
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Joel Harris 082 926 0287 | Marco 082 048 2644

Anti-Semitic vitriol in Facebook comments

PETER FELDMAN

Anti-Semitic vitriol drenched social media channels after the SA Jewish Report broke the story last week of a school play that turned into a real life Nazi drama.

At the centre of the storm was the Holocaust play, “The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas”, put on by King David High School Victory Park, at the Grads One Act Play Festival at Waterstone College on May 18.

Learners from Edenvale High School, a competing high school, began anti-Semitic chants before, during and after the staging.

“We were aware of anti-Semitic and vitriolic comments that appeared at the end of the Eye Witness News (EWN) article on their Facebook page on this topic on Saturday and Sunday,” Wendy Kahn, national director of the Jewish Board of Deputies, said.

“The comments that were made against Jews, were clearly upsetting for our community. On Sunday morning I contacted the EWN webmaster who promptly removed the entire comments section from Facebook, agreeing that ‘many of the comments contravened our comments policy.’

“Furthermore, their comments policy was re-posted with the aim that “future posts about this story do not elicit similar comments. While we are appreciative of the very swift manner in which EWN responded to our complaint, we have written to them for clarity as to their process of moderation, and why they had not picked up this hate speech earlier.

“It is the responsibility of the social media host to ensure that comments do not contain speech that is offensive, hateful and with incitement to violence.”

Katy Katapodis, head of EWN, said: “EWN covered the story of Edenvale High School pupils after it broke last week. We immediately took a decision to close comments on all related articles on the EWN website, mobilise and app due to the sensitivities around the story.”

The articles were also posted to EWN’s social media platforms, where it publishes over 100 posts per day. “On Sunday morning, it was brought to our attention that there were anti-Semitic comments posted on one of our Facebook posts,” said Katapodis.

“We acted immediately by assessing the posts and it soon became clear that the conversation had descended into one which no longer looked at the circumstances of the particular story, with some containing anti-Semitic sentiments which we believe amount to hate speech.

“Due to the vast number of comments and the possibility of more being posted long into the day, a decision was taken to take down the post immediately as it was clear the conversation was not in the spirit of meaningful contributions and it was clearly in contravention of EWN’s comments policy. Furthermore, we posted our comments policy to Facebook to remind our audience of our guidelines.”

She added: “EWN does not condone any commentary - be it on its social media platforms or website - which is racist (including offensive comments based on ethnicity and nationality), sexist, intolerant of any religious beliefs, derogatory, hate speech or incites violence. The involvement of our users in moderating conversations is something we value,” she added.

News 24 were contacted for comment regarding the allowing of anti-Semitic comments on their site and whether they had closed down all the comments posted on it, but they did not respond at the time of going to press.

Edenvale headmaster apologises for anti-Semitic incident



PETER FELDMAN

In the aftermath of a heated anti-Semitic incident at a school play festival in Johannesburg on May 18, the headmaster of the school said to be behind the unacceptable behaviour, has issued an unequivocal apology.

Dr Larry Harmer, principal of Edenvale High School, sent a letter to King David Victory Park High School principal Andrew Baker, stating: “On behalf of Edenvale High I apologise unequivocally for any offence caused.”

The incident to which he refers happened on May 18 when King David Victory Park teenagers were participating in a one-act play competition with other schools at Waterstone College in Kibler Park.

They were taunted by Edenvale High learners, who were using Nazi salutes and “Heil Hitler” chants. King David learners had been performing a poignant play about children in a Nazi concentration camp, based on the novel “The Boy in the Striped Pajamas”.

On Monday an urgent meeting was convened to address the matter, attended by Harmer, Baker and two members of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Wendy Kahn, its national director, and Prof Karen Milner, its deputy chairman. From all accounts the meeting had been positive and constructive.

Initially the Edenvale headmaster put out a statement, that was seen on the Edenvale High School Facebook page, that claimed it was only one Edenvale learner involved and that the reaction had been blown out of all proportion.

However, following further discussion, he changed his mind and sent the unequivocal apology.

“We have agreed to work with the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre on an education and sensitivity programme at the school to prevent further incidents of this sort,” wrote Harmer.

“I have received the suggestions on the best way to move forward and believe we need to focus on resolving the situation.”

He added: “I place on record that I, and Edenvale High School, strongly condemn any anti-Semitic or racial behaviour of any kind. We have a zero tolerance policy towards this type of behaviour.”

Harmer said he had done his own investigation and that the boy, who was the main protagonist from his school, showed “immediate remorse straight after the incident when he realised it was a hurtful and inappropriate thing to have done and apologised several times, pleading that it had not been meant in a malicious or hateful way”.

Baker issued a statement after the meeting, saying it was “unfortunate that, in the 10 days that have elapsed, there has been much that has incorrectly been reported in the media that has magnified the incident to a disproportionate scale”.

He added that he was satisfied with the outcomes at the meeting and feels strongly

that there is a “genuine attempt being made by Edenvale High School to address the problem with integrity”.

Commenting on the meeting, Kahn told Jewish Report: “We met to clarify what took place and discuss the way forward. It was confirmed that at least one Edenvale learner had made offensive comments at the event, for which he has since expressed sincere remorse.”

Kahn also said she believed the meeting was constructive and they were in particular encouraged by the principal’s commitment for his learners to participate in tolerance and sensitivity training with the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre.

“Furthermore, we appreciated his condemnation of anti-Semitism and apology regarding the incident.”

Kahn stressed that while chants of “Heil Hitler” and similar acts of identification with the ideology of Nazism were unacceptable under any circumstances, they were especially hurtful when the intention was to bait and insult Jewish people.

She added: “As was well known, Nazi tyranny had resulted in the systematic mass murder of some three-quarters of European Jewry during the Second World War. For that reason, Jews found it deeply hurtful, and indeed threatening, to be confronted with crass taunts expressing support for the Nazi ideology.

“The SAJBD welcomes Edenvale High’s unequivocal condemnation of the incident. It further appreciates the willingness shown by the school to implement appropriate measures aimed at sensitising its learners to the importance of avoiding behaviour likely to cause hurt and offence, whether on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity or any other such grounds.”



Pictures from the performance of The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

Photos: Renos Spanoudes

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Child sexual abuse also in Jewish community

NICOLA MILTZ

Child sexual abuse is happening in the Jewish community.

“Anyone who denies this is being naive,” says Rebbetzin Wendy Hendler of Koleinu SA, an organisation offering a helpline for victims of abuse in the Jewish community.

“The numbers are worrying. It happens in our schools, it happens at our shuls, the prevalence of abuse is concerning,” she said.

According to Hendler, worldwide statistics reveal that one in four girls and one in seven boys are victims of abuse. “We have absolutely no reason to believe that it is any different in the Jewish community.”

This comes in the wake of a flood of horrifically disturbing media reports concerning incidents of rape, murder and abuse against women and children in South Africa.

“The Jewish community is not immune,” says Tova Goldstein, head of abuse programmes at the Chevrah Kadisha’s Social Services department.

“The increase may actually be a reflection of the number of incidents being reported,” she said

One of the more disturbing things to come to light is the incidence of child on child abuse.

“There are many cases of child on child abuse. It is usually perpetrated by an older child on a younger sibling, cousin or friend. And sometimes it can be violent.”

These perpetrators are acting out “learnt behaviours” due to having been exposed to abuse themselves.

“They too need help,” said Hendler.

There have been cases involving children as young as five and seven performing oral sex and it is unknown whether this is due to Internet accessibility or child abuse.

Another area of concern surrounds shul safety. In several incidents, children are being abused at shuls during Shabbos when parents are either davening or enjoying the brocha after the service.

“Children have a lot of freedom during shul to run around unsupervised. An unlocked room on the campus or shul grounds is an open invitation for some child to get molested.”

Koleinu will be rolling out an extensive “Shul Abuse Policy”, which it hopes will gain the support of rabbis countrywide.

The policy will cover every aspect of the

shuls’ functioning, including things like thorough staff background checks, having a roster of adults to supervise children during services, making sure there is a visual line of sight at all times, ensuring youth directors know about appropriate social media protocols.

“It is inappropriate for a youth director to WhatsApp a child individually; this could be a way of grooming a vulnerable child,” said Hendler.

Said Goldstein: “Our biggest aim is to get the community into gear, to accept that this is happening, instead of sweeping it under the carpet and to ask what measures it can take to prevent it from happening.”

Hendler says that while local organisations involved in combating abuse are fully aware of



this tragic, social reality, the community finds it hard to believe.

“On the one hand we encounter reactions of utter shock and horror. There is such a blind spot, a total inability to even conceptualise and believe that this is happening under our noses.”

While on the other hand, she said, parents are desperate for information and skills to empower their children to keep safe.

“Parents are so thirsty for knowledge because they are hearing things. Sexual abuse is an epidemic worldwide and has become part of everybody’s experience,” she said.

Numerous workshops, presentations to teachers and parents and talks to small groups in the community, at people’s homes are becoming common place.

“Training and education play a big role,” said Hendler.

“Stranger danger is a myth. In 90 per cent of cases the abuser is someone close to the child, a family member or friend of the family, who is loved and respected by the child.

“He is someone who has groomed the family over time and now enjoys access to the child and privacy, two essential things he needs to perpetrate his crimes. When you look at him you would have no idea he is a paedophile.”

Both Hendler and Goldstein are hopeful, though, that the situation will improve over time, so long as communication and information channels are available, unlike in the past when the entire subject was taboo.

“People are becoming more aware, children

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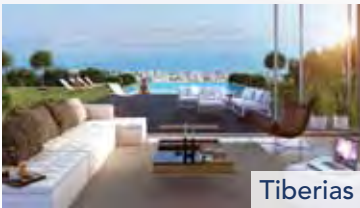
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South African Jewish Report

The closeness of our community in times of trouble

Shavuot has been described as a “marriage between G-d and the Jewish people” and it is uncanny how it is specifically around this time that the Jewish community is being reminded of how important we are to one another as a community, and of our “otherness”.

In the first case, I am referring to how the community has rallied around the family of the young Yeshiva College grade eight boy, Hugo Paluch, who was involved in a freak accident on the playground at school.

And secondly, I refer to the rabid response online and on social media to the story of the anti-Semitic incident involving the King David Victory Park thespians.

Community pulling together

What happened to Hugo was every parent’s worst fear. They sent their beloved child to school healthy and well, probably studied with him during Generation Sinai, leaving a healthy happy child at school. Then, shortly thereafter they heard about his horrific accident. Their pain is so very personal and nobody can really imagine just what they are going through. However, their pain is all of our pain, in that he is a Jewish boy, just like our own.

For many, this incident would challenge their belief, but instead it has created a fervour of prayer for Hugo and mitzvot in his name. The Johannesburg community has joined hands in doing whatever is in their power, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, to help heal this child and support his family.

There are times when people in our community can be hurtful and unkind, but when we stand together in support and love, we do it like no other community. As desperately sad as I feel for this family, I am proud to be a part of this community as I witness this standing together.

By the time of this newspaper going to print on Tuesday (shortly before Shavuot started), Hugo was fighting for his survival. We at the Jewish Report stand by the community in praying for a Shavuot miracle.

Anti-Semitism

Following last week’s lead about the anti-Semitic incident King David scholars experienced at the theatrical competition, other media picked up on the story.

The hateful anti-Semitic comments that followed the stories online on websites and on Facebook, made the incident itself look tame.

While we were all disturbed by the actual event, the hatred towards Jewish people that initially flowed in those comments, was horrifying.

I know that those people writing comments are trolls and clearly are just ugly hateful people needing an outlet for their venom and Jews, in this instance, were a soft target. I am also aware that people don’t censor their thoughts when they use social media and other online platforms.

However, I am astounded and horrified by the base, threatening and overwhelmingly evil thoughts people have about us.

I guess we go through our lives interacting with friends and colleagues who are mostly likeminded and, if they are not, they don’t share their hateful thoughts - if aimed at us - with us.

My question is: Is there a rise in anti-Semitism in South Africa? Has it always been like this, but some of us - like me - were blissfully unaware?

The flipside of this is, once again, that the community rallied together in support of one another. My belief is that we all need to stick together and make sure these anti-Semitic people don’t get away with it and are educated to the facts about the truth of their sentiments.

What we need to be very clear about, is that we do not stoop to their level. Instead, we must rise above it and deal with it in our integrity and with dignity.

We may not be a comparatively huge community, but we are a powerful one and we all need to be as one against anti-Semitism and any harm that may befall one or more members of our community. We need to do it with dignity and pride.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



PAULA SLIER

As if Israel doesn’t have enough problems, here’s another one to add to the list. What to do when more than 1 000 Palestinian prisoners inside your jails go on hunger strike - which they did some 40 days ago in a nationwide protest over conditions behind Israeli bars.

The strike ended this past weekend after an agreement was reached between the Israel Prison Service, the Palestinian Authority and the Red Cross.

Jerusalem says no negotiations took place and instead “understandings” were reached. Palestinians insist negotiations did transpire and their strike was a success. That difference is important.

Palestinians regard their prisoners as national heroes. Over the past 50 years, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been jailed by Israel at one time or another.

I have yet to meet a Palestinian family who doesn’t have at least one relative who hasn’t spent time in an Israeli prison. At the moment, there are more than 6 000 Palestinians behind Israeli bars on charges ranging from throwing stones, to possessing weapons and wounding or killing Israeli civilians and soldiers. They all relate to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

During the six weeks of the hunger strike, thousands of Palestinians took to the streets in Gaza and the West Bank in a show of solidarity. On several occasions clashes broke out with Israeli soldiers.

A hashtag #SaltWaterChallenge started trending on Twitter with videos of people drinking saltwater in support of the one glass of saltwater prisoners were consuming each day.

But most Israelis have little sympathy for Palestinian prisoners and believe they are getting what they deserve. Out of principle, Jerusalem refuses to negotiate their demands because, as the country’s public security minister, Gilad Erdan, recently said, they were “terrorists and incarcerated murderers” and their conditions were in line with accepted norms.

The Israeli Defence Ministry agency responsible for administering civilian affairs in the West Bank and the crossings with Gaza, COGAT, released a report arguing that Palestinian security prisoners were treated better than prisoners elsewhere in the region and even in most Western countries.

As a form of protest, a hunger strike is nothing new and many observers argue that a significant portion of the rights Palestinian prisoners currently have in Israeli jails were obtained in this way.

Although starving oneself hurts the person refusing food more than who or what they are protesting against, hunger strikes assure a moral high ground and good publicity.

And this hunger strike became the longest and largest of such protests since 1967. More than 1 500 Palestinian prisoners embarked on it back in April and it was led by the highest profile Palestinian prisoner in an Israeli jail, Fatah

Dateline: Middle East

The hunger strike is over – but what was the damage?

leader Marwan Barghouti, who is serving five life sentences.

The compromise deal that was subsequently agreed to will see increased prisoner visitation rights and other prisoner demands such as access to telephones, improved medical care and an end to punitive solitary confinement being considered.

So, did Israel capitulate? The Palestinians think so. But it’s a hard position for the Israelis to be in and the last thing Jerusalem wants is for a prisoner to die or be irreversibly brain damaged on her watch. Eighteen prisoners were hospitalised during this strike.

Mohammed Allen, a Palestinian lawyer affiliated with the Islamic Jihad militant organisation, made headlines two years ago when he embarked on a two-month-long hunger strike that nearly killed him. He was protesting a year of Israeli detention without charge or trial, a controversial practice Jerusalem employs.

I met his family outside his Israeli hospital ward where he’d temporarily lost consciousness and had been put on life support. His family implored the hospital staff to respect his wishes not be force-fed. It was a fundamental human right, they argued, and being force-fed would undermine his hunger strike.

International law is unclear on the topic, neither banning force-feeding outright, nor mandating it.

Israeli legislation is controversial and allows district court judges to authorise force-feeding inmates against their will, but the Israel Medical Association has banned its members from doing so, arguing it’s unethical and akin to torture.

Now the prison authorities are considering hiring foreign medical staff to bypass Israeli doctors if force-feeding is the only way to keep a prisoner alive.

Israelis argue that this strike had nothing to do with prison conditions. They’ve accused Barghouti of cynically exploiting his fellow prisoners for his own personal gains; to secure his position as a possible successor to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

During the strike, the prison services released a video it insisted was authentic, showing Barghouti breaking his fast by eating cookies and a candy bar they’d left in his cell.

Palestinians insisted the video was a fabrication. It caused an uproar, especially after a still image of the video was later used in an advertisement on the Facebook page of Pizza Hut’s Israeli branch. The caption asked Barghouti if he wouldn’t rather have broken his fast with pizza. The company later apologised.

A group of Israeli right-wing activists also tried to exacerbate tensions when they held a braai in front of a prison to taunt those on strike, with the smell of the meat.

There have been individual cases in the past, of Palestinian hunger strikers whose detention terms were shortened or not renewed, after they were hospitalised in critical condition. There are no easy answers and no doubt Israel will continue to grapple with the ethics and appropriate response to this age-old form of protest.

• 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.



A Palestinian runs past a poster bearing a portrait of convicted terrorist and prominent Palestinian prisoner Marwan Barghouti in the West Bank city of Ramallah

South Africans leading aliyah in Western world



ANT KATZ

South African emigration to Israel in the first quarter of this year, is double that of last year’s figure for the same period. South Africa now represents the highest per capita migration from any country in the Western world.

South Africa is one of the only Diaspora countries that has shown a growth in the first quarter. With 129 olim arriving in Israel between January 1 and March 31, the numbers were up by 109 per cent on 2016 figures. This trend is expected to continue throughout the year.

in that month and this may well increase to 75 in one month, according to Sela.

National Director of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, Wendy Kahn, told Jewish Report that there is no source of empirical evidence regarding migration, both in and out of SA, of Jews. The Board however picks up trends from anecdotal information and statistics like school enrolments, she says, from which they had noted a modest increase in emigration.

The South African community’s number one spot was attained partly because its figures have increased while other Western countries’ numbers have declined.

The countries Israel classifies as being in its “Western” region includes Western Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world (North America, Oceania and South Africa).

Within the group, France leads the pack with 679 olim in the first quarter. However, that figure is 20 per cent down on the first quarter of last year. After Israel and the US, France has the third largest population of Jews in the world. The core Jewish population is 465 000, with another 135 000 who are born Jewish but not involved in the community.

Aliyah from the United States - with its core population of at least 5,3 million - declined by over 20 per cent this year, from 428 to 337. The United Kingdom’s number - the country has some 300 000 Jews - also declined from 136 between January and March 2016, to 101 this year.

Historically, says Sela, Israel was low on the list of destinations for South African Jews. “Today,” he points out, “it is becoming their destination of choice.”

There has been a rapid rise of aliyah from South Africa over the past few years, according to Aviad Sela, the Israel Centre shaliach. He points out, however, that this rise does not mean that more members of South African Jewry are emigrating.

Historically, says Sela, Israel was low on the list of destinations for South African Jews. “Today,” he points out, “it is becoming their destination of choice.” He says the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) which operates as the Israel Centre in Johannesburg and Cape Town, has “seen this growth trend - people from South Africa who want to make a future in Israel”.

In the decade from 2005 to 2014, the average number of South Africans making aliyah was just 75 per year. Earlier this year, Jewish Report published figures showing that in 2015, 230 people did so - and in 2016, the number of olim rose to 272.

Looking ahead, Sela says April slowed down due to the impact of Pesach tourism leaving fewer seats available on El Al. He maintains that these numbers will pick up in May and June and shouldn’t slow down in the second quarter.

The number of new aliyah files opened this year, indicate that the 100 per cent growth could be sustainable for the whole year.

Historically, August is the biggest month for olim to leave, as the Israeli academic year starts on September 1. At this stage, over 50 people are scheduled to make aliyah

Israel puts those making aliyah into two categories, namely those who move to Israel by choice and those in the emergency category, who are fleeing war zones, anti-Semitism or collapsing economies.

“I am happy to see that so many of the people who are looking to leave South Africa are choosing Israel,” says Sela.

Israel puts those making aliyah into two categories, namely those who move to Israel by choice and those in the emergency category, who are fleeing war zones, anti-Semitism or collapsing economies.

Leading aliyah-by-choice stakes in the past quarter, were 1 970 Russians.

In the emergency aliyah category were 1 361 Jews who fled the Ukrainian war zone and the 233 Brazilian Jews fleeing their country’s collapsing economy.

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Brit milah regulations don't quite cut it

TALI FEINBERG

Three years since a botched bris left a Johannesburg baby boy seriously injured, brit milah is still not officially regulated in South Africa.

While Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein has given his assurance that regulations would be implemented in the next few weeks, at least two other brisses have gone wrong in the last year alone. These could possibly have been prevented if the regulations had already been in place.

But Rabbi Goldstein says a great deal has and is being done to implement the recommendations of the Brit Milah Regulatory Board, which came about as a result of the botched bris. He points out that it is an extremely complex issue.

In a statement to the SA Jewish Report, The Regulatory Board said that it has received only one formal complaint regarding brit milah over the last year. “This was fully investigated and dealt with to the satisfaction of the complainant.”

A mohel who declined to be named, confirmed that he has been given no new directives. He feels that regulations will be time-consuming and that there should be no possibility of error in a bris, but he understands the need for such regulations.

In fact, insisting that a mohel fills in forms and records events, would benefit the mohel should anything negative occur.

He also emphasises that excessive bleeding could happen if the mohel is inexperienced or the bandage comes off, but a good mohel would easily be able to correct this.

Two other mohelim who were approached for this article, declined to comment.

Rabbi Goldstein said: “The Brit Milah Regulatory Board in South Africa has been hard at work for the last year, running a workshop and various meetings with mohelim, bringing out an international expert in this field of governance of brit milah, as well as creating all of the necessary protocols for the governance of brit milah in South Africa.

“This has been a time-consuming,

complex, and rigorous process which could not be rushed. It has also established a mechanism to receive any complaints with regard to the practice of brit milah in South Africa.

“It is such an important aspect of Jewish life that the Regulatory Board had to take its time in order to do everything properly with the professionalism and with excellence. Given the magnitude of the task, the Board has worked as efficiently as possible.”

Following the botched bris three years ago, the parents asked for a commission of enquiry, which the Beth Din instituted in 2014. This commission made a number of recommendations to prevent such an incident from occurring again. While the recommendations are being finalised, there have been no actual changes to the training or accrediting of mohelim over the last three years.

One mohel says he has been encouraged to ensure that all instruments are scrupulously sterilised, and to visit the family before and after the bris. He was doing both of these already, and he has received no additional training or monitoring.

“I was informed that the following morning my nine-day-old son would have to undergo a general anaesthetic and surgery to repair his penis. They didn’t know at that stage if there would be enough skin to do the repair.

The following incident happened in Cape Town a year ago. “The mohel must have cut wrong or nipped a blood vessel as my son would not stop bleeding,” says the mother, who has asked not to be identified.

“There was blood everywhere and eventually the mohel advised us to take the baby to hospital as he could go into shock from blood loss. It was the most traumatic day of my life and explaining to the nurses that we were circumcising an infant



A bris taking place in New York

in a coffee shop for everyone to see, felt incredibly inhumane.

“Thank G-d it all ended okay, but we spent the day in hospital waiting for a paediatric urologist and the whole thing could have been avoided.”

Another mother - who also asked not to be identified - said: “The night of the bris I noticed that the bandages were soaked with blood. My son wouldn’t stop screaming. We rushed him to casualty that night and they had to call in a doctor to cauterise his penis to stop the bleeding.

“I was informed that the following morning my nine-day-old son would have to undergo a general anaesthetic and surgery to repair his penis. They didn’t know at that stage if there would be enough skin to do the repair. The nightmare continued the next morning and I had to go into theatre with my baby and watch while they put him under. Thank G-d they were able to complete the repair and there is no permanent damage.”

Neither of these incidents were reported to the Beth Din, although the Brit Milah Regulatory Board emphasised in its 2015 circular: “If there are any other complaints regarding any other ‘bris’ which any member of the community would like to submit to the Commission for investigation, they must notify the Beth Din office as soon as possible.”

The first mother said she did not report the incident because she “did not want to report a rabbi”, and the second mother said she did not report it because she “didn’t think they would do anything about it”.

These responses demonstrate the urgent need for the implementation of the regulations, which could remove the onus from the family and make sure that mohelim are monitored, properly trained and assessed before, during and after a bris.

The mohel quoted in the article, believes regulations are a good thing as they mean “mohelim are working with medical professionals”. He adds that after 40 years practising as a mohel, he doesn’t think there is much more he can do, but he is open to improvement.

While the chance of an accident in a bris is highly unlikely, stricter regulations could reduce this risk even further and also ensure that there is less discomfort and possible suffering for the baby.

Says Rabbi Goldstein: “Brit Milah has been a safe and meaningful pillar of Jewish life for thousands of years since when G-d first

commanded Abraham to circumcise his sons. It is one of our most important mitzvot, is the symbol of our covenant and bond with G-d, and a foundation of our Jewish identity.”

The Brit Milah Regulatory Board added that all mohelim have been given the opportunity to have input on these guidelines and recommendations. The UK’s Initiation Society also produced an updated version of its guidelines in August 2016 and permission was granted for The Board to adopt many of these guidelines where appropriate, for South Africa.

“The process has taken several months to fully research and consider the various opinions and input of mohelim and experts in the field. These guidelines and recommendations for mohelim will become effective on June 14, 2017, and will coincide with the launch of a website which has been developed for the public.”

What has become apparent is that members of the community generally don’t know what is happening about the implementation of the Regulatory Board’s recommendations – maybe a need for better communication would help restore confidence in the process.

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The three major Absa business awards are for listed and unlisted companies, and entrepreneurship.

There is also a Young Jewish Entrepreneur and a Jewish Woman in Leadership award and the Jewish Report Humanities awards for: Lifetime Achievement; Community Service; Arts, Science, Sports & Culture; and a Humanitarian Award.

Nominate as many people in as many categories as you wish. Be sure each nomination is on a separate e-mail and includes the nominee’s name, telephone number and e-mail address; the award for which the nominee is nominated; and a short motivation for the nomination.

The black-tie awards gala evening, replete with music, comedy and a sparkling array of community members, is an event not to be missed.



Putting shadowy government decisions under a bright light

Ivor Chipkin is the director and founder of the Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI) in Johannesburg and is one of the authors of the controversial “Betrayal of the Promise: How South Africa is being Stolen” report released last week.

How would you describe yourself?

At the moment I am neurotic and excited. Excited about the possibility of a genuine democratic revival in South Africa. Neurotic about the obstacles that remain. I would like to say that I am a writer but what I am, really, is a fundraiser and an administrator. I do a lot of swimming to help manage the gap :)

What was your reason for launching PARI?

In the early 1990s I worked for a remarkable organisation called Planact that did high quality research in the service of the struggle against apartheid. After 1994 circumstances had obviously changed, but I thought that model of engaged research was important in the post-apartheid world. Moreover, by 2010, everyone was talking about government (usually in terms of service delivery failure) but there was little research about how government was actually working. I wanted to change that, to produce high quality research about government so that we could understand how to get departments etc. to work better. Given the legacy of apartheid, the future of the country is tied to the capacity of the state.

What was your aim in having a Public Affairs Research Institute?

PARI is an academic institute linked to Wits (and now to UCT too - a major, unprecedented coup), and aims to produce research-based knowledge of government with a view to inform policy, but also to partner with public servants to help solve intractable governance problems.

Until this report, what has been your proudest PARI moment?

I think our first big contract. We were commissioned by the South African Revenue Services (SARS) to do a major study of corruption in the organisation. The study helped us hone our methodologies, made us realise that corruption was not simply about immoral people stealing money - and it helped build our reputation. We also got to see what a genuinely remarkable and capable organisation SARS was then.

What drew you to the research into “the Betrayal of the Promise”?

For several years now PARI has been working in government departments and agencies at all three levels, national, provincial and local and all around the country. What we find runs counter to so many conventional stories about government and public servants: that the majority of people are “unskilled” and “incompetent” and “corrupt”. These are often racist myths.

What we often find are committed people working in impossibly complicated environments. What PARI does is to try to understand this complexity so that we can develop strategies to simplify working environments. We have come to have a good understanding of what drives corruption.

In particular, corruption usually happens in institutional contexts that allow it (usually unwittingly). Moreover, it is more often than not justified in political terms. In other words, there is an ideology associated with it. As reports of looting in the state owned enterprises (SOEs) broke, we wanted to see if there was something about the structure of government that facilitated it and if it was more than a criminal enterprise.

What did you hope to find?

We found that the structure of the SOEs and, in particular, their ability to procure goods and services without adequate public scrutiny, made corruption possible. Illegal activities were justified by an ideology of “Radical Economic Transformation” that saw the Constitution (and the National Treasury) as obstacles to change.

What did you hope you wouldn’t find, but did?

We found the complicity of Jews.

What was the most distressing find for you, personally in this research?

Especially the breaking of impressive state entities and the purging of talented and honourable officials.

You speak of “Kitchen Cabinets” in your research. What do you mean by that?

Emerging where key decisions of government are being made in shadowy, often ad hoc and sometimes fleeting spaces/networks.

In the report, you warn of South Africa facing the danger of a “silent coup” by a rotten dangerous and expanding powerful elite around President Jacob Zuma, which has been allowed to flourish under an immoral government. How did we get to this point?

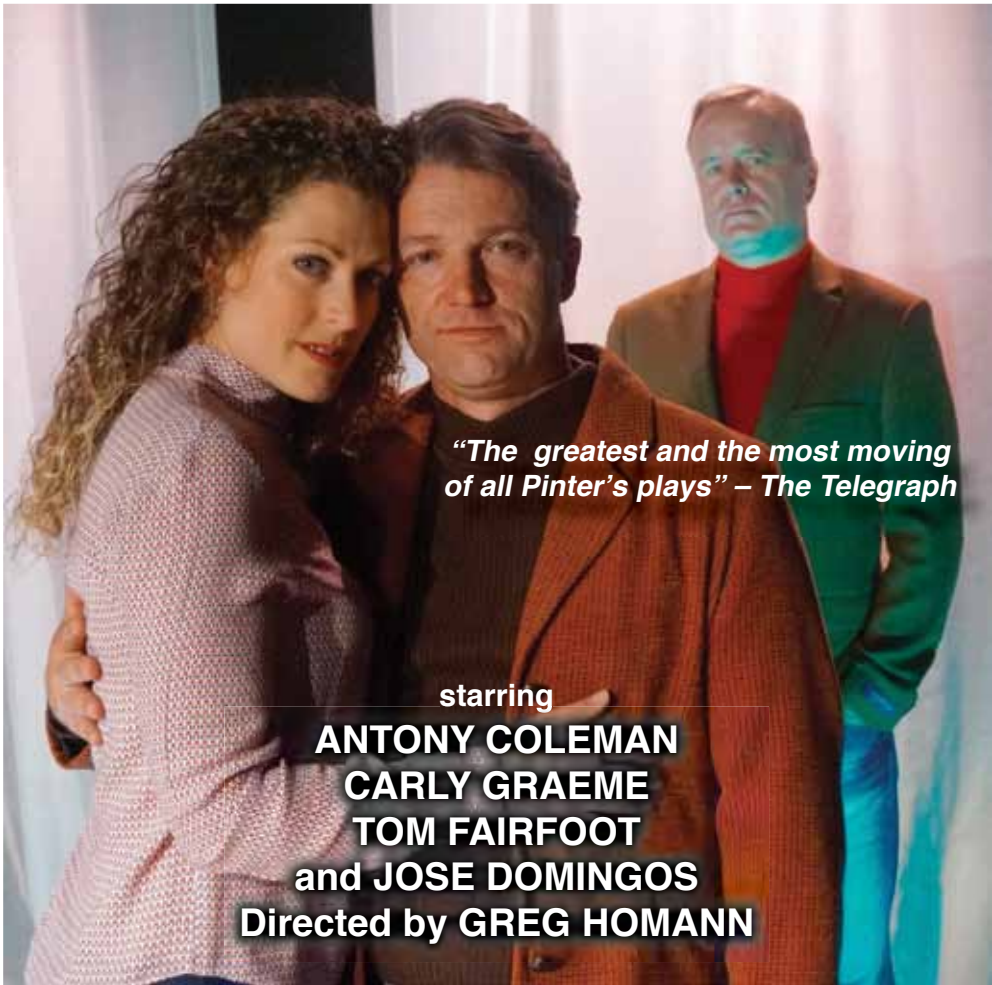
We succumbed to an argument that real development and economic change is not possible within the Constitution.

What can we do to stop this going any further?

Oppose this narrative and help reassert the sovereignty of parliament and of government processes. Recognise that there do have to be major, structural changes to the SA economy – to make it more inclusive and produce more egalitarian outcomes. For as long as democracy is associated with massive inequality, the dangers of elite populism will continue to threaten the fabric of the State.

What do you think Jewish people and particularly Jewish business leaders can do to help?

We must show that development and democracy can be reconciled and we must clamp down on those among us profiting from illegal and unethical practices.



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Rosh Beth Din, Rabbi Kurtstag, moves to Israel

SIMON APFEL

As Av Beth Din - the head of South Africa’s Jewish ecclesiastical court - Rabbi Moshe Kurtstag cuts a fittingly imposing figure. Beanpole tall, furrow-browed and prone to long, pensive strokes of his wizard-like beard, he has, for close to 30 years, presided over the institution that has brought structure, order and kosher Jelly Tots to Jewish life in South Africa.

Up close and personal, though, he’s not nearly as frightening. His stern gaze dissolving like a mirage, a playful grin and pair of bright, gentle eyes come into focus, as he holds forth in a pleasingly craggy voice, and with a classic Israeli forthrightness that’s immediately reassuring.

At the beginning of May, Kurtstag relocated to his birthplace in Israel from where he is continuing his Beth Din duties, liaising daily with the local team and commuting once a month, while leading and guiding the next generation of South African dayanim.

“It wasn’t a difficult decision,” he says of the choice to return to Israel after 50 years of serving the South African community. “My wife hasn’t been well, and we have all our children in Israel. We felt it was the right time to make the move we were always going to make.”

Kurtstag is in touch daily via e-mail and Skype, though he jokes it has been a battle keeping pace with technology. “I used to dictate e-mails to my secretary, now I’ve had to learn to use e-mail myself. WhatsApp is the next step - the new frontier.”

He sees his key role as mentoring the new generation of dayanim.

“I realise I’m getting on,” he says with typical candour. “You know, the cemetery is full of indispensable people; you aren’t here forever - you have to educate and groom those who come after you.”

Moshe Aharon Kurtstag was born in Tel Aviv to Polish parents who came to Israel before the Second World War. Brought up in a Zionist-religious home with a great love for Israel and Torah, he attended a yeshiva high school, went on to study in various yeshivot, and served as a chaplain in the IDF, before taking up his first leadership role as Rosh Yeshiva of Bnei Akiva high school in Netanya.

In 1961, Kurtstag married his wife, Batya - who is South African and the daughter of the late, revered Rabbi Yirmiyahu Aloy - and began studying in kollel, eventually qualifying as a dayan. Soon after, he received a call from South Africa to head up a rabbinical training programme.

“My big passion has always been education, and it seemed like a good opportunity to make an impact on what was emerging as an important Diaspora community.”

A young, idealistic Kurtstag made his mark early on with JSUP (Jewish Students University Programme), which he founded not long after his arrival in 1967.

“At the time, kids learnt Jewish studies in high school and their Jewish education ended there. Our goal was to offer tertiary-level Jewish studies to university students.”

At the campus in Arcadia, students learnt in-depth Gemara, Tanach and halacha in the morning, and did Unisa studies in the afternoon.

“People thought we were mad to open what was basically a yeshiva university in such a small community, but Baruch Hashem, we were very successful. At our peak we had about 120 students enrolled in various programmes. Many people became frum

through JSUP.

Some went on to yeshiva and became rabbis - Rabbi Menachem Raff from Maharsha, for example, who was one of our first students. People still tell me it was the best years of their life.”

After the Board of Education underwent a financial crisis, and JSUP was closed, Kurtstag joined the Beth Din as a part-time dayan in 1976. He was the rookie in a group of much older, more experienced dayanim, but he grew into the role and learnt a lot from them (he cites his father-in-law as a personal mentor), and in 1989 was appointed as the head of the Beth Din.

Under Kurtstag’s leadership, the South African Beth Din became widely admired around the world.

“I believe we are the envy of many other communities because we have one central, unified body - one Beth Din, one hechsher, one Chevrah Kadisha,” he explains.

“This is especially important when it comes to kashrut. In England you have four different kashrut organisations, in America you have more than 100. This makes things difficult - not just

for the consumer who is confronted by a confusing array of hechserim, but for kashrut authorities themselves, who have much less bargaining power when approaching manufacturers.

“Amazingly, South Africa has around 30 000 kosher-certified products; I’m told we have the highest ratio of kosher products to kosher consumers in the world.”

He is particularly proud of the institution’s reputation.

“Our judgements and decisions and hechshers are accepted everywhere in the world. We cherish our reputation and we always try to maintain the highest standards in our activities.”

Other signature achievements include a highly-regarded conversion programme (he estimates that around 70 per cent of new converts remain observant) and a series of landmark rulings that have seen South African civil courts uphold the Beth Din’s verdicts - not least of which was an amendment to South Africa’s Divorce Act, effectively enabling a woman to petition a judge not to grant a civil divorce until a get is given by the husband (or vice versa).

Rabbi Kurtstag has seen many changes in the community

The South African Jewish community has changed considerably over the past five decades - a spectacle to which Rabbi Moshe Kurtstag has had front row seats.

“The main development I’ve noticed is that more people are becoming interested in Judaism. Today, there is no family without a frum relative - whether it is a son or daughter, a nephew or cousin.

“With this has come a tremendous development in Jewish learning. Going to yeshiva post-high school has become an accepted path. The frum community continues to grow in both numbers and quality, and it’s very heartening to see.”

He is particularly intrigued by the sudden spike in the number of people seeking to convert.

“There have been entire Afrikaner families converting, black Africans, pastors, you name it. It’s a phenomenon we’ve never seen before, and there’s no clear answer why this is happening.”

Kurtstag is rather less enthused, understandably, about rising intermarriage.

“It’s not at the alarming rate you find in the US, but still, any Jew that marries out is for us a loss. It is for this reason that we have strict policies for shuls not to give honours to members who marry out, and why we have a separate section in the cemetery. These are harsh steps, but we believe they are necessary.”

Looking ahead, he sees it as imperative that the South African Jewish community maintains its renowned unity, and that the Beth Din doesn’t splinter into factional entities each representing a different segment of the community.

But in an increasingly open world in which traditional power structures are crumbling, some have raised the question of there being too much authority invested in one institution.

His response is unequivocal. “People can challenge the Beth Din. They can dispute decisions and ask for explanations and hold us accountable. We are happy to answer to the public - indeed, we see it as necessary to do so - and sometimes we change our minds.

“But people who want to undermine and break apart - that’s a dangerous thing. If the Beth Din fractures, things become chaotic - rulings can’t be relied upon, and it becomes anarchy.”

The patriotic fire remains undiminished, but even for this most ardent Tzioni, being back in Israel after what seems a lifetime will take some getting used to.

“It’s a different Israel to the one I knew,” says Kurtstag. It’s nice to see how the country is developing technologically and economically. Here, as in South Africa, you are seeing a spiritual reawakening. Obviously, it’s more politicised - everything in Israel is politically charged from the day you are born. But it’s wonderful nonetheless.”

Finding himself with spare time is another unfamiliar sensation.

“I’m starting to devote more time to my own learning. I also hope to do some writing. Above all, I look forward to enjoying my children and grandchildren [he has 25] and great-grandchildren. I will not be bored. I will not sit idly looking at the four walls.”

In between, though, the work continues apace securing the future of a celebrated institution he has been instrumental in building.

“I think the Beth Din is in excellent hands. This new generation of dayanim are great guys, and I have full confidence they will do an excellent job - they already are - and maintain the culture and traditions and excellence that we have built over the years.”



Rosh Beth Din succession plan in place

SIMON APFEL

For the past 10 years, the South African Beth Din has been preparing a succession plan to ensure it continues to maintain the highest halachic and service standards.

A training and recruitment programme has resulted in the appointments of Rabbi David Baddiel, Rabbi Yoel Smith and Rabbi Shlomo Glicksberg, who have joined the established dayanim – Rabbi Moshe Kurtstag, Rabbi Baruch Rapoport and Rabbi Zadok Suchard.

Rabbi Kurtstag will remain as the rosh Beth Din. Having relocated to Israel, he will be in daily contact with the dayanim in Johannesburg and commute regularly to South Africa, while leading and guiding the succession process.

“The transition is being conducted in a very gradual way to ensure maximum stability and maximum positive continuity,” explains Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein.

Rabbi Kurtstag’s eventual successor will be jointly appointed by the Beth Din, the UOS Executive Council and the Office of the Chief Rabbi. According to Rabbi Goldstein, rosh Beth Din will be chosen on the basis of possessing a high level of expertise in Torah and general leadership ability, and will also need to be someone with deep compassion and integrity.

“We now have a team of six outstanding dayanim, who will all be working together as the torch is passed from one generation to the next. We have full confidence that with Hashem’s blessings the Beth Din will continue to be a bastion of unity, and deliver the highest halachic standards and dedicated service to the South African Jewish community.”

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THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Netanyahu: We must retain full military control of West Bank

STUART WINER
JERUSALEM

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday said that Israel must maintain its military control over the West Bank in the event of a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

“The idea that we can give up territory and achieve peace is not right,” Netanyahu told Army Radio in a pre-Shavuot holiday interview.

“In order to assure our existence, we need to have military and security control over all of the territory west of the Jordan [River],” he said, reaffirming his commitment to a policy that is rejected by Palestinians, who seek a full Israeli withdrawal from the territory.

Netanyahu asserted the root of the conflict lies not with Israeli settlements in the West Bank, but rather in Palestinian intransigence regarding recognition of Jewish rights to any part of the land.

Netanyahu’s comments came after visiting US President Donald Trump, last week impressed on the prime minister and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas that he is determined to work on a peace agreement.

“It is not because of the territories and the settlements,” Netanyahu said, noting the history of conflict between Jews and Arabs in the area from 1920, long before the establishment of Israel in 1948 and the capture of the West Bank in 1967.

Even before 1967 the Arabs “wanted to get rid of us from Tel Aviv, and after we pulled out of Gaza [in 2005] they [still] want to get rid of us from Tel Aviv,” Netanyahu said.

The prime minister said that when Israel proposed to the Palestinians that it relinquish all the territory they want as long as they give up on the right of return for Palestinians who fled in 1948, “they squirm in their seats and are not prepared to give an answer”.

He added: “The root of this problem was and still is that continued refusal by the Palestinians to recognise Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people in any borders.”

Israelis seek peace, but the Palestinians are stuck in their attitude of “not setting up a state but rather negating the existence of a state, the Jewish state”, the prime minister insisted. As soon as that is changed, “then there is hope for peace, because you can’t build peace on a foundation of lies,” he said.

“There is no nation that knows the price of war more than we do - we want a real peace,” Netanyahu added.

He reiterated that moderate Arab states were coming around on Israel. Peace, he assessed, is more likely to come after ties between Israel and other parts of the Arab world are improved.

“There is a change happening. Not necessarily with the Palestinians, but in some parts of the Arab world they are understanding that Israel is not the enemy,” he said.

Arab states are internalising that Israel is an ally against the threats of Iran and of the Islamic State terror group, he said.

Some media reports claimed that moderate Arab states - led by Saudi Arabia - are prepared to offer some improvement in ties with Israel, though not recognition, in return for restarting peace talks.



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman, along with MK Avi Dichter and IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot, visit a new section of the security barrier between Israel and the West Bank near Tarqumiyah on July 20, 2016. HAIM ZACH/GPO



Between 15 000 and 20 0000 people participated in a pro-peace demonstration in Tel Aviv's Rabin Square last Saturday to mark “50 years of occupation”, under the banner of “Two States - One Hope”.

CABINET APPROVES CABLE CAR TO WESTERN WALL

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF

Cabinet ministers last Sunday approved a plan to construct a cable car from the new city of Jerusalem to the Western Wall, which will allow more accessibility to the holy site, as part of a series of measures aimed at strengthening facilities in capital.

The cable car, to run from the city’s First Station complex to the Old City’s Dung Gate - the main entrance to the Western Wall - aims to ease traffic in and around the maze of narrow streets in the ancient part of Jerusalem by whizzing visitors across the 1,4 km route as the crow flies, in just 3,5 minutes.

The Cabinet approved the first phase of the joint project between the Tourism Ministry and Jerusalem Development Authority. The Tourism Ministry will cover the initial budget of NIS 15 million (\$4,2 million) with the total cost of the project estimated at about NIS 200 million (\$56 million).

The project, the brainchild of the Jerusalem City Council and its mayor, Nir Barkat, has stoked controversy because the route passes over parts of East Jerusalem.

Two years ago, the France-based utility giant Suez Environment said that, because of political sensitivities, it had decided not to take part in the project.

“The future cable car will change the face of Jerusalem, allow easy and convenient access for tourists and visitors to the Western Wall, and serve as an exceptional tourist attraction,” Tourism Minister Yariv Levin said.

The cable car will be designed to serve about 3 000 visitors an hour in each direction and will travel at speeds of up to 21 kilometres an hour.



A mock-up of the project shows cable cars running over the Hinnom Valley to the Old City.



SOUTH
AFRICAN
ZIONIST
FEDERATION

Terror-hunting attorney aims at big business

Attorney Nitsana Darshan-Leitner



MATTHEW KALMAN

Western Union and Boeing had better look out. The American giants are in the cross-hairs of an Israeli lawyer with a track record of humbling huge corporations and winning multi-million-dollar settlements for her clients.

Attorney Nitsana Darshan-Leitner has spent the past decade filing lawsuits for the victims of terror attacks against the governments, banks and corporations that enabled or financed the violence. As a result of her efforts, more than \$200 million has been collected for terror victims and their families (including out of court settlements), and some \$600 million in assets has been frozen.

Darshan-Leitner has also used the courts to fight against what she considers to be unfair lawsuits against Israeli military commanders. In one notable case, she stopped a Spanish lawsuit against Israel’s Chief of Staff Dan Halutz over a bombing raid in Gaza by filing a similar suit against Javier Solana, a top Spanish politician who had overseen Nato’s bombing of Kosovo. Spain changed the law.

The Bar-Ilan University-educated mother of six will speak about her work in a live interview in Jerusalem this coming Sunday, in the next Times of Israel Presents event.

Last year, she won an unprecedented \$655 million verdict against the Palestinian Authority and PLO on behalf of 11 American families whose loved

ones had been killed or injured in attacks in Israel. That decision was overturned by the US Court of Appeal, but Darshan-Leitner says she is not deterred.

Darshan-Leitner and Shurat Hadin, the non-profit law centre she heads, are self-funding and do not receive backing from any government, including that of Israel. Sometimes she can be more effective even than the Israeli army: In 2011, she prevented a Gaza-bound activists’ flotilla from leaving Greece after challenging the seaworthiness of the vessels in a local court.

Now she has discovered that Lebanon-based terrorist group Hezbollah is using Western Union to channel funds, and Iran is planning to use Boeing aircraft to deliver missiles to Syria. She plans to sue them both.

“Hezbollah is launching a fundraising campaign and using Western Union to accept the donations, so one of the moves that we are planning is to go after Western Union,” says Darshan-Leitner. “In addition, we learned that Boeing not only signed a

horrible deal with Iran providing them with 80 aircraft with a special waiver for the sanctions, Iran actually is using these aircraft to deliver missiles into Syria and let Hezbollah drive them to South Lebanon to shoot them over Israel.

We are suing Boeing now to stop the deal, and we are launching a campaign to put pressure on the administration not to let Boeing continue,” she says.

Darshan-Leitner is also suing Facebook, Twitter and other social media giants for their alleged role in “facilitating” terror activity.

“Facebook, Twitter and Google provide material support in the form of social media network services to Hamas, to ISIS. This is unacceptable. It’s also a violation of American law. So, we’ve filed lawsuits against them as well,” she says.

Are the courts the right battleground to fight terrorism? Does her work encourage Israel’s enemies to resort to their own “lawfare” against Israeli targets? Times of Israel will be asking those questions and more when Darshan-Leitner is interviewed on Sunday.



News and views from the Fed South Africa and Israel – a relationship of the ages

ROLENE MARKS

Comparing Israel and South Africa seems to be all the rage at the moment. It is the cause du jour among self-declared human rights activists. The reality is that there are loads of similarities between the two states.

No not THAT one! The one that Israel’s detractors would have you believe - but I got your attention, right? The truth is that South Africa faces many similar challenges to Israel, and the Jewish State is perfectly poised to help her Southern African counterpart navigate and overcome them.

Israel and South Africa have endured similar historical similarities: Both countries have majority populations who even though they have indigenous roots, have been subjected to foreign rule.

In Israel, the British controlled what was then known as Mandate Palestine, severely restricting the number of Jewish immigrants trying to escape the pogroms and the Holocaust in Europe.

In South Africa, the majority black population was subjected to heinous, discriminatory laws during the apartheid era.

Yet, both peoples, despite all, never lost their hope or national aspirations. Today, South Africa has overcome her dark past and is a democracy and Israel is a vibrant manifestation of the Zionist dream.

South Africa is often referred to as the “rainbow nation” - a nod to her eclectic mix of different cultures and languages that are colourful and vibrant. Israel is also a kaleidoscope of different ethnicities, having ingathered the exiles from over 80 different countries.

On any given day, you may encounter multiple languages and cultures. From the US to South Africa, the Jews of Mizrahi (Arabic) descent and those from South America to Europe and Ethiopia, generations have come home. Home is Jerusalem, the hope that has sustained generation upon generation through exile, Inquisition, Holocaust and Intifada.

The two countries also share many of the same challenges. Both experience seasonal or short rainfall seasons and as such face major water shortages. South Africa has endured horrendous droughts over the last couple of years, that have drained the country of valuable water resources.

Israel, a desert country, is perfectly poised to help. It has developed ground-breaking technologies that can help countries who struggle with drought and water shortages. Low drip irrigation pipes help ensure that valuable water is not wasted and desalination plants recycle salt water from the ocean into fresh water for human consumption. In fact, Israeli water technology is so advanced that scientists have come up with a new invention that creates water out of air. Literally!

Israel as mentioned earlier, is perfectly poised to help South Africa overcome some of her challenges. If we rewind back a few years, both Theodor Herzl in his revolutionary essay “Altneuland” and Prime Minister Golda Meir, recognised the similar heritage and also symbiotic relationship between the Jewish State and the African continent.

We have looked at a few similarities and shared challenges and as discussed, seen that Israel is perfectly poised to help. Today, Israeli technology helps South Africans and others across the continent conserve water, improve agricultural output, secure their countries, fight famine and disease.

While many would have you believe that the only similarities shared by the two countries are negative (and that accusation is both scurrilous and offensive), the reality is different. There is more to be proud of and shared and I think that Herzl and Golda would be proud.

New app tests for fruit freshness

SHOSHANNA SOLOMON

Israeli startup AclarTech has developed a mobile app that monitors, in real time, the ripeness, freshness and quality of fruit and vegetables.

The Ness Ziona, Israel-based firm’s AclaroMeter will change the way farmers make their decisions and will “revolutionise” the global food market by helping prevent wasted products and making them accessible to wider populations, the company says on its website.

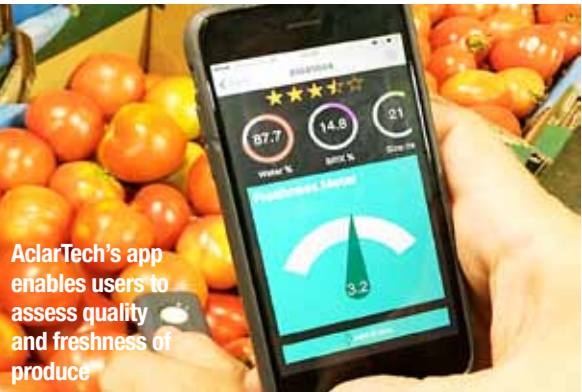
Today, farmers decide when to pick fruit based on instinct or lab tests. “These methods are extremely inefficient and not standardised, leading to a yearly loss of approximately 50 per cent of worldwide grown fruit and vegetables”, the company said, with some wasted even before it gets to consumers’ homes.

With the Aclarometer, users scan the fruit with their built-in smartphone camera and with a standard portable molecular sensor, the SCIO.

This captures a large set of measurements about the fruit and its environment, revealing data like the fruit’s sugar content, acidity, firmness, weight and colour, as well as its GPS location and weather

conditions at the time of sampling. The data is then uploaded to the cloud and is processed by a tailor-made algorithm that compares the data to tens of thousands of other samples of previously inspected fruit.

The algorithm then grades the scanned fruit for freshness, ripeness and quality within a few seconds, the company said. This data can help farmers decide when to pick their produce and monitor its freshness as it moves along the food chain via packaging houses to retailers and end users.



AclarTech's app enables users to assess quality and freshness of produce



Facebook to remove Holocaust denial only if sued

STUART WINER

Facebook instructs moderators to ignore Holocaust denial posted to its website, unless it came from one of four countries - out of more than a dozen countries where it is illegal - and only then if it is reported, the UK Guardian newspaper reported last week Wednesday.

The four countries are France, Germany, Israel, and Austria and the content is to be removed “not on grounds of taste, but because the company fears it might get sued”, the report said, citing training manuals for moderators at the social media giant.

Earlier this week the Daily Mail said that over a period of months it was able to review more than 100 training documents.

Facebook “does not welcome local law that stands as an obstacle to an open and connected world”, one manual says and only recommends removing or blocking Holocaust content when “we face the risk of getting

blocked in a country, or a legal risk”.

Examples of allowed content in the other countries where the social media giant doesn’t fear legal action, was a post that said: “Never again Believe the Lies” with a picture of a concentration camp, according to the report.

“We believe our geo-blocking policy balances our belief in free expression with the practical need to respect local laws in certain sovereign nations in order to remain unblocked and avoid legal liability.

“We will only use geo-blocking when a country has taken sufficient steps to demonstrate that the local legislation permits censorship in that specific case,” a training manual explains.

“Some 14 countries have legislation on their books prohibiting the expression of claims that the volume of death and severity of the Holocaust is overestimated. Less than half the countries with these laws actually pursue it. We block on report only in those countries that actively pursue the issue with us.”

Facebook “contested the figures but declined to elaborate”, the report said, referring to the claim that action against Holocaust denial content is taken only in some countries.

Monika Bickert, head of global policy management at Facebook, told the Guardian: “Not every team of employees is involved in enforcing our policies around locally illegal content. Whether reported by government entities or individual users, we remove content that violates our community standards.”

Facebook was aware of “the sensitivities around the issue of Holocaust denial in Germany and other countries and [we] have made sure that our reviewers are trained to be respectful of that sensitivity,” she added.

Other guidelines instructed that refugees and asylum seekers are in a “quasi-protected category”, meaning they receive less stringent protection against online abuse than other vulnerable groups.

While any calls for violence against refugees must be removed, Facebook manuals advise that “as a quasi-protected category, they will not have the full protections of our hate speech policy because we want to allow people to have broad discussions on migrants and immigration which is a hot topic in upcoming elections.”

Comments such as “F--k immigrant” and “Keep the horny migrant teenagers away from our daughters”, do not need to be deleted although references to migrants, that “equate them to other types of criminals, such as rapists, child molesters, murderers or terrorists”, are not permitted, according to the report.

Anti-Muslim sentiment such as “All terrorists are Muslims” is permitted but a comment “All Muslims are terrorists” should be flagged because while terrorists are not a protected category, Muslims are a protected category, a manual explains.

“When context is ambiguous about whether a PC (protected category) or non-PC is being attacked, the default action is for reps to ignore,” Facebook training material instructs and gives as an example of content that can be left on the site a photograph of Syrian refugees and children in a swimming pool with the caption “The scum need to be eliminated”.

“Because it is ambiguous whether the caption is attacking Syrian refugees (PC) or perpetrators of sexual assault (or the subcategory Syrian refugees who commit sexual assault), the correct action is to ignore,” the manual explains.

Last week Tuesday, European lawmakers approved legislation that would force social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and Google’s YouTube, to remove hate speech videos, Reuters reported. The measure still needs to be approved by the European Parliament before it becomes law.

In January, Israel’s so-called Facebook bill, which would allow the state to seek court orders to force the social media giant to remove certain content based on police recommendations, passed its first reading in the Knesset.

The bill was proposed by Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan and Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked in July, two weeks after the two met with Facebook officials in the Knesset. It is aimed at combating Palestinian incitement to terror against Israelis.

The government says the bill will only be invoked in cases of suspected incitement, where there is a real possibility that the material in question endangers the public or national security.

In December Google changed its search algorithm to deny prominence to Holocaust-denying websites. The company faced criticism after Digital Trends reported that searching for the query “Did the Holocaust happen?” gave top results from white supremacist and anti-Semitic pages, which asserted that it, in fact, did not.

Google had initially said it had no intention of removing or filtering search results, but the company subsequently announced that it has “made improvements to our algorithm that will help surface more high quality, credible content on the web”.

Jew and Muslim in Manchester photo tell of long friendship



Renee Black and Sadiq Patel mourning the victims of the Manchester terror attack which took place last week Monday. YOUTUBE SCREENSHOT

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF

A Jewish woman and a Muslim man, whose photo mourning together in the aftermath of the Manchester terror attack went viral and symbolised hope for coexistence to many, have been good friends for over 10 years.

Renee Black, a 93-year-old Jewish woman and Sadiq Patel, a Muslim man, travelled to Manchester last week Wednesday from the nearby town of Blackburn to mourn the victims.

The pair were captured on video and in photos talking and joining in prayer next to a makeshift memorial in Albert Square, in the city’s centre.

“When we were walking through Albert Square I kept asking Sadiq: ‘Why is everyone looking at us?’ I couldn’t understand what all the fuss was about us being there together. All I could think about was that poor little eight-year-old girl,” Black said, referring to one of the victims.

“G-d’s been good to me. I am at the edge of life now, while hers should have been spread out before her.”

According to the Daily Mail, the two Blackburn natives have been close friends for more than a decade and are members of an interfaith group.

The death of Black’s partner Harry three years ago, and several minor strokes that she suffered, have led the two to become even closer, with Patel visiting Black

every few days and driving her into Manchester to buy kosher food, the pair told the newspaper.

Black was born in Blackburn in 1924 to a Lithuanian Jewish father, while her maternal grandfather was a Russian Jew. Despite the town once having a synagogue and a Jewish community, Black told the Mail she believed she was now the only Jew remaining there.

She said that as a result of the Holocaust and a number of experiences of anti-Semitism in her youth, she always felt it was important to build bridges with other immigrant groups.

Patel, meanwhile, was born in Blackburn to a family of Muslim immigrants from India.

He said that while his friendship with Black may seem “unusual”, it is a testament to their ability to focus on what they have in common, rather than their differences.

“It’s unusual for a Muslim man in a robe with a hat and beard and a Jewish lady to be friends, but let’s celebrate what we have in common with a vengeance. We all share the same things, births, marriage and deaths, so let’s reflect and tolerate each other’s differences,” the Mail quoted him as saying.

Black and Patel told the Daily Mail that he was the only Muslim at the funeral of her Jewish partner Harry, while she in turn was the only Jew at the funeral of his mother.

- JTA contributed to this report.

The huge role played by the ‘Fifth Beatle’

ROBERT PHILPOT
LONDON

Last week, the City of Liverpool in the northwest of England, commenced celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the release of The Beatles’

A year later, with his relationships with Asher and Schwartz behind him, McCartney began dating Eastman. Their 30-year marriage - which saw Linda launch a musical career as a member of McCartney’s band Wings and co-writer on the Oscar-nominated Bond theme “Live and Let Die” - only ended with her death from breast cancer in 1998.

An entertainment lawyer, Lee Eastman was not simply McCartney’s father-in-law. With Epstein’s death, he also became McCartney’s manager. A tussle between Eastman and the former Rolling Stones manager, Allen Klein (whom John Lennon favoured) helped contribute to the ill-feeling which led to the Beatles’ split in 1970.

It is to Epstein that McCartney and the Beatles owe much of their success.

As Lennon’s first wife, Cynthia, suggested a decade ago:

and swearing and smoking on stage. In came a more wholesome look: suits, shirts and ties, and the later widely imitated mop top haircut.

In 2014 - when Epstein would have celebrated his 80th birthday - he was finally inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, while the building in London’s West End from which he managed The Beatles, now bears a commemorative blue plaque.

After his tumultuous 2002 marriage and 2008 divorce to model Heather Mills, McCartney appears to have found love again in the arms of a new, Jewish Lady McCartney.

In 2011, four years after their romance first became public, he married Nancy Shevell. A native of New Jersey who went to work in her father’s trucking company and served for 10 years on New York’s Metropolitan Transit Authority, Shevell appears to be everything McCartney’s second wife was not.

While Mills courted media attention, Shevell eschews it. Interviewed by the New York Observer shortly before the couple tied the knot, Shevell’s cousin, legendary American journalist Barbara Walters, was tight-lipped about her reported role as matchmaker.

“The thing about Nancy is that she doesn’t want this article,” Walters politely explained. “She doesn’t want anything to do with publicity.”

When the Observer caught up with her as she left a transit authority meeting, she had little to say about her romance with McCartney.

“It’s just not that intriguing. Not like his last marriage, which was really intriguing. I’m over 50. I work. That’s it. I haven’t been social and I have a small group of friends. There really isn’t much to talk about,” she said.

On the eve of their wedding the couple attended Yom Kippur services at the St John’s Wood Liberal Synagogue, close to McCartney’s London home.

Despite marrying in a church, the most famous of McCartney’s three children with Linda, fashion designer Stella McCartney, identifies herself as Jewish.

“My mum was Jewish,” she told British Glamour magazine in 2002.

McCartney’s seeming love of all things Jewish has not, though, always been reciprocated.

In 1964, Israel refused permission for The Beatles to play in the Jewish state. After lengthy deliberations, the Interdepartmental Committee for Authorising the Importation of Foreign Artists, decided the band was likely to have “a negative influence on the [country’s] youth”.

Four decades later, however, McCartney defied the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and reported death threats, and played Tel Aviv. Perhaps, as he performed before the 40 000 fans who had packed Yarkon Park, McCartney’s thoughts turned briefly to his former manager.



“I think Brian’s one of the forgotten people. It’s almost as if he’s been written out of the story. I don’t think they’d have got anywhere without Brian.”

Although his grandparents were Eastern European immigrants to Britain at the turn of the 20th century, Epstein’s upbringing was solidly middle class.

His teenage desire to be a dress designer was dismissed by his father, who wanted Epstein to work in the family’s furniture business and musical instrument shop. Put in charge of the record department of a new branch of the family’s North End Music Stores, Epstein grew it, and a further store, into one of the largest music stores in the north of England.

It was through that work that Epstein first heard of the then largely unknown Beatles. He went to watch them perform several times at the Cavern Club and, despite his lack of experience, approached the band and suggested he manage them.

Epstein immediately went to work on the Beatles’ image. Out went the scruffy jeans, black leather jackets



ground-breaking and best-selling album, “Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band”.

As part of the three-week “Sgt Pepper at 50: Heading For Home” festival - a symbol of Liverpool’s enduring pride in its most famous export - posters went up around the city by Turner Prize-winning artist Jeremy Deller bearing slogans noting the contribution of Brian Epstein.

But Deller’s desire to ensure that Epstein, the band’s manager and so-called “Fifth Beatle” was not written out of the celebrations, had an added poignancy this summer. Barely three months after the album’s release, the 32-year-old Epstein was found dead, having accidentally overdosed on sleeping pills.

The 50th anniversary of Epstein’s tragically early death provides a reminder of the Jewish threads, both professional and personal, which weave through the life of Paul McCartney, one of the Fab Four’s two surviving members. As music critic Seth Rogovoy has suggested, McCartney has displayed a half a century “love affair with all things Jewish - including collaborators, business associates, girlfriends and wives”.

The first Jewish woman in McCartney’s life was American scriptwriter Francie Schwartz. The 23-year-old flew from New York to London in 1968 after reading about the Beatles’ formation of a new multi-media company, the Apple Corps. She hoped that she might be able to interest the band in a film she had written about a street violinist and actor she had met outside Carnegie Hall.

On spec, she turned up at the Beatles’ offices on London’s Wigmore Street. Although McCartney was engaged to actress Jane Asher, the pair began a relationship. Asher is alleged to have returned from a filming trip to find McCartney and Schwartz in bed together.

The affair with Schwartz was not long-lasting, unlike McCartney’s marriage to Linda Eastman. Born in Scarsdale, New York, Eastman was the granddaughter of Russian-Jewish immigrants to the United States. Her father, born Leonard Vail Epstein, changed his name to Lee Eastman; his wife, Louise Sara Lindner, hailed from a German-Jewish family. While on assignment in London, Linda met McCartney at the Bag o’Nails club.

‘Send back funds for women’s centre named after terrorist’

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF

Norway’s foreign minister has condemned the Palestinian Authority for naming a women’s centre in the West Bank, funded in part by the Scandinavian country, after a female terrorist.

“The glorification of terrorist attacks is completely unacceptable, and I deplore this decision in the strongest possible terms. Norway will not allow itself to be associated with institutions that take the names of terrorists in this way. We will not accept the use of Norwegian aid funding for such purposes,” Norwegian Foreign Minister Borge Brende said in a statement last week Friday.

Brende’s comments were made in reference to a new women’s centre opened earlier this month in the West Bank town of Burqa. The centre was

named after Dalal Mughrabi, who took part in the 1978 Coastal Road Massacre. Mughrabi and several other Fatah terrorists landed on a beach near Tel Aviv, hijacked a bus on Israel’s Coastal Road and killed 38 civilians, 13 of them children, and wounded over 70.

Brende said that Norway had been unaware of the decision to name the centre after Mughrabi. He demanded that the country’s name be removed from the centre and that the funds it gave for construction be returned.

“We have asked for the logo of the Norwegian representation office to be removed from the building immediately, and for the funding that has been allocated to the centre to be repaid,” he said.

He also said that Norway would no longer participate in similar projects until

the country receives assurances “that nothing of this nature happens again.”

“We will not enter into any new agreements with either the Palestinian Election Commission or UN Women in Palestinian areas until satisfactory procedures are in place to ensure that nothing of this nature happens again,” he said.

Israel commended Oslo’s action, with Foreign Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon saying “Norway took the right step - a tough line against memorialising terrorists is an integral part of the international effort to eliminate terror. We recommend that the international community take thorough steps to check where the money it invests in the PA is going.”

Norway’s rebuke of the PA came after the Norwegian branch of the International

Christian Embassy Jerusalem brought the matter to the country’s attention last week Friday, the organisation said in a statement, while thanking Brende for his “swift and clear” response.

“The Palestinian Authority undermines the quest for peace in this region, and violates all standards of human decency, when it decides to glorify and perpetuate the despicable legacies of terrorists like Dalal Mughrabi,” ICEJ President Jürgen Bühler said. “The Norwegian government acted properly when it condemned this immoral action by the Palestinian Authority.”

Palestinian Media Watch, which first brought attention to the naming of the women’s centre, quoted a local village leader saying that “the centre will focus especially on the history of the struggle of Martyr Dalal Mughrabi.

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Holocaust survivors are human like the rest of us

TALI FEINBERG

Holocaust survivors are often idolised and put on a pedestal by our community. Often the fact that they are human beings - struggling with circumstances, memories, personalities and their families – is often forgotten.

The South African Holocaust & Genocide Foundation and the Gilah branch of Bnoth Zion WIZO (Cape Town), recently screened the film “Tzipora’s Nest”, which delves into these issues.

“I was scared to show the film because I was worried that people would hate me,” says Malka Nedivi, who made the documentary about her mother, Tzipora. She came to South Africa for the screenings and had a public conversation with media personality Lisa Chait at the WIZO event.

Nedivi explained that she was the only child of Holocaust survivors who moved to Israel after the Second World War, and that she had a fraught relationship with her mother growing up. “The screams would be to the sky,” a neighbour says, interviewed in the film.

Nedivi eventually “escaped” this claustrophobic environment by immigrating to Los Angeles with her Israeli husband, where they raised their three children. She still received, angry, emotional, loving and hurtful letters from her mother, but 17 years passed before Nedivi picked up the phone and heard her mother say: “I am picking the mould off the bread.

But don’t worry! I am fine. How are the kids?”

Nedivi’s husband, Udi, told her she had no choice but to go help her mother, so she eventually moved back to Israel with her two young daughters, while her husband and son remained in the United States.

An artist by profession, Nedivi is not a natural filmmaker, but with an amateur camera in hand, she began to film life in Israel with her mother. Initially, this was simply to record this period and to perhaps interview her mother, but eventually Nedivi knew that this was a story too important not to share, and she decided to make it into a documentary.

The result is a raw, uncensored look at the fraught relationship many children have with their parents, with the added complications of Holocaust survival across the generations.

Tzipora is a hoarder, and the camera presents us with an unflinching look at piles of plastic, rotting food, boxes piled high, rags, clothes and paraphernalia in every room. “If something enters the house, it does not leave,” explains Nedivi in the film.

We see her battle to slowly infiltrate the clutter and her mother’s defences, and the difficult moments between mother and daughter are laid bare.

Nedivi knows the film shows the truth - “that I am not the perfect daughter” - but as an artist, she hopes people will react to these challenging scenes and



Photo supplied

Media personality Lisa Chait and film director Malka Nedivi, in conversation at Bnoth Zion WIZO’s screening of “Tzipora’s Nest”.

perhaps identify themselves in the film. “If you open up, people open themselves up back,” she explains in conversation with Chait.

In the film we see how Nedivi battles to find caregivers for her mother; we hear social workers say: “There is nothing more we can do for your mother”; “We want to pass this case on to another agency”, and: “It smells like a dead rat in there.”

This is in Israel, a society which should be treasuring its Holocaust survivors, yet the film shows a harrowing picture. Eventually, a wonderful caregiver is found, and she helps Nedivi gently tackle her mother’s hoarding habits.

The film is not only doom and gloom, and light-hearted moments make the audience feel like part of this warm, complicated family and the chaos of Israeli society. The viewers are given glimpses into the many aspects of Tzipora’s personality, which has been hardened by her tough life experiences.

The documentary is also fascinating for anyone interested in cinema, as the form of production

is known as “guerrilla filmmaking” - sometimes “undercover” and with the camera being held by anyone who can control it - sometimes Nedivi’s daughters, or strangers in the street.

The camera is a constant presence and sometimes acts as a buffer or shield between mother and daughter; Nedivi can cower behind it, or attack her mother with it. It is an untraditional, uncomfortable approach to filming, matching its subject matter.

This is a film that should be seen by Jewish communities around the world, as it gives deep insight into the lives of Holocaust survivors and their children. At the beginning of the film, Nedivi says that looking after her mother is “taking a journey into the night”, but on reflection at the Cape Town event, she says: “I am grateful my life took this turn. It allowed me to be with my mother until her very last moments and to make peace with her.

“It has taken me 65 years to admit that I am very much like my mother, and proud of it! And I am thankful that I had the chance to fall in love with my mother again.”

• See more at <http://tziporasnest.com>

Finding family out of ashes of the Shoah

SUZANNE BELLING

Former South African, Professor Louise Bethlehem and Dr Oren Gutfeld, both senior academics at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, passed each other frequently on the Mount Scopus campus without a flicker of recognition, little knowing the blood ties that bound them.

They had no idea that they were cousins – sharing the same German-Jewish grandparents – who were separated through the Nazi period.

Louise also didn’t realise that this man was also world renowned as the leader of the team that discovered the “12th cave” at Qumran on the Dead Sea this year, a site where further Dead Sea Scrolls were once stored.

Louise, associate professor in the department of English and in the Programme in Cultural Studies at the university, eventually met him in person earlier this year when her mother, South African community stalwart Marlene Bethlehem gave a talk in Lower Saxony, Germany, on Holocaust Memorial Day this year.

In her capacity as president of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture (MFJC), Bethlehem was invited to address an audience of 1 200, including refugees and 500 Jews in Germany. Gutfeld, at this stage knew of his South African cousins but had never met them, when he got an invitation to attend Bethlehem’s talk in Germany. He was in the audience when Marlene gave her speech.

Marlene recently told this story at a meeting at Waverley Shul, under the auspices of the Johannesburg Jewish Women’s Benevolent Society. She is an honorary life vice-president and a past chairman of the JWBS, as well as a former national chairman and president of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies.

Reminiscing on her family who were killed - and some who survived the Holocaust - Bethlehem said she was taught not to focus on the six million who perished, as the number was too difficult to comprehend, but rather to concentrate on individuals. She chose to speak in Germany about her own family, including her aunt and uncle Yehudit and Reinhold Gutfeld and their son, Yossi (Oren’s dad).

Yehudit’s parents - Marlene’s grandparents - left Lithuania for fear of pogroms, moving to Koenigsberg in East Germany (Yehudit’s father fought for the Germans in the First World War).

In 1933, the family moved again, with seven of the eight children - only the newly-married Yehudit

remaining behind. Three of the children, including Marlene’s father, came to South Africa.

Yehudit and Reinhold left it too late to escape the Nazis, managing to move to Belgium and then to Marseilles in the south of France, but they were rounded up by the Germans and sent to the Drancy internment camp outside Paris, from where they were deported to Auschwitz where “both were murdered on arrival”.

But before they left, they had contacted the French underground and, through the co-operation of a sympathetic station master, arranged to have their six-year-old son Yossi and his friend Simon Haas thrown from the train at a small French village. There, they were taken in by a Catholic family, Joseph and Emilienne Argoud, with whom they lived throughout the war.

Yossi went on to live in Israel, where his son Oren was born. Marlene visited Yossi 25 years ago in Israel and he passed away five years later. She hadn’t met his son.

During her visit to Germany earlier this year, she told those at the Waverley Shul, she was able to watch the famous Shabbaton Choir from London. Their performances were led by Rabbi Lionel Rosenfeld, who on hearing Bethlehem’s story, and the name of Simon Haas, who escaped with Yossi, he “put his head in his hands and told me Simon had become a renowned cantor in London”, said Marlene.

She and her daughters were invited to the office of the Mayor of Hannover Stefan Schostock.

“When I commented on the beauty of his office and surroundings, he was unenthusiastic, revealing that it had been built by Nazis and modelled on Hitler’s office!

Bethlehem was also invited to bring a message from the Foundation to the Lower Saxony Parliament. She also met with the prime minister of Lower Saxony, Stephan Weil.

Bethlehem also was there to lay a wreath at Bergen Belsen. “We thought it was inappropriate to have lunch there, but, in keeping with the mood, we were given dry bread and soup.

“It was pouring with rain and snowing, which we had to endure for five hours, thinking of those who had to live under those conditions for much longer.”

• The flagship of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture is the Nahum Goldmann Fellowship which trains young Jews from all over the world, including several South Africans.



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Confronting the problem of racism

CHIEF RABBI WARREN GOLDSTEIN

A while ago, I had a heart-breaking meeting with members of the Jewish community in Johannesburg, people of colour who have converted to Judaism and have felt the pain of racist attitudes from some of their fellow congregants.

As a community, we need to confront the problem of racism. We, like all South Africans, are not immune to it. We must face up to this challenge.

It is our sacred duty - not only because of the values of the South African Constitution and its Bill of Rights which create a vision for a society of equality and dignity for all, but also, and primarily, because the Torah teaches us about that evil of racism in terms of our Torah values.

Long before it was politically correct, the Torah showed us the way in understanding the immorality of racism. G-d chose to create all of humankind from one man and one woman, even though other species of plant and animal life were created en masse.

The Talmud teaches that the reason for this was to eradicate racism from the world: ensuring human beings were descended

from one man and one woman made us all brothers and sisters for each other.

Our Torah teachings declare the evil of racism, as the Mishna says: “Beloved is the human being created in the image of G-d”, which means that every human being has a soul from G-d, which reflects in some way the awesomeness and greatness of the Creator Himself.

And so, it behoves each of us to treat every human being with great care and respect, regardless of race, colour, creed or gender, and regardless of their station in life. These Torah values have been part of Jewish consciousness for generations, which may explain why Jews were disproportionately involved with the forefront of the struggle against apartheid, in every way possible.

Our rejection of racism needs to find practical application in our daily lives. It reflects in the way that we interact with all of our fellow South Africans. It reflects in simple yet profound things, like greeting people we encounter, as the Mishna says: “Initiate the greeting to every person.”

It reflects in the way we deal with our employers and employees, with our work colleagues. And it also reflects in how

we speak in our families and among ourselves about people from other races. It is beyond the pale to use any derogatory word in reference to another race or culture. To do so is to betray our Jewish values.

Our rejection of racism must also reflect in how we engage with South Africans from all races who have converted to Judaism and have joined our community. We must welcome them with open arms; we are one family.

Let’s make this practical by inviting them for Shabbos and Yomtov, engaging warmly at shul, sharing schools lifts, and generally make them feel welcome in every way. We must appreciate their incredible sacrifices and devotion to the Torah that has brought them to voluntarily choose our way of life.

In many passages the Torah reminds us that we were strangers in the land of Egypt and, therefore, to remember what it means to be a stranger and what it means to be the subject of the prejudice and racism of others. The Torah calls on us to engage with kindness and sensitivity to all people.

We can and must be a model community in South Africa, a beacon of light for how to treat every human being with dignity and respect.

Should Israel prioritise SA Jews?

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

Israeli leadership often puts its political interests before those of Jews living in the Diaspora - including South Africa - but it says that this is to be expected, according to David Fachler who was speaking at the Greenside Shul recently.

South African-born Fachler - who lives in Israel and holds a Masters in Law from South Africa, a Masters in Contemporary Jewry from the Hebrew University in Israel, and writes for Haaretz newspaper - analysed the sometimes-rocky relationship between Israel and South African Jewry. He considered some events that shaped the history of the two countries and their impact on South African Jews.

“Foreign affairs in the Diaspora is something that is run by an elite,” he said. “When people vote, it’s usually for economical reasons and security; they don’t put foreign affairs at the forefront of their decision.

“So, however Israel acted to South Africa is not a reflection of its electorate - the electorate always praised South African Jewry. You can criticise Israeli foreign policy without criticising Israel.

“Israel, like every other state, has to base its actions on its national interests,” he added.

Fachler looked at when Israel illegally kidnapped Nazi criminal

Adolf Eichmann from Argentina in 1960, which led to two years of right-wing riots against the Jews in Argentina.

While Jews in that country and those who worked in Intelligence in the US, were put at risk, Fachler said one could argue that it was worth being able to try and execute one of the biggest perpetrators of the Holocaust. Yet, it remains an incident that puts Israel/Diaspora relations under debate.

Reflecting on how Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion had said at the time that Argentinian Jews could make aliyah to protect themselves from the riots, Fachler fast-forwarded to the 2015 attacks in France at a Jewish supermarket.

“Immediately, Israel made comments encouraging French Jews to make aliyah,” he recalled. “That’s not how you help Jews in the Diaspora. You help them where they live - not by telling them to leave. While aliyah is important, ensuring that Diaspora Jews flourish, is vital too.”

South African Jews are among the most Zionist in the world, Fachler pointed out. This was acknowledged as early as 1947 when a Jewish historian noted that South African Jews were more concerned with the plight of Israel than of South Africa itself.

Yet, South African issues did grow in importance for Jews, when the National Party came to power in 1948 and implemented apartheid. In the 1950s, South Africa was powerful and still a member of the Commonwealth, so the world wasn’t too concerned about apartheid and aside from a few instances, there was minimal tension between South Africa and Israel.

Yet, tension rose dramatically in the 1960s. In 1961, while there was rising pressure to vote against apartheid, most Western countries abstained. “Israel wanted to cultivate a relationship with black Africa - it thought African countries would act as a block against Arab resolutions against Israel,” said Fachler.

So, in 1961, Israel voted against South Africa and sided with the Afro-Asian countries and South Africa saw this as a slap in the face, which hurt the local Jewish community. For the first time, the SA Zionist Federation condemned Israel’s vote, which upset the Israeli representative in South Africa.

South Africa, which had at this time given the Zionist Federation special dispensation to transfer money to charities in Israel, now stopped this - a big blow to South African Jewry. It resulted in the end of diplomatic relations between South Africa and Israel.

“At no time in the 60s did Israel ever say anything about worrying about the strong South African Jewish community,” said Fachler. “It was more concerned with

fostering relations with African states which was ironically widely regarded as a huge gamble.”

In 1967, South Africa was impressed with Israel’s strength in the Six Day War and sent humanitarian aid to that country, which placed pressure on Israel to reciprocate. It allowed South Africa to set up a consulate in Tel Aviv in 1972.



David Fachler

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Time out from family for soul trip

NICOLA MILTZ

“I was stuck in a rut, so caught up with homework and lift schemes I had lost sight of everything important,” says Sandton mother of three, Tanya Matisonn.

This could have been said by most mothers of school-going kids at any given time. But in Matisonn’s case, and that of 80 other local Jewish mothers, she took time out of her life to go on a special tour to Israel with the Momentum Jewish Women’s Renaissance Project.

Now, she says, she feels “energised for life” following the “awe-inspiring” journey of self-discovery and awareness. “My soul is soaring,” she says.

The highly subsidised trip offers “so much more” than a whirlwind tour of Israel’s finest attractions. “It’s a journey inward,” says Rebbetzin

duration of the eight-day trip.

“World-renowned speakers of the highest calibre speak on a range of topics, from parenting to pain, love and loss,” said Kraines.

The women, all of whom according to the criteria do not keep Shabbos and have children under the age of 18, return with a suitcase load of not only halva and Ahava products, but memories which according to one participant “will last a lifetime”.

In recent years, hundreds of local Jewish women have grabbed onto this opportunity for soul-searching and spirit-building offered in these specialised tours.

Armed with a burning desire to leave everything behind, including husbands, children and burdensome everyday tasks, these women are searching for that special illumination, a special something far greater than what everyday living can



Sandton moms Sam Behrmann, Tali Dannheisser, Tanya Matisonn and Roxanne Slom on a high after their recent trip to Israel with the Jewish Women’s Renaissance Project.



Tracy Balkin, Jackie Katzman and Jolene Marks who recently returned from the Jewish Women’s Renaissance Project trip to Israel.

Nechama Kraines of Sandton Ohr Somayach community. She is one of six South African city leaders who take it upon themselves to lead and inspire small groups of women for the

provide, explains Kraines.

“These are spiritually uplifting and enlightening experiences targeted to women who are seeking more from their lives, women wanting to bring

light into their homes by experiencing basic Torah and of course leaving with a deep love for the Holy Land,” said one Glenhazel mother.

“The tour literally awakened my

soul and gave me time to reflect on the truly important things in my life, like enjoying my day, my family and friends,” says Matisonn.

According to its founder, Lori Palatnik, the mission of the JWWRP is to “empower women to change the world through Jewish values that transform ourselves, our families and our communities”.

The philosophy behind the jam-packed trips which began eight years ago, and which costs an estimated R20 000 excluding flights, (and shopping excursions of course) is to “inspire a woman” because in so doing, “you inspire a family”.

Says Palatnik: “Inspire enough families, you inspire a community. Inspire enough communities, you can change the world.”

Grace Nahon of Sandton who went on the JWWRP several years ago said: “There is a striking familiarity and a unique bond between Ashkenazi women from disparate cities and walks of life. No matter our circumstances and backgrounds, our bobbas and zeidas lit Shabbos candles, baked challahs and learnt

from the same Torah and this continuity and familiarity is what binds us as a people and sets us apart

“You leave with a deep understanding that it is ultimately up to the women to keep this spiritual flame going. We have the power to do this till the end of time.”

For first-time visitor to Israel, Sandton psychologist, Roxanne Slom, the trip was “mind-blowing”.

“I really felt as if I had arrived home. Standing at the Kotel as a Jewish woman, having grown up in a traditional Jewish home and having attended a Jewish day school, was nothing short of surreal. Experiencing Shabbos in Jerusalem is almost impossible to describe. This trip was food for my soul and will have an everlasting impact on my life.”

Mother of three, Tracy Balkin of Rivonia said: “It was an eye-opening, heart-warming, soul-enriching, experience. I have a new-found love and appreciation for Israel and our heritage. I loved every minute of it.”

The SA Israeli Worker of the Year

NIA MAGOULIANITI-MCGREGOR

President Reuven Rivlin of Israel, recently presented former South African Jonathan Scheftz, with the Israeli Worker of the Year award in the trade category at a ceremony at the Jerusalem International Convention Centre.

Not bad for the former Johannesburg-born electrician and glassblower who couldn’t speak a word of Hebrew when he made aliyah in 2009.

Thanked, along with other recipients in various categories, for “helping Israel grow and making a difference”, Scheftz described the award as “a humbling experience - a gift from G-d”.

When Scheftz heard a few months ago that he was to be presented with the award, he said: “I was at a loss for words. I thought after only seven and a half years in Israel, I’m taking my wife to see the president shake my hand. But I’d had something to prove.”

Before they landed in Tel Aviv in 2009, Scheftz and his wife Lorren, made a decision: “No matter how challenging it is, we’ll make it work. Well, we wanted a challenge and we got a challenge.”

Scheftz’s first job as an electrician in Tel Aviv meant a six hour commute every day to and from his Haifa home. He was also paid the minimum wage. His next job at Ready Mix Industries’ Lime & Stone subsidiary, looking after electrical machinery, saw him win 2014 Worker of the Year in the company.

“I think South Africans are hard workers and I had to work



harder than most because I had a will to succeed and was determined to make a better life for my family. I went the extra mile.” Still, he had haphazard shifts - one day he’d work in the morning, the next in the afternoon, the next at night...

“Israel is a roller coaster, but then you start feeling it. You get into it.”

He was nominated Worker of the Year in September 2016, having joined international company Raphael Valve Industries as maintenance manager three years before. The company then put his name forward for the national awards via the Ministry of Works.

“In January this year a representative from the Ministry came to interview me. He asked me why I worked so hard. I told him: ‘because if I don’t do my job to the best of my ability, then the machinery might not be 100 per cent operational so that the next worker won’t be able to do his work’.”

A few weeks later, his human resources manager called him to say: “I hope you have a suit. You’ve going to the Worker of the Year award ceremony in Jerusalem.”

When President Rivlin shook hands with Scheftz, Scheftz said: “Sir, thank you. It’s been an absolute privilege and an honour.”

Rivlin replied: “No. Thank you. The pleasure is all mine.”

Scheftz has since taken up a new position of mobile technician for JLL, a commercial real estate and investment management firm.

“It wasn’t easy at first being in Israel, but I firmly believe that even if you’re on your knees, you should be standing.”

The miracle of being in Jerusalem for Yom Yerushalayim

RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN

I have just returned from the most extraordinary, exhilarating, breath-taking, inspirational adventure. To be in Israel, and especially Jerusalem, on the 50th anniversary of the Six Day War and the Reunification of Jerusalem, really was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. And all 38 of us - on our Sydenham Shul “Jerusalem 50” Israel Tour - were privileged to be part of it all.

All of Israel is a miracle but the Six Day War was arguably its biggest miracle ever. To have defeated the far larger and much better-equipped armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan in six days flat, was a miracle of Biblical proportions. It was clearly a miracle from G-d who came to the assistance of Israel’s brave, heroic soldiers. And then we conquered the Old City of Jerusalem, which wasn’t even in our sights. Who can forget General Motta Gur’s famous, historic words “Har Habayit Byadeinu - the Temple Mount is in our hands!”

So, there was much to thank the One Above for at this time. And thank Him we certainly did. There were special prayers throughout the city and especially at the Kotel - the Western Wall - with tens of thousands davening and praising Hashem for His great miracles of deliverance.

On Tuesday night, the Great Synagogue in Jerusalem was filled to capacity to hear chazan Chaim Adler and his choir, along with a speech by the UK’s Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis.

Then on Wednesday morning some 30 000 people gathered at the Kotel for the morning service. There, the chazan had

The grand finale of the celebrations was a festive march to the Kotel, through the Old City, by thousands upon thousands. Blue and white dominated the city landscape. In all my visits over the years, I have never seen the streets of the Old City so packed with people as on that day.

to use a microphone to be heard over the crowds. Then, leading rabbis recited special prayers for the Israel Defence Forces and Jerusalem. I davened near Chief Rabbi Mervis of the UK. The festive davening and dancing was quite extraordinary.

A special highlight for us was having our own Sydenham Shul minyan “at the Western Wall on the previous Friday night”. We sang and danced around the bimah after Lecha Dodi, joined by other visitors from around the world.

From then on it was highlight after highlight of events I will never forget.

At the Tower of David, we watched an artistic sound and light show, which was projected onto the walls of the historic tower. It told the story of Jerusalem from its very beginnings until now.

There was a moving ceremony for our heroic fallen fighters at Ammunition Hill, the famous site of one of the fiercest battles for Jerusalem in 1967. We watched a powerful movie featuring the soldiers of that actual battle telling their stories to

their grandchildren.

Tuesday night was called a “White Night”, not only because of the fireworks, but there were concerts throughout the city at all hours of the night. In the evening, there was another special service at the Great Synagogue, symphony concerts at various public squares at different times of the night, and I even saw a concert with Israeli singing star Idan Reichel advertised for 04:00! (No, I didn’t make that one up!)

The grand finale of the celebrations was a festive march to the Kotel, through the Old City, by thousands upon thousands. Blue and white dominated the city landscape. In all my visits over the years, I have never seen the streets of the Old City so packed with people as on that day.

Even during the day, the Old City was literally shoulder-to-shoulder!

And for some reason a certain Donald J Trump decided this was the right time for him to visit Jerusalem too. So, we were compelled to adjust our itinerary to make sure we stayed out of his way and could get to our chosen destinations without huge delays.

Thank G-d, we managed, (more or less) with only a few disappointments. No, I didn’t meet him, we just saw a few helicopters over Jerusalem and assumed it was his party.

None of these hiccups dampened our spirits, though, as it was simply incredible to be in Jerusalem then. The atmosphere, the energy, the massive crowds, were all part of a most magical experience. The vibe was unbelievable. Just to be there and soak it all in personally, was an absolute honour and a privilege.



Queuing at the Kotel on Jerusalem Day



Andy Warhol: Ladies & Gentlemen, II.128, 1975

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Francis Bacon: Figure Writing Reflected in a Mirror, 1977

Generation Sinai creates an appetite for learning

A huge thumbs-up from the very young, and not-so-young, for Generation Sinai, the highly successful Torah learning project initiated by Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein some years ago. It is growing from strength to strength. The connection between parents and children learning Torah together, found wide resonance. This year the emphasis was on the mezuzah - and even grown-ups expressed pleasant surprise at what they could learn - in a fun way. But equally important was the appreciation for parents and children to spend “quality time” together, with Torah learning the universal glue. The SA Jewish Report asked kids and their parents what Generation Sinai means to them.



Sam, Justine and Robert Rubin from Bella Vista



Hirsch Lyons Girls' School Generation Sinai participants



Jenny Israelite with Jessie and Sophia Shalem from Rosabelle Klein Nursery School



Shaul Rubin with Shayna and Yakov from Torah Academy

What does it mean to you to be able to do this?

Aiden Kalk (Minnie Bersohn Nursery School): It was lekker to learn together.

Gina David (King David Linksfield grade 5): It was exciting and interesting to learn new stuff together with my mom.

Romi Bravo (mom at King David Linksfield Junior Primary): It was such an amazing experience to be able to teach and share with my children. They are truly privileged to have opportunities like these to enhance their Jewish identity.

Mushka Feinblum (Torah Academy grade 3): It was a “nice” project because we usually don’t get to do this as my parents are busy.

Anonymous (Hirsch Lyons Girls): It was cool to learn with my mom, because I knew more - I got to teach her.

Saul Brest (Sydenham Pre-Primary): You got to spend time with mom and dad.

What was it like learning with your child?

Cynthia Reichman (mom at King David Victory Park): There are not enough words to describe the amount of nachas and love one receives when doing and being with grandchildren. I am truly blessed.

Lindi Galaun (mom at King David Sandton): It was very special to spend the quality time together. We are all so busy that this is the perfect excuse to just focus on being together.

Anthony Selikow (dad at King David Victory Park): It was very exciting to learn at school with my child in class to reinforce the importance of Torah at school.

Is there something special you remember from Generation Sinai in previous years?

Tyler Diamond (King David Linksfield grade 2): That moms and dads spent some time at school.

Is there a specific memory you will take home from today?

Kelly Pogir (King David Sandton grade 1): I loved my mom watching me daven.

Ricky Cohen (Sydenham Pre-Primary): My dad said I’m the most brilliant child ever!

Dakota Trakman (King David Linksfield grade 4): Me and my family learning Torah together and answering questions together at school, was very special.

Samantha Friedman (mom at Minnie Bersohn Nursery School): I never went to a Jewish day school and I am proud that my children have that privilege.



Lisa and Ryan Kalk with Aiden and Shay from Minnie Bersohn Nursery School



David and Talia Jankelowitz with Ethan and Kira from King David Victory Park



David Cohen with Ricky and Danni from Sydenham Pre-Primary



Jocelyn, Danni, Jesse and Alexia Angel from King David Linksfield Junior Primary



Max, Camryn and Ronli Dorfman from King David Sandton

Yom Yerushalayim reinforces KD Schools’ Zionistic ethos



Camryn Gilchrist; Leah Joss; Madison Williams; Demi Lurie; Tyra Kuper; Jaime Diamond; Ella Barnett; and Aviva Samuels.

GABY COHEN

Yom Yerushalayim on the King David Linksfield campus started with special Yom Yerushalayim assemblies, which included poems, tributes, songs and Israeli dancing. This was followed by joint celebrations by King David Pre-Primary, Junior and Senior Primary, arranged by KD Soul.

Everyone – learners, teachers, parents and staff - danced joyously together to the music of Nefesh and the spirit in the school was wonderful.

Rabbi Vigler recounts his Six Day War experience

AMY JAFFE

Sandton Sinai Primary School kids had a special Yom Yerushalayim assembly where they learnt the meaning of this day and Rabbi Avraham Vigler, who fought as a soldier in the Six Day War, spoke to the children about his experience. There was also a live feed to the Kotel to watch the celebrations in the Old City of Israel marking 50 years since the reunification of Jerusalem after the Six Day War.



King David Sandton commemorates Israel in song and prayer

SEAN KORB

King David Sandton was a great alternative to being at the Kotel over Yom Yerushalayim. Learners learnt about the Kotel, Jerusalem, and all the happenings of the tumultuous 1967. An educational shuk gave the children the chance to speak Hebrew and their very own Western Wall was a place to daven and do their tefillot, their special prayers for the State of Israel.

Grade R and grade 1 learners at King David Primary School Sandton, placing their special prayers in the KD Sandton “Kotel”.



Sydenham Pre-Primary’s busy Yom Yerushalayim

JENNY MILLER

Sydenham Hebrew Pre-Primary School celebrated Yom Yerushalayim with the children painting, baking, davening, singing, dancing and eating.

Enjoying their ice cream cone cupcakes in front of the “Kotel” are Tyla Civil; Danni Cohen; and Gabriella Marcus.



KD Victory Park celebrating Yom Yerushalayim

HANNA BEN-MOSHE

King David Victory Park celebrated Yom Yerushalayim last week Wednesday with a special assembly for the 50th anniversary of the liberation and unification of Jerusalem.

The learners sang, danced, and spoke about the history and special significance of Jerusalem to the Jewish People.

Israel’s Deputy Ambassador to South Africa Ayelet Black, and Aviad Sela, head of the Israel Centre, were the gueat speakers.

After the assembly, a memorable photograph was taken on the Victory Park campus of all the learners, forming the shape of a heart with the words “Jerusalem 50” inside.

Photoa: Yael Gordon



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Art: not a saviour, a mirror for South Africa



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

In this country’s nightmare under President Jacob Zuma and his mafia-like network who run the place, the political power play is mainly in black arenas with the entire gamut of good, bad, pure and corrupt. Whites - some nine per cent of the 56 million population - try to understand it mostly from the sidelines.

Making sense of such things often falls to artists, as in 20th century Germany between the world wars, when exceptional, radical art was produced, capturing the spirit of the times. South African art holds a troubled mirror to society today, epitomised by two recent theatre productions.

The first is by veteran 71-year-old satirist Pieter Dirk Uys, called Evita Bezuidenhout and the Kaktus of Separate Development at Pieter Toerien Theatre in northern Johannesburg. During apartheid the character he created,

the Afrikaans woman Evita Bezuidenhout, lampooned racist white South Africans and their leaders such as President PW Botha.

She became so famous that she boasts she is mentioned in Nelson Mandela’s autobiography. Now, in the post-apartheid confusion, she says she belongs to the ANC. Her commentary remains piercing.

Her audience at this venue is largely white and middle aged. The content focuses on “white” perspectives about black politics. Jacob Zuma and former Presidents Thabo Mbeki, Nelson Mandela and Kgalema Motlanthe, feature in it, along with other politicians.

Describing herself as a “non-black” South African - an inversion of the pervasive phrase “non-white” which defined blacks when whites held power - she articulates how Afrikaners’ political relevance has waned, amidst the barrage of fake news and the residue of the fake history Afrikaners were taught at school many years ago to bolster ethnic fervour.

One theme is white fear in today’s hyper-PC atmosphere of expressing critical political views, lest one be accused of racism, now that power lies in black hands.

Evita also mentions in a telling aside the Weimar Republic in Germany which had a role in producing Hitler, as a reference to EFF leader Julius Malema’s possible rise to be South Africa’s president one day, with his populist anti-white diatribes.

The second production, Hallelujah! at Wits University’s theatre, portrays the abominable practice of “corrective rape” still exercised in some corners of black society on lesbians. It was written by coloured playwright Xoli Norman. The cast contains talented, young and mostly black drama students from Wits, who portray their characters brilliantly under the direction of a drama lecturer at the university who is also a leading light of South African theatre - and who happens to be white.

But here’s the rub: At the post-performance Q&A she was challenged by an aggressive black student who questioned her entitlement as a white person to direct a play dealing with pain in black culture.

The answer, of course, is that pain is universal, as are the tools of art such as a theatre directors’ finely-honed skills. But despite attempts to articulate this, the

accusative question remained hanging in the air, with the whites present feeling defensive and frustrated.

Evita Bezuidenhout’s portrayal of the “irrelevance” of white South Africans, and the black student’s rejection of whites’ entitlement to employ their skills in areas black radicals consider to be their preserve, are elements of a crucially needed debate for South African society.

The feeling whites have that they are silenced and disenfranchised by radical blacks, is not surprising, as the latter assert their identities after centuries of colonialism and apartheid.

Where to from here? For years to come, this society will be healing its wounds. The common decency of most South Africans, and the generally warm relations between blacks and whites on the ground, means there is a chance it will succeed, if only expedient politicians - including President Zuma - will stop stoking the racial embers.

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

Community Column

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

Dealing with school play anti-Semitic aftermath

As reported last week, the Board was working with King David Victory Park in addressing an unfortunate incident of anti-Semitic abuse that took place at an inter-school one-act play competition. Among the allegations made, were that learners from Edenvale High School directed “Heil Hitler” chants and Nazi salutes at their King David counterparts.

On Monday, representatives of the Board and King David met with the principal of Edenvale High to discuss what happened and determine the best way forward.

There are always two sides to any dispute. Every reasonable effort must be made to ascertain the facts

and Genocide Centre, as well as his unequivocal condemnation of anti-Semitism and sincere apology regarding the incident.




Above Board
Jeff Katz
National Chairman

Since the meeting, a letter to the Edenvale parents has been sent out, strongly condemning the incident and acknowledging the hurt caused to the Jewish community. However, it was also suggested that the matter had been “blown out of proportion” and that while the learner in question had indeed behaved inappropriately, he had not intended to cause offense to the Jewish students.

In our subsequent interaction with the Edenvale principal, we have raised our concern

with this perceived playing down both of the gravity of what occurred and the extent to which the errant learner was in fact culpable.

We asked that an unequivocal apology for what occurred, be sent to King David Victory Park. This has since been done, with Edenvale having unconditionally apologised for the offence caused and putting on record its strong condemnation of any form of anti-Semitic or racist behaviour.

The letter further confirmed that the school had agreed to work with the SAJBD and the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre on an education and sensitivity programme at the school and we look forward to working with Edenvale High in this regard.

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

Letters

DURING THESE TIMES IT BEHOVES US TO READ PSALM 48

It behoves all of us to study Psalm 48 during the tumultuous Jerusalem Jubilee period and beyond. The summary to Psalm 48 in the Stone Edition of the Tanach reminds us that: “Jerusalem is eternally beautiful and glorious because G-d chose it for the abode of His Presence.”

The commentary to Psalm 48 in the Hirsch Psalms is most uplifting and should also be considered, together with Rabbi Ilan Ranaan’s

words in last week’s Jewish Report: “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”.

Edna Freinkel
Johannesburg

WHO IS TO BLAME FOR SCHOOL PLAY ANTI-SEMITISM?

I refer here to your report in last week’s Jewish Report, on the absolutely scandalous behaviour of high school children at Waterstone College in Kibler Park.

As a Jew in my 80s, having lived in South Africa all my life, I have experienced similar anti-Semitic incidents from my youth and I feel the pain. Somehow, I thought that this type of behaviour and action had now settled, largely through the Holocaust and accounts by survivors of that horrific period of man’s history.

But no, this will reign on and on! For this I blame not the children, but the Christocentric church movements and the parents of those children. Somehow the message of the teachings of many of their leaders, to behave as true Christians has not penetrated their abysmal minds.

Whatever have my people done to such persons to teach their offspring such despicable behaviour? The plot of the play (The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas) should have sent a different message to the audience, children actors and even parents - and even teachers!

But no, the behaviour of all these chanters is absolutely not tenable. If the principals of each school involved do not have the gumption to find out who stimulated such behaviour and correct such acts, they should be held accountable.

One would have thought the new dispensation in South Africa would have tempered such acts. It seems that such hatred lurks below the surface of those churches and in adults’ minds!

Maurice Skikne
Johannesburg

FOR DONALD TRUMP, TO ‘BUFFOONERY’ ALSO ADD ‘IRRELEVANT’

For a time, Europe’s political elite were filled with confusion and trepidation about American President Donald Trump and his foreign policy. His rantings appeared to be cemented in right-wing populist ideology.

As it turned out, the Europeans realised their mistake. They now view Trump as an unprepared and ill-informed dilettante, whose sentence structure is limited to a noun, a verb, and ending in “fake news” or “build a wall”.

The world will be watching Trump closely on his international tour of the Middle East and Europe - not for diplomatic triumphs of his making, but rather to what extent Trump will erode America’s global standing even further.

Jacob Heilbrunn, editor of the conservative

National Interest Journal, told a meeting at the German Foreign Office that “the dominant reaction to Trump right now is mockery”, to which the word “irrelevant” can also be added.

Irrelevant inasmuch as the upcoming Nato meeting with Trump has been downgraded from a summit to a dinner. Those attending the meeting have been asked to confine remarks between two to four minutes to keep Trump’s attention. In other words, there is no need to invest meaningful time and effort, because the Trump presidency is destined to be the shortest in US history.

Errol Horwitz
Cape Town

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

Small in numbers but big in action, these PE women



Beryl Meyer, Pamela Leibowitz, Adela Kapp, Elaine Racussen, Sandra Orwin and Wendy Bethlehem.
OWN CORRESPONDENT

The Union of Jewish Women in Port Elizabeth, though small in numbers, fight above their weight, as was again demonstrated by their recently held most successful 76th annual general meeting.

The committee is only six strong with a total membership of 94. However, this small band of dedicated volunteers, work relentlessly to uphold the mission of the UJW which is to invest in all the peoples of South Africa and to create a better life for all.

The guest speakers this year were Reb Aryeh Furman, rabbi of the PE Hebrew Congregation and Lindsay Ziehl, manager of the Yokhuselo Haven for Battered Women. Among the guests were some of the recipients of the 2016 projects.

Dream Dress Drive PE received matric dance dresses, shoes and fashion jewellery, to give to girls who cannot afford to buy their own.

Groom a Girl Initiative enabled these girls to buy a computer. This group consists of young professional women providing assistance to young girls who come from disadvantaged

backgrounds. They invest time in grooming each girl individually, as well as empowering them to be the best that they can be, and that despite their background, there is a world of opportunity awaiting them.

Heaven’s Mission Angels Feeding Scheme provides soup kitchens for the hungry across PE and its surrounds. It received dry goods such as samp, baked beans, mealie meal and soup packets.

Algoa Council for the Aged received knitted blankets, beanies and scarves.

Yokhuselo Haven is a safe house for battered women. It received garden furniture and plants, as well as children’s clothing and knitted toys.

Nkosinathi Foundation of aid for the blind and partially-sighted people, receive a monthly food allowance.

Port Elizabeth Hebrew Congregation received 20 siddurim.

The Jewish Pioneer Memorial Museum received a security gate.

UJW PE sent money to the UJW headquarters to start a fund for the terrible fires that raged in Israel in November, with the money handed to the JNF.

Yael invited to sing French anthem at rugby international

PETER FELDMAN

A Jewish Johannesburg mother of two has been honoured by the South African Rugby Board by being invited to sing the French national anthem, “La Marseillaise” at the Test match between South Africa and France at Loftus Versfeld in Pretoria, on Saturday, June 10.

The singer is Yael Benjamin, who launched her professional music career in November last year with her album, “Fly Away”. She told Jewish Report of the excitement of being chosen to sing the French anthem in front of thousands of people in the stadium, with millions more watching on TV.

“As a child I could sing the anthem which I learned at school when I studied French,” she said, “and now it’s a very exciting opportunity for me to receive international coverage.

“Although I am deeply patriotic about South Africa, it is a great honour to sing this anthem for our French visitors and it affords me another opportunity to use my singing as an expression of multiculturalism. I truly believe that music can be a universal language, creating unity among us all.”

Yael speaks several languages, including French and Hebrew, and can sing in eight.

Other exciting family news she shared is that her seven-year-old daughter Naomi, in grade 2 at Sandton Sinai, has been cast as Gus in Cinderella, which will be staged at the People’s Theatre in Parktown at the end of June. This



very much seems a case of like mother, like daughter.

Naomi also plays the piano, dances, does musical theatre and is a gymnast. “She is passionate about music and performance and to quote her ballet teacher, she ‘shines on that stage’,” said her proud mother.

Of her own singing career, Yael says she is planning another album with original material and is collaborating with other artists on the project.

“As a woman and as a proud South African, I am motivated by both inspiring others along their journeys as well as by being inspired by the successes and innovations of others, all contributing to a better country and a better world,” she added.



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Friday (June 2)	Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, Forest Town. Time: 09:30. No charge, donations welcome. Tea and refreshments. Bookings: Jenny (011) 645-2515.
Sunday (June 4)	• Jaffa's Morning Market takes place from 08:30 onwards at Jaffa, 42 Mackie Street, Baileys Muckleneuk Pretoria. Tea garden, different stalls, kosher food, tombola, children's activities. Contact: (012) 346-2006.
Monday (June 5)	• UJW hosts Prof Peter Delius, professor emeritus at the department of history at Wits, on "The Neglected Stone Ruins of the Upumalanga Escarpment". Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 10:00. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW Office (011) 648-1053.
Tuesday (June 6)	• WIZO Forum hosts a tour of the exhibition "The Goldene Medina: Celebrating 175 Years of Jewish Life in South Africa". Venue: The
Sunday (June 11)	• Big Band Music Appreciation Society meets at the Beit Emanuel Slome Auditorium. Programme is compiled by Ian Young with an audio from his play list. After interval a DVD on Andre Rieu. Time: 14:15 sharp. Enquiries: Marilyn 072-243-7436 or Jack 082-450-7622.
	• Temple Israel Heritage Centre presents a one-woman show, "From Koe'sisters to Kneidlach", written and performed by Chantal Stanfield and directed by Megan Furniss. Venue: Auto and General Theatre on the Square, Sandton. Time: 14:00 for 14:30. Tickets: R250 each. Booking through the theatre (011) 883-8606 or www.theatreonthesquare.co.za or computicket www.computicket.com. Enquiries: Reeve Forman 083-228-7777 or reeva@intekom.co.za
	• Second Innings hosts Linda Levy on "Life is a Do-It-Yourself Project". Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres, Sandringham. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors (incl tea and light refreshments). Contact: Linda Fleishman (011) 532-9701.

A teddy for children in distress



OWN CORRESPONDENT

Beit Emanuel has been running a project for several months now, of distributing knitted teddy bears to children in hospital. Last week Wednesday the congregation had a tea party to thank some of the regular knitters for their amazing contribution to the project.

“These wonderful women fully deserve our thanks and their efforts may hopefully encourage others also to contribute knitted teddies.”

The project is facilitated by Max Green, head of the Care Committee at Beit Emanuel.

Beit Emanuel entertained 22 visitors from Thembalame Care Centre, who have knitted nearly 300 teddies for the Beit Emanuel Ubuntu Bears project.

This project began on Mandela Day last year and runs till Mandela Day this year, July 18, the icon’s birthday.

So far Beit Emanuel has distributed close to

500 teddies to children attending outpatient clinics and some in-patients at Raheema Moosa and Charlotte Maxeke Hospitals in Johannesburg and a special distribution to Zithulele Hospital in the Eastern Cape.

What prompted this project was a belief that all children are distressed by illness and by the need for treatment at hospital and that a cuddly teddy can, to some extent, help reduce this distress.

Beit Emanuel has found enthusiastic knitters at several homes for the elderly, the Union of Jewish Women and among the shul’s congregants. The shul also has had generous donations towards wool, and teddy bear stuffing.

All contributions are welcome. You can provide knitted or crocheted teddies (we’ll provide the pattern) or donate double ply wool and teddy bear stuffing. Contact the office at Beit Emanuel Synagogue, (011) 646-6170.

Milch carries on Jewish UK boxers’ tradition

JACK MILNER

He might be 36 years old, but light-middleweight Tony Milch continues to make an impact on the British professional boxing circuit.

Milch maintained his unbeaten record as he claimed his 13th professional victory last Saturday night, although he did admit to being “disappointed” with his overall performance.

He beat Lithuanian Arvydas Tryzno on points and the referee, who was the sole judge, awarded the fight to Milch by just one point, 58-57.

My coaches kept me busy, but it is a long time out. Keeping busy is the key; you can spar, but it’s not the same as being in the ring.

“I was a little bit disappointed with my performance. I’m not making any excuses, but it was so hot in the hall - I was shvitzing, full-on shvitzing! I felt very flat out there, and not as sharp as usual - I had to grit my teeth at times.”

Describing the six rounds as a “learning experience”, he added: “The guy was coming for a win; he wanted to take my head off, so I had to listen to my coach, Ian Burbedge, and box to instruction. I moved around and boxed from the outside, but it was a great learning fight.”

This was his first fight since his November knock-out win and he believes ring rust may have contributed to his performance. “Six

months out of the ring is a long time. My coaches kept me busy, but it is a long time out. Keeping busy is the key; you can spar, but it’s not the same as being in the ring.

“I had to dig deep. It was a tough night but, as I said, it’s a great learning curve. I wouldn’t say it was frustrating, I felt flat myself, but that’s nothing to do with him, I give him full credit. He came to win - and to win by a knock out - whereas for me, I wanted to show my skills tonight, which I wasn’t fully able to do.”

Milch believes boxing teaches one about life. “I love competing, and winning feels great. Not just for myself, but for the team around me also. And for all those supporting me. Hard work pays off.

“A challenge is a challenge. It’s not about the outcome, it’s about how you address it and deal with it as best as you can while it’s happening. Boxing, or no boxing, we all have battles in life. They all make you stronger.”

Looking at what is coming next he added: “I’m on the radar now for some national titles. It will be either the Southern Area or British - that’s what’s on my mind though - or even the English one.”

It is interesting to note that Jewish boxers have had great success in Britain over the centuries, especially considering the man known as the “father of modern boxing”, Daniel Mendoza, was Jewish. He was English champion from 1792 to 1795.

Anna Whitwham in her novel “Boxer Handsome”, although not Jewish herself, decided it would be right to make her hero of Jewish/boxing stock.

As she delved into the history of British boxing, she noted that fighting is an immigrant sport, and with the influx of Jewish refugees



Tony Milch (left) on his way to a narrow points victory over Lithuanian Arvydas Tryzno at the York Hall on Saturday night.

from Poland and Russia at the end of the 19th century, London’s East End boxing scene, already tapping Irish talent, was further reinvigorated.

Ted “Kid” Lewis was born Gershon Mendeloff in 1893. In 1913, he won the British and European featherweight titles, and in 1915 was named world welterweight champion in America.

Harry Mizler, whose shorts bore a Union Jack on one side and a Magen David on the other, was taught to punch by his big brothers Moe and Judah. His victories included the British lightweight crown, which he successfully defended for just nine months before losing it to Jack “Kid” Berg, whose career would span three

decades and nearly 200 professional contests.

Other stars of the era included Benny Caplan and Jack Hyams, the latter competing as “Kid Froggy”.

“By the 1920s, boxing had become an integral part of life in London’s Jewish East End,” wrote Whitwham. “My great-grandfather Abe, would regularly join spectators at Premierland, the venue whose inaugural bout had featured Kid Lewis.

“It was what everyone did, my great-aunt recalls. He even took her once, though she was too small to remember anything except standing on the seat beside him. When her brothers were a bit older, they were sent to boxing classes for self-defence.”

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