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■ Volume 22 – Number 43 ■ 7 December 2018 ■ 29 Kislev 5779

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Alarming findings in Stan & Pete kashrut investigation

NICOLA MILTZ

The investigation into the Stan & Pete *treif* chicken saga has revealed shocking details of how the country’s former foremost kosher caterer allegedly used unkosher meat (particularly chicken) in its operation.

The Bowmans Report, released last week, makes prima facie findings that Stan & Pete, owned by Jeff Shull, served unkosher chickens over a period of time prior to the discovery of the *treif* chickens in its kitchen by a Beth Din inspector on 28 February this year.

The 16-page report reveals that the discovery was not an isolated incident. It allegedly appeared to be part of a pattern of wilfully bringing non-kosher food into its kitchen. More than that, the chicken was then apparently wrapped in kosher packaging to ensure that the *mashgichim* (kashrut inspectors) did not catch on.

A reliable source told Bowmans that Stan & Pete employees “had purchased non-kosher chicken and meat from retail outlets. They removed the non-kosher packaging, placed the chicken and meat into plastic containers brought from Stan & Pete’s premises for this purpose. They then wrapped the containers with plastic and Beth Din tape and took the containers into Stan & Pete’s premises after the *mashgiach* had left for the day. They cut the seals on the meat fridges and freezers and placed the containers into them, and then resealed the seals in a manner which was not noticed by the *mashgiach* when he broke the seals to open the fridges and freezers the next working day.”

The report also found prima facie evidence that non-kosher chicken was served at some functions or to some kosher customers, but it did not draw any conclusion with regard to meat.

“In the course of our investigation, we received evidence that Stan & Pete

had purchased non-kosher chicken and meat prior to the incident on 28 February 2018,” the report stated.

“One of the people we interviewed, who we consider to be credible, told us that from his personal knowledge, Stan & Pete had been purchasing non-kosher chicken and meat from retail businesses (which he named) for some years prior to 28 February 2018, and that this had been used at kosher functions.”

During the period of analysis of chicken products, Stan & Pete “used significantly more chicken than the kosher chicken it purchased, but a significant majority of the chicken used by Stan & Pete during this period was kosher”.

“There is prima facie evidence that the discovery of non-kosher chickens on Wednesday 28 February 2018 in the kitchen of Stan & Pete was not an isolated incident, and was part of a pattern of wilfully bringing non-kosher food into its kitchen. This is not a conclusive finding, as we consider that we are not in a position to come to any such finding without establishing that Stan & Pete did not purchase frozen kosher chicken from supermarkets in quantities which would significantly reduce the significant shortfall reflected by our forensic analysis.”

From the onset of the investigation – and in spite of several attempts by Bowmans to meet Shull at his premises to share information – Shull refused to do so, according to the report. This made the investigation extremely challenging. The forensic

analysis was conducted over 14 months, from 1 January 2017 to 28 February 2018.

The report made it clear that what they had was prima facie evidence, “not a conclusive finding”.

It filled in the gaps of the original story. On 28 February 2018, the report related, during the course of a normal inspection by one of the

not know how the *treif* chickens came to be on the premises.

Bowmans said Shull refused to co-operate with its investigation, and its team was not given access to “any of its executives, management, or current employees, or to any of Stan & Pete’s documents and records”, according to the report.

This refusal to co-operate

quantities of kosher chicken and meat purchased by Stan & Pete with the quantities of chicken and meat used in products supplied by Stan & Pete.

Scores of interviews, telephone conversations, and email communication took place.

Bowmans made recommendations based on its investigation. It said



Cape Town shul gutted by fire

See story on page 4

Union of Orthodox Synagogues’ (UOS’s) inspectors, about 20 *treif* chickens were found in the kitchens of Stan & Pete. The inspector immediately informed three Beth Din *dayanim* (judges), who went to the premises. They asked the proprietor of the kosher chicken supplier to come to the premises, and he verified that the chickens were *treif*.

Shull then repeatedly told the *dayanim* and the inspector that he did

“significantly hampered” the investigation.

Bowmans therefore said it found “no evidence” to support Shull’s initial claim that the *treif* chickens might have been put there by an employee who was replacing chickens he or she had stolen.

The investigation was conducted along two main lines: interviews with all relevant stakeholders; and a forensic analysis to compare the

mashgichim and inspectors needed to be “be vigilant about looking out for criminality”, including avoiding distraction, or being required to work in a secluded area for lengthy periods.

It recommended that the seals placed on fridges and freezers by the *mashgiach* when leaving the premises be tamper proof.

It agreed with the recommendation made by international kashrut

Continued on page 12>>

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Stellenbosch University denies Israelis were disinvited

TALI FEINBERG

When Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela removed the names of Israeli academics from the online programme of her conference at Stellenbosch University, she said she did it in the hope of diffusing protest. She told the *SA Jewish Report* she had planned to return their names once the issue had been resolved.

However, that was not to be, as the Israeli delegates withdrew their participation after they saw their names had been taken off the online programme.

The conference, titled “Recognition, Reparation, Reconciliation: The Light and Shadow of Historical Trauma” began on Wednesday, and will run until Sunday. More than 320 people from 23 countries are attending.

“The reason their names were taken off the online programme was to remove what would be a flashpoint for protest once the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign (PSC) statement was released to the public. The aim was simply to allow me to continue the discussion with PSC,” she said.

“Since graduate school, and even before, my personal and professional identity has been embedded in the academic ethos. The first premise of this ethos has been to encourage free discussion and exchange of ideas regardless of

their content or of whoever is expressing them,” she said.

“Boycotting certain individuals because of their affiliation, their opinions, or their findings contradicts this basic first rule of academic life. Therefore, the call for boycotting a group of individuals whose work I know is aligned with mine goes against everything I believe in, my values, and the seriousness with which I take professional relationships with colleagues.”

She said this was the first time she had had to deal with this kind of situation. “I have been thrown on the horns of an ongoing dilemma. On the one hand, I want to protect Stellenbosch University from protests and ensure that this conference, which I have worked so hard to organise, goes well, and not allow any organisation to control how discussions are conducted, and what conversations are permitted. On the other hand, knowing that the flare-up is because of Israeli participation, I wanted my Israeli colleagues to understand the pressure that this imposes,” she said.

Professor Shifra Sagy of Ben-Gurion University confirmed that Gobodo-Madikizela had encouraged her to come to the conference even after the programme was altered. The two academics have known each other for years as they have both worked extensively in reconciliation and dialogue.

Gobodo-Madikizela said she was deeply committed to the work that her Palestinian and Israeli colleagues were doing. She described her longstanding connection to these academics, going all the way back to 1998, when she worked with Sami Adwan, a Palestinian Professor of Education, and Dan Bar-On, the late Israeli Professor of Psychology.

“I hosted Bar-On the previous year, when he visited South Africa to observe the public process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Both Adwan and Bar-On are among leading figures in peace scholarship and activism that seeks an alternative form of engagement to the one that dominates Palestine-Israeli relations, and Adwan and I have shared platforms at international conferences,” she said.

“The late Bar-On’s book on the children of Nazi perpetrators influenced my own work, and became one of the foundational pillars in my scholarly pursuits,” she added.

From her perspective, Gobodo-Madikizela never wanted to silence or isolate Israelis – quite the opposite. “We, of course, believe in academic freedom, and we believe in the right to boycott, given the role that this played in our own struggle against apartheid. But I also know that our conference was not the appropriate vehicle for the application of the boycott,” she said.



In a statement released on 30 November, Stellenbosch University Rector and Vice-Chancellor Wim De Villiers echoed this view. “When the first statement expressing opposition to the participation of Israeli speakers came to the attention of the organisers, a strategic decision was taken to remove the names of individuals and their institutions from the website [not from the programme] as a precautionary measure to prevent academics and their institutions from being targeted, and to prevent the conference from derailing.”

He explained that only then did the “Israeli delegates decide to withdraw their participation as a result of circumstances beyond the control of the university and the conference organising committee”.

He added that “terminology such as ‘disinvited, uninvited or invitation unilaterally cancelled’ in reference to speakers who will

no longer be attending, is simply not true. At no point did the conference organisers or Stellenbosch University request or suggest that any speaker should withdraw from the event. Gobodo-Madikizela continued her engagement with the various role players in a spirit of reconciliation, expressing regret over their withdrawal, and assuring them of their safety in South Africa if they were to attend.”

However, all the Israeli delegates told the *SA Jewish Report* that as soon as the online programme was altered, they had felt unwelcome. Anti-Israel activists, on the other hand, believed that they had scored a victory. “We commend the conference organisers for their respectful engagements and ultimate decision to respect the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel guidelines for the implementation of the academic boycott against Israel,” wrote Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions South Africa (BDS SA) on 29 November.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies pointed out in a statement on Facebook that, “It was because they had been unilaterally kicked off the programme that those academics decided not to attend the conference. There was nothing ‘voluntary’ about it. Even Stellenbosch University admits that the conference programme was changed to exclude speakers that various BDS-aligned factions were objecting to.”

There is one point that the Israeli academics and the university agree upon. In the words of De Villiers, “The most disappointing outcome of this sequence of events is the absence of robust debate on the Israeli-Palestinian issue at the conference.”

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
18:15	19:26	Johannesburg
19:15	20:27	Cape Town
18:15	19:24	Durban
18:15	19:41	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:58	Port Elizabeth
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Torah Thought

Brighter than Chanukah candles

This weekend is one of the busiest on the Jewish calendar. It’s called Shabbos-Rosh Chodesh-Chanukah. On Friday afternoon, we will light two sets of candles, the Chanukah menorah with its six burning candles, followed by the regular Shabbos candles. On Shabbos morning, we will read from three Torahs in shul, compared to the regular Shabbos, when we read from one and sometimes two Torahs.

Judaica stores around the world are bustling with customers buying the necessary paraphernalia for lighting the menorah. Olive oil, candles, cups, and wicks are purchased in bulk during this time of the year. But that wasn’t always the case. There were times when

the cost of Chanukah lights was financially prohibitive for the average shopper.

Maimonides asks a practical question. If a person could afford only one candle for Friday afternoon, which should he use it

for, Shabbos light or Chanukah light?

Logically, one could suggest that he use it for Chanukah. Shabbos candles are lit every Friday afternoon, while Chanukah candles are lit for only eight days of the year. Grab the opportunity to kindle the Chanukah light, and resume lighting Shabbos candles the following week. But that is not the ruling of Maimonides. Shabbos light takes priority because it symbolises *shalom bayit*, domestic peace. Its purpose is to bring light and peace into the home, and because *shalom bayit* is key, Shabbos light takes precedence over Chanukah light.

Life’s responsibilities pull us in many different directions. Family, friends, work, studies, hobbies, and more. Especially in today’s technological age with the internet and social media at our fingertips, we are often juggling multiple activities simultaneously. It is challenging to keep up, and we are often given a choice of where to direct our attention. Maimonides’ ruling is more relevant now than ever before. *Shalom bayit* – peace in our homes, our marriages, and our families – is the

most important aspect of our lives, more important than all our pursuits and aspirations, and even more vital than a mitzvah like Chanukah candles.

The Torah tells us about the *sotah*, the wayward wife who is suspected for committing adultery. The couple would travel to the Temple looking for assistance and advice. The cohen would prepare the “bitter water”, which the wife would drink to help verify whether or not she was guilty. The preparation of this special potion included the writing on parchment of this specific Torah portion, with G-d’s name written out in full. This was dissolved into the water until there was no remnant of writing left on the parchment. This story illustrates the importance of the husband-wife relationship and *shalom bayit*, to the point that G-d is willing for His name to be erased in order to help bring peace into their home.

When there is peace in our homes, we experience blessings and success in all other facets of our lives. This is the ultimate festival of light.



Rabbi Yehuda Stern, Sydenham Shul

South African Jewish Report

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Subscriptions Avusa Publishing (Pty) Ltd. Tel: 0860 525 200 • Board of Directors Howard Sackstein (Chairperson), Herby Rosenberg, Dina Diamond, Herschel Jawitz, Shaun Matisonn, Benji Porter. Advertisements and editorial copy do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, staff and board of directors. Tel: 011 430 1980.

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SA Jews shocked by hate speech u-turn

NICOLA MILTZ

Bongani Masuku, the man who was found guilty of hate speech in the Equality Court last year for threatening to subject Jews to “perpetual suffering”, was this week exonerated in the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA).

Masuku was found not liable for having committed an act of hate speech after his appeal was upheld.

Nine years ago, Masuku, then Congress of South African Trade Union (Cosatu) International Relations Secretary, threatened to harm South African Zionists, as well as other hateful utterances.

The appeal court ruling was shocking news for the Jewish community, as Masuku had been found guilty of hate speech twice for the same statements, first by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and then by the Equality Court. He had been ordered to apologise, but refused and appealed the hate speech judgement.

A disheartened Wendy Kahn, the National Director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), told the *SA Jewish Report*

this week that the board noted the ruling by the SCA on Tuesday.

“We respectfully disagree with certain important aspects of its findings. The board strongly adheres to its belief that the statements by Bongani Masuku constituted unlawful incitement to cause harm,” she said.

“We will now be looking to the Constitutional Court to address these critical issues, and hopefully to confirm the original hate speech rulings of the SAHRC and Equality Court.”

The Equality Court found that Masuku’s words constituted hate speech, and more specifically hate speech directed at Jews.

The SCA expressed concern that the words were not directed at Jews, they were directed at Zionists, and the two were not synonymous.



Bongani Masuku

Furthermore, it ruled that Masuku’s words did not constitute incitement to cause harm on the basis that the words used were metaphorical in nature and not direct incitement to harm.

The court’s ruling was based on a previous judgement which said that a court should not be hasty to conclude that because language is angry in tone or conveys hostility, it is characterised as hate speech, even though it has overtones of race or ethnicity.

Ultimately, the SCA found that the words were protected speech, and did not constitute hate speech in terms of the Constitution.

The case goes back to 2009, when Masuku, in written communication and on public speaking platforms, made a series of vitriolic and highly inflammatory comments about Jews who supported Israel. This took place soon after Operation Cast Lead, a three-week offensive launched by Israel to halt rocket attacks by Hamas in Gaza. Cosatu accused Israel of committing human-rights violations.

In February 2009, Masuku said, “As we struggle to liberate Palestine from the racists, fascists and Zionists who belong to the era of their friend Hitler! We must not apologise, every Zionist must be made to drink the bitter medicine they are feeding our brothers and sisters in Palestine.

“We must target them, expose them, and do all that is needed to subject them to perpetual suffering until they withdraw from the land of others and stop their savage attacks on human dignity. Every Palestinian who suffers is a direct attack on all of us.”

The majority of his statements were made during Israel Apartheid Week 2009 on the east campus of the University of the Witwatersrand during a lunch-time lecture hosted by the Palestinian Solidarity Committee and the Young Communist League.

Masuku said, “Any South African family who sends its son or daughter to be part of the Israel Defence Force must not blame us when something happens to them with immediate effect...”

“Cosatu is with you, we will do everything to make sure that whether it is at Wits, whether it’s at Orange Grove, anyone who does not support equality and dignity, who does not support rights of other people, must face the consequences, even if it means that we will do something that may necessarily cause what is regarded as harm.”

He also reportedly said that Jews who continued to stand up for Israel should “not just be encouraged but forced to leave South Africa”.

In 2009, the SAHRC ordered Masuku to apologise for his hate speech. When he refused, the commission took it to the Equality Court. In July last year Judge Dimpholetse Moshidi ordered Masuku to make an “unconditional apology” to the SAJBD for the hurtful and

harmful comments he had made.

Moshidi said in his judgement that Masuku’s statements were hateful and hurtful, “in essence... made to instil detestation, enmity, ill-will, and malevolence towards Jews in South Africa. It is distinct advocacy of hatred - nothing else.”

Masuku still refused to apologise, and took the matter on appeal.

According to the SCA judgement, “The fact that particular expression may be hurtful of people’s feelings, or wounding, distasteful, politically inflammatory or downright offensive, does not exclude it from protection. Public debate is noisy, and there are many areas of dispute in our society that can provoke powerful emotions.

“The bounds of constitutional protection are only overstepped when the speech involves propaganda for war, the incitement of imminent violence, or the advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender, or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm.”

It went on to say, “Nothing that Mr Masuku wrote or said transgressed those boundaries, however hurtful or distasteful they may have seemed to members of the Jewish and wider community. Many may deplore them, but



that does not deprive them of constitutional protection.”

This week, Cosatu welcomed the SCA decision. In a statement, it said, “We will never keep quiet in the face of extreme barbarism of Israel against the Palestinian people.”

The trade federation also took a swipe at the SAHRC saying, “What was more heartbreaking about this case was to see the deterioration of an institution like the SAHRC that has essentially out-sourced its work to the SA Jewish Board of Deputies.”

It accused the SAHRC of being “too busy doing the bidding of the Zionist lobby”.

Boycott Divestment Sanctions South Africa tweeted the statement made by Cosatu at 15:26 on 4 December, saying, “South Africa’s trade union federation @_cosatu welcomes the ruling from the Supreme Court of Appeal clearing the federaton of the frivolous AntiSemitism claims by the Israeli lobby group @SAJBD. Full statement below: #FreePalestine”

The Masuku matter lives on.

Chanukah menorah toppled near Harvard campus

A large menorah was toppled in a public park near Harvard University just before the start of the first night of Chanukah.

A white male dressed in black was seen riding his black bike up to the menorah in Cambridge Common and pushing it over on Sunday afternoon, according to two witnesses, the city’s police department reported. He then rode away.

“We’re looking into the possibility of it being a hate crime,” police spokesman Jeremy Warnick told the *Boston Globe*.

In a video recorded by a passer-by immediately after the menorah was toppled, a group of people walking through the Cambridge Common was seen lifting the menorah back into place. The video has been viewed more than 9 400 times.

The menorah is sponsored by Chabad at Harvard with permission of the City of Cambridge, according to Rabbi Hirschy Zarchi, the college Chabad’s director. His organisation has sponsored the public menorah for about 19 years, he told *JTA*.

The menorah has been vandalised before, Zarchi said, but the last time was about a decade or more ago.

Cambridge Mayor Marc McGovern called

such vandalism an act of hatred.

“Cambridge stands in opposition to such animus, and remains vigilant to the slightest offense,” he tweeted on Sunday.

On 28 November, a 6-foot-high (1.8 metre), 300-pound (136 kilogram) menorah was stolen from outside a synagogue in nearby Brookline, a Boston suburb. It was later found nearby, according to Boston police, who said the thief may have wanted to sell it as scrap metal, the *Globe* reported.

A spate of anti-Semitic incidents including swastikas and hate speech have beset a town north of Boston.

“This negativity and hate is out there,” Zarchi said.

But the rabbi said he took comfort from the kindness of the people who “sprang into action to restore the menorah and put it back in place”.

“It’s a very Hanukkah story,” he said, of the power of light over darkness. “Their actions moved many in the community.”

The Chabad community was expected to gather at the public menorah on the Cambridge Common on Thursday to acknowledge the efforts of those who restored the menorah, and the people who recorded the video. (JTA)

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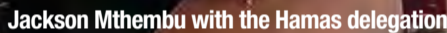
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Continued on page 11>>

NICOLA MILTZ

Mthembu said on Twitter on 4 December, “Last night, @ANCParliament Caucus signed a memorandum of understanding with the #Hamas Change and Reform Bloc in the Parliament of Palestine. The #MOU seeks to introduce practical steps in mobilizing the world community in ending of #Israel’s occupation

“ Hamas has been here a number of times, feted by the ANC, and now has an office in Cape Town. Hamas’s fundamental principle is the destruction of Israel and the creation of a single, Muslim, state in its place.



“Let’s see what happens in a few months’ time – whether South Africa shows genuine willingness to play a meaningful role, and if it is going to do something with Israel. At this stage, we cannot overreact, everything is in line.”

It remains to be seen whether the ANC will roll out any red carpets for visiting Israeli delegations in the future. Not so long ago, they were rudely snubbed.

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A Chanukah of tough decisions

What a week for this community! During the week of Chanukah, we have Hamas hobnobbing with the ANC, and Cape Town’s Beit Midrash Morasha shul experiencing a fire that destroyed five Sifrei Torah.

But two other incidents have put a lot of pressure on our communal leaders. First, the Union of Orthodox Synagogues (UOS) received Bowmans’ final report on its ‘investigation into the use of non-kosher chicken and other products by Stan & Pete caterers’. Bowmans found there was prima facie evidence (based on first impressions and accepted as correct until proven otherwise) that Jeff Shull’s company was buying, cooking, and serving unkosher food.

Then, on Tuesday, the Supreme Court of Appeal of South Africa overturned the judgement of the Human Rights Commission and the Equality Court, in which they found that statements made by Cosatu’s Bongani Masuku in 2009 amounted to hate speech.



The appeals court declared this null and void, and dismissed the complaint... almost 10 years after the statements were made.

In both instances, our communal leaders are left with massive decisions to make, which may well amount to spending much more money on legal and other fees. And all this to what end?

Shull’s Stan & Pete was once the number-one catering choice for kosher events, particularly of the large variety. People trusted Shull. He was an integral part of this community. Now, in many circles, his name is spoken in hushed tones and people wonder if Jewish folk are still using his services. Others speak about how he seems to be doing well in *treif* circles. Who can tell?

While our community does not forgive easily, there are those who get angry when people say unpleasant things about Shull or Stan & Pete. We are a complex community.

However, what is clear from the findings is that people reported to Bowmans that Stan & Pete employees had bought non-kosher chicken, and went to the trouble of surreptitiously wrapping them in traditional kosher covering, Beth Din seals and all, to trick the *mashgichim*. That is astonishingly underhanded, immoral, and dishonest! There is prima facie evidence of going to this extent to con people into believing something was kosher when it wasn’t.

Now, I know enough about our religion to know where the sin lies, and it is certainly not with the consumer, no matter how *frum* they are. However, why would anyone who is trusted and loved willingly do this to their own community and customers?

What this unpleasant situation did do is give the Beth Din and the UOS a serious wake-up call. It prompted not just the Bowmans investigation, but one that would revamp and revise everything the Beth Din does in running a kashrut department. The UOS brought in global kashrut experts to guide it in making sure that this doesn’t happen again.

That is a massive positive outcome in this whole ugly saga.

Now, some people may believe that the next step is the court of law, but is it? This will be at a huge cost to the UOS that some may say should rather be used to implement all the kashrut policing upgrades. Would that not

serve the community better or would it be more worthwhile to see justice being done. Has Shull not felt the wrath of the community – which can be very, very painful, and undoubtedly life-changing? Has he not been punished? What is the punishment that fits this crime?

There are some who say this is between Shull and G-d, and not up to us to get involved. Are they right? I can’t answer these questions. I am sure the debate and discussion at the UOS must be fervent and tough. I must say, I am glad this is not my decision.

“The shamash is the candle that lights the others; be the shamash.”

Moving on to the offices of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), I don’t believe for one minute that anyone expected that Masuku would be exonerated of hate speech. This has been an incredibly protracted case, one which seemed unending. It still doesn’t seem to be over, and may well land up in the highest court of the land.

I, for one, kept wondering why this guy just didn’t do the right thing and apologise, as it was so apparent to me – and obviously I am not a legal expert – that this man said the most hateful things to our community.

He threatened to “target and expose” every Zionist, and “do all that is needed to subject them to perpetual suffering until they withdraw from the land of others”. In other words, he wanted Jews to suffer so much they would leave Israel.

He went on to – among other things – threaten South African families who send their sons or daughters to serve in the Israeli Defence Forces, saying they “must not blame us when something happens to them with immediate effect”. This is a clear threat of violence because of people wanting to defend the Jewish State.

This community, for all intents and purposes, supports Israel. With very few exceptions, we believe Israel has the right to defend its people. So, it appears that this is quite obviously threatening hate speech towards us.

It was quite clear to the Human Rights Commission and Equality Court. However, it clearly didn’t have the same impact on the appeal court judges. This is quite astonishing, and leaves the SAJBD with big decisions to make. The Board clearly would like to see this case go to the highest court in the land, the Constitutional Court.

Already, there are huge legal costs, thanks to the appeal court finding. What if the finding doesn’t change, but then what if it does? There are high stakes at play.

What does this appeal court judgement mean for us? Can we afford not to keep on at this? Can we afford to continue with it? Again, I am sure there has been much debate and discussion going on in the offices of the SAJBD. I am glad that this, too, is not my decision.

There is a great deal going on in this community in the middle of Chanukah, the festival of light. I read something on Facebook earlier that resonated for me, what with everything that is going on in the boardrooms of our communal leadership, and in our country. It said: “The shamash is the candle that lights the others; be the shamash.” So, from me to our leaders, be that shamash, and do the right thing for all of us.

Chag Sameach and Shabbat Shalom
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

Friends of Israel and Trump

I am in Buenos Aires to report on the G20 world leaders summit. It has been a diplomatic test for Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman. It was his first international gathering after a damning Central Intelligence Agency report blamed him for ordering the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October.

He needn’t have worried. British Prime Minister Theresa May threatened that she would push him on his role in the murder, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel stressed that her country would not export arms to the Saudi Kingdom in the current “uncertain” climate. However, American President Donald Trump welcomed him warmly to the Argentinian capital.

Trump’s thinking is clear. Riyadh is important to the United States because of the huge number of deals it has signed with US defence contractors. It is also crucial in the battle against Iran and, as the president himself has said, “it helps Israel”. Jerusalem could not agree more.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said on more than one occasion that to ensure the stability of the world and the region, Saudi Arabia must itself remain stable. And, Netanyahu wants to keep his friends.

This is why it is significant that the G20 took place in Argentina. Since becoming President of South America’s second-largest economy three years ago, Mauricio Macri, of the centre-right political coalition Cambiemos has strived to revitalise the occasionally-strained relations between Argentina and the Jewish state.

His efforts have brought hope to the mostly pro-Israel Argentinian Jewish community, and he’s been praised by Netanyahu for being “a true friend of Israel”.

Relations between the two countries have had ups-and-downs over the years. There have also been rampant manifestations of anti-Semitism, particularly following the capture of Adolf Eichmann, one of the major organisers of the Holocaust, by Israel’s national intelligence agency, Mossad, in 1960.

One of the must-see side-line visits for my post-G20 travels was 14 Garibaldi Street – now 4261 – Buenos Aires. This is the place where Eichmann was living under the pseudonym of Ricardo Klement until he was forcibly brought to Israel to face trial.

The house no longer exists, and the plot has been purchased by the authorities to prevent it from becoming a shrine or place of interest for future neo Nazis or anti-Semites. Today, it’s just an empty piece of land.

To some extent, Macri has managed to combat any residual Jew-hatred that was tolerated, if not encouraged, by previous administrations. It is fairly common to see Jewish men walking in the streets of Buenos Aires wearing yarmulkes, and the community numbers more than 180 000, the largest in Latin America.

Both countries share common concern about the rise of international terrorism and the danger posed by Iran and Hezbollah.

Last year, Macri handed over 140 000 World War II documents to Israel that shed light on the assistance Argentina gave to war criminals seeking refuge after the Holocaust. As many as 5 000 Nazi officers and collaborators found refuge in the country. A further 2 000 fled to Chile, and between 1 500 to 2 000 to Brazil. Among Macri’s documents were secret files and photographs from 1939 to 1950 that he told Netanyahu were handed over “so that the state of Israel can make sure that they are

DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier



investigated. This is very important for us.”

The G20 was another important event for the Argentine president. This year has arguably been his most difficult in office. There is a lot of anger against conservative financial policies that he insists are necessary to repair what was done to the economy by his predecessor, populist Cristina Kirchner.

Macri sought a record \$56 billion (R773 billion) aid package from the International Monetary Fund after the country’s currency crisis dragged it into recession. He has boosted ties with the US and Israel in an effort to attract foreign investment.

I’ve been asking how a right-wing president can support Israel? When I pose this question to Argentinians, they don’t see any contradiction.

Both countries, local Jews are quick to point out, share common concern about the rise of international terrorism and the danger posed by Iran and Hezbollah. The latter has reportedly been using South American countries for money laundering, and there is concern this could develop into larger criminal, perhaps even terrorist activities.

Macri and Netanyahu see eye-to-eye on issues like free trade, development, and security. The Argentinian president has been trying to encourage other South American leaders to warm to Netanyahu, and build stronger relations with Israel. Jerusalem’s intelligence expertise and burgeoning technology sector are a huge attraction.

The eight years under Macri’s predecessor, Kirchner, resulted in a sharp deterioration in ties between Jerusalem and Buenos Aires. Kirchner’s recognition of Palestine as a “free and independent state”, and her tweets which reinforced anti-Semitic stereotypes, are said to have contributed to increased anti-Semitism online.

Relations worsened when in January 2013, she signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Iran that included a “truth commission” to jointly investigate the two bombings of Jewish institutions in Buenos Aires in the 1990s. These attacks left 114 people killed and more than 500 wounded.

In the first attack in March 1992, a suicide bomber drove a truck into the front of the Israeli embassy. Two years later, a suicide bomber drove a van into the headquarters of the Buenos Aires’ Jewish community. It is Argentina’s deadliest terrorist attack to date.

But since Macri assumed office, he’s pushed for a separate full and complete investigation. He has called for the same into the suspected murder of Jewish Special Prosecutor Alberto Nisman, who established that Iran was responsible for the bombings. Nisman accused Kirchner of covering up Tehran’s role. In June last year, an Argentine federal court found Nisman had been murdered as a direct consequence of his accusation against the former president.

Macri was the first Argentinian president in five years to attend a remembrance service marking the anniversary of the bombings. He left a wreath in front of the Jewish community centre building, and offered consolation to the bereaved. He also met surviving victims of the Israeli embassy bombing.

A memorial in front of the Jewish community centre lists the names of those who died, and a fervent hope that such a disaster never be repeated.

Under the current Argentinian leadership, things look good for Jews and Israel; but it is the economic uncertainty of the country that will determine whether Macri remains in power or not.

The American consulate at 1 Leila Khaled Drive



OPINION

Howard Sackstein

An ANC motion to rename Sandton Drive after the notorious plane hijacker Leila Khaled passed in the Johannesburg City Council with the support of the EFF on 29 November. The victorious armchair revolutionaries may well have won a psychological victory in their ongoing efforts to support Palestinians in their struggle against Israel, but their efforts to try to offend Israel may portend a devastating backlash for South Africa. Khaled rose to fame in 1969 when she

became the first female to hijack an airplane. On 29 August 1969, Khaled and an accomplice, Salim Issawi, hijacked an American civilian aircraft, TWA flight 840, from Rome to Tel Aviv while flying in Greek airspace. The Boeing 707 aircraft carried 120 civilian passengers and seven crew. Khaled would later explain that she thought Israeli Ambassador to the United States and subsequent Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, would be on the flight, he wasn't. But on the plane was American diplomat, Thomas David Boyatt. Boyatt was held hostage for six days. Although no one was injured in the hijacking, Khaled and her accomplice blew up the front nose of the TWA plane while it was stationary on the ground in Damascus. While the crew and passengers were released by the Syrian government after the incident,

the Damascus regime detained the six Israeli passengers and held them captive until December that year. Khaled and Issawi walked free. Now infamous as a terrorist for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Khaled and her Nicaraguan accomplice, Patrick Argüello, went on to hijack El Al flight 219 from Amsterdam to New York on 6 September 1970. This hijacking was part of an attempt by the PFLP to hijack four civilian aircraft in a single day. This series of events became known as the Dawson's Field hijackings, after the airfield where two of the planes landed in Jordan. Also taken that day were American TWA flight 741, Swissair flight 100 from Zurich, and American Pan Am flight 93. Khaled and Argüello boarded the El Al plane using Honduran passports, and once the plane reached British airspace, they attempted to storm the cockpit using guns and grenades. Pilot Uri Bar Lev, realising that a hijacking was in progress, put the plane into a steep nosedive causing everyone standing in the craft to fall to the floor. Argüello threw his hand grenade at the passengers down the aisle of the aircraft. Mercifully, the grenade failed to explode. Argüello drew a pistol and shot air steward Shlomo Vider. The commotion gave enough time to an El Al security officer to shoot Argüello. He subsequently died from his wounds. With the help of fellow passengers, Khaled was subdued. The flight was diverted to Heathrow Airport in London, where Khaled was arrested. Three days later, as part of an operation to free Khaled, a British Airways, BOAC flight 775 was also hijacked, with Khaled's release one of the hijackers' demands. In October 1970,

Khaled was released by British authorities in exchange for hostages in a subsequent hijacking. To name a road after a plane hijacker who targeted civilians is a puerile attempt by the ANC and the EFF to slap Israel in the face. However, by doing so they are bound to offend British – and more importantly American – sensibilities deeply. When the Jewish South African-born, newly-nominated United States Ambassador Lana Marks arrives in Pretoria to assume her role as American envoy to South Africa, she may well discover that the American consulate in Johannesburg is situated at the address of 1 Leila Khaled Drive. This will not sit well with her or her bosses in Washington. In a world where the struggling South African economy is begging the US and Europe for investment, jobs and assistance with economic growth, the renaming of Sandton Drive makes South Africa look like a petty tin-pot revolutionary state unfit for any serious consideration. If we are to try and resurrect the South African economy, which has been looted by the lackeys of the ANC and the EFF, we will need to recognise that the world has changed since the era of the Cold War. Those who would have found the cutesy shenanigans of the ANC and the EFF appealing have all lost power, and in the new world order, South Africa, Cuba, and Venezuela stand out as the lonely voices of a revolution that has long been lost.

• Howard Sackstein has a BA in International Relations, an LLB degree and a masters degree in Political Advocacy and International Conflict Resolution.

Activism against gender-based violence begins at home



OPINION

Bonita Meyersfeld

Violence against women and girls is a pandemic. A conservative estimate is that more than 35% percent of women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence from men in their lifetime. The majority of perpetrators are husbands, intimate partners, or someone the women know. The United Nations-sanctioned 16 days of activism seems a trite response to one of the largest social harms worldwide. But it does provide an opportunity to raise awareness of a problem that is among the world's most serious human-rights violations. And, it is an extreme human-rights violation, recognised by the UN as a form of torture. Among women aged 15 to 44, acts of intimate violence cause more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents, and war combined. Homes become prisons from which victims cannot escape, sometimes because they have nowhere to go, or because no-one believes them. Often it is because the blow that crushes a cheekbone or a rib or an arm also crushes the spirit. And a crushed spirit is its own form of imprisonment. Of course, physical violence is only one manifestation of violence against women. Emotional abuse is often as damaging as physical abuse. Financial abuse, controlling behaviour, extreme jealousy, outbursts of anger that threaten violence, these are all forms of gender-based violence. All of them hurt. All of them are prohibited by law. What is vital is the recognition that it is a feature of our community. We are not immune. This is unpalatable, but it is the truth. Violence against women in the Jewish community not only exists, but can also be extreme. There will be people reading this who know they suffer from – or perpetrate – some form of domestic violence. How do we respond to this as a community? The most powerful initial step we can take is to stop the silence. There are ways we can do this that demand little from us. We can, for example, host an evening with friends where we watch *Once Were Warriors* or *Sleeping with the Enemy* and discuss it afterwards. We can decide to read *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* in our book clubs. We can make our shiurim about violence against women. We can call out

people making sexist jokes or those who make light of violence. There are also some tougher steps we can take. These demand more from us personally. We can set ourselves targets. Men can set a target of asking 16 men over the 16 days whether they have ever hit a woman. Women can ask other women if they have ever been hit. We should ask this not only because we need to discuss the answer, but because we need to break the taboo around the problem. People will get angry at being asked this. So, introduce the question within the context of 16 days of activism. Say that you have set yourself a target, as a man, of asking 16 other men whether or not they have hit a woman, and offer to talk about it if they have. Or, you can ask your sister, mother, daughter, if they have ever been hit. And then listen to them when they answer. I started working in the area of gender-based violence more than 20 years ago as a lawyer giving victims legal advice. My most effective role, however, was not as a lawyer; it was as someone who asked the hard questions, and then listened to the answers. I would always ask, "Do you know that what is happening to you is wrong?" The answer would be a quiet, tentative response, "Really?" Yes, really. What is happening to women in South Africa, and in our community, is wrong. How we respond to it is within our control. We can choose silence, or we can choose discourse. We can choose complicity, or we can choose opposition. We can choose the status quo, or we can choose change. We can choose to unmask this harm, and we will indeed be the light unto other nations. The violence may start at home, but so does the solution. Let us start the conversation in our homes, in our communities, and in our families. And let us be leaders in the 16 days of activism against violence against women. We have the power and the choice. I hope we choose wisely.

- *The 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children is taking place from 25 November to 10 December.*
- *Bonita Meyersfeld is an Associate Professor of Law at Wits Law School; the recipient of the 2018 Jewish Achiever Europcar Women in Leadership Award, and has been awarded the Knight of the National Order of Merit by the French president for her work on human-rights and gender-based violence. She is the founder of Lawyers Against Abuse and the author of the book "Domestic Violence and International Law".*



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Israel story based on a fake narrative

PETA KROST MAUNDER

The Israel story is “malfunctioning or getting warped in translation”, says Canadian-born Israeli Matti Friedman, who is a senior journalist and author based in Jerusalem. He would know, having been reporting on the Middle East from Israel for the past 23 years since he moved there as an Associated Press (AP) journalist.

“It is about how much is covered and the way it is covered that is so telling,” he told participants of the international Jewish Media Summit last week in Jerusalem. “When I started here in 2006, there was a war between Israel and Hezbollah, and there were more than 40 fulltime staffers in Israel for AP,” he says. “Israel is a small country with a population of less than New York City. The number of journalists was dramatically more than those covering China, with 1.3 billion people, or even all the sub-Saharan African countries combined.” He explained that the Israel story was seen as the most important news story in the world by virtue of the number of people sent to cover it. “If Africa was a priority, that is where you would put most of your people,” he says. “But instead, it is this small piece of the world with very little importance to the greater global picture.”

Today, the number of journalists in Israel has dropped a bit, but “only because the industry has largely collapsed”.

Foundation narrative

Israel is covered as an ongoing conflict story, which conjures up images of death and mayhem. However, in 2017, 27 people in Jerusalem were killed in a violent death out of 860 000 people in the city, according to Friedman. Those deaths were unlikely to have had anything to do with the conflict. In Indianapolis in the same period, 175 people died in violent deaths, he says, “but nobody would suggest you shouldn’t go there”.

He adds that in Syria there have been half a million fatalities over the past few years, yet nobody is suggesting that people boycott that country.

“The level of attention paid to this country is not because of the bloody level of the conflict,” Friedman says. He attributes this strange situation to the “foundation narrative of Israel”, which is that “the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians was founded in 1967, and once peace is discussed, everything will be fine”.

This narrative is untrue because “Israel’s wars are not against Palestinians. Its biggest enemy is Iran. So, it is not just about Palestinians and Israel, it is much broader.”

To consider the full story, one has to understand the regime in Syria, the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt, and the Russian relationships with Arab countries – and that is just the beginning. “Then you see that the problem is not easily solved, and it is all about how you frame the story. “If you zoomed into one-fifth of the Arab world that is controlled by Israel, then nothing I do as an Israeli



makes any sense. Israelis look at their conflict, and see it as a regional conflict. They see themselves as a small minority in an enclave in a big region. Palestinians are part of a minority of a huge Muslim world in this region, and Israelis are about six million Jews in a massive Arab world.”

And so, what is happening is that people conduct debates that are led by Israel’s enemies.

Small player in regional conflict

“If you look at it regionally, it is quite simple. Israel is one small player in a very big conflict in the region. If Israel signed a peace treaty, it would have a small impact on the Middle East. It is about dictators who have been oppressing people for decades. If you focus on the one piece of land, you won’t see it. Israel is an insignificant player, not a decisive player in the region.

“As for the belief that the conflict began in 1967, it couldn’t be further from the truth. It is not about the West Bank and Gaza, the conflict is far broader and older than that. The

Palestine Liberation Organisation started in 1964. The occupation, which is an obsession of Western media is a symptom of the problem, not the cause, and withdrawal from the territories will not solve anything,” says Friedman. He is adamant that Israel cannot solve the problem to which the world believes it holds the key.

“Many people believe Israelis are bad people. Israel knows, though, that if the occupation ends, there will not be a solution. There is a belief around the world that if you do the right thing, things will get better, but events in the world do not bear out that way.

“When Israel moved out of occupied territories and south Lebanon, the vacuum was filled with Hezbollah. Then, it pulled out of Gaza, and its place was filled with Hamas. The idea is that if you dismantle the bad system, it will be great, but that doesn’t work.”

Friedman cites the example that people believed that if you got rid of Muammar Gaddafi, Libya would become a democracy, and everything

would work out. Obviously, that didn’t happen.

“In Israel, we have no margin of error. Unlike in Iraq, there is not enough room to manoeuvre. Israel cannot create a Palestinian state, it can only pull back. But it can’t pull back and hope for the best. There is fear of what may happen, and it is justified in the Middle East.”

Fiction being used as a PR tool

Friedman says that fiction is being used as a public relations tool by Israel’s enemies. It is an easy story to report because as a journalist, Israel is a safe country to live in relative to any other in the region. “You are unlikely here to find yourself being beheaded on YouTube. You can go to the Gaza border, write your story on the conflict, and then in the evening, you can be drinking in a bar served by the sister of the guy you called a war criminal in your story,” he says.

He explains that in the world of news, Israel is a bestseller, partly because “the country is webbed into the international DNA of the West”. “Few other stories make me angry.

Jerusalem, Nazareth, Bethlehem – these are emotive places.” Then, it is a news story that doesn’t die down. “If you cover Yugoslavia. You cover it, it dies down, and you go home, but Israel keeps on being a story, and people respond to it. Putin can invade Ukraine, but nobody wants to boycott Russian products. It doesn’t illicit the same kind of anger. When Israel does something in Gaza, Jews have to increase security in shuls around the world.”

Jews illustrate what is wrong

Friedman believes that what lies behind the “Israel ogre” story is anti-Semitism. “Jews have always had a role in the universe – to illustrate what is wrong. Whatever the world doesn’t like, Jews are seen to represent it. Jews were called the killers of Christ.

“So, what don’t they like now? Israel and Jews are seen as an example of racism, or nationalism, or colonialism. In the United States, Israel is discussed as [an example of] white supremacy. Whatever you don’t like, you can connect with Jews. Jews are globalists, and they move money around in their own interests.

“It’s not a news story, but a morality story. Jews represent what the West hates about itself.”

Friedman believes that this story fits into a world of distortion and counter distortion, where one side supposedly has to be good, and the other evil.

He maintains that the only way to solve the problem of the media telling a fake news story using the same old narrative is to ensure that knowledgeable people report the story. “Most people who cover the Middle East don’t know what they are talking about,” he says. “Because of this, they allow the press to be an ideological battleground, and a tool in the hands of politicians.”

Apple chief uses Hebrew at anti-Semitism conference

JOSEFIN DOLSTEN

Apple Chief Executive Tim Cook reiterated the company’s commitment to fighting hate and used a Hebrew phrase to do so.

Cook invoked a phrase from Leviticus 19:16 in its original language on 3 December in New York City at the Anti-Defamation League’s Never Is Now summit on anti-Semitism and hate.

“*Lo ta’amod al dam re’eikha*. Do not be indifferent to the bloodshed of your fellow man,” Cook said, after receiving the ADL’s Courage Against Hate Award.

Cook, who is not Jewish, said in his address that the biblical mandate moves Apple to speak out on behalf of the rights of targeted groups, including immigrants and the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community.

“It moves us not to be bystanders as hate tries to make its headquarters in the digital world,” he said.

Cook has criticised United States President Donald Trump’s zero-tolerance immigration policies as “inhumane”, and has spoken publicly about being proud to be gay.

The Apple leader was speaking at the third annual Never Is Now summit, which addresses topics of anti-Semitism and hate in the world today. About 1 300 people attended the one-day conference, which featured presentations on anti-

Semitism on campuses, immigration policies, diversity in the Jewish community, and the forces driving modern anti-Semitism.

In a morning panel, historian Deborah Lipstadt was asked if Jewish women should attend the Women’s March. Some of its leaders have come under fire for their association with anti-Semitic Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, or for failing to distance themselves from him in spite of his bigoted messages.

“No,” said Lipstadt, a professor of modern Jewish history and Holocaust studies at Emory University. Farrakhan, she said, had likened Jews



to termites.

“And what does one do with termites?” she said. “Exterminate them. When you stand with someone who calls me a termite, I’m not marching with you.”

Cook referenced the shooting in Pittsburgh in October, in which a gunman killed 11 worshippers at the Tree of Life synagogue.

“This year, we’ve seen the stubborn and constant evils of anti-Semitism, violence, and hate darken the streets of Pittsburgh and so many other places,” he said. “Yet, at the same time, we see more and more people opening their eyes and rising to their feet, speaking out in defence of a society where we are all bound together by the values we have in common.”

Cook cited the policy of Apple’s online music store, iTunes, not to allow white supremacist-themed content or violent conspiracy theories, as an example of its commitment to fighting hate.

“At Apple, we’re not afraid to say that our values drive our curation decisions. Why should we be?” he asked.

Social media sites, including Twitter and Facebook, have come under fire for not doing enough to get rid of hateful content on their platforms. Cook in recent months has sought to distance Apple from the social media giants, saying Apple deals in hardware and does not depend on advertising revenue from users. (JTA)

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A different singing of *Hatikvah*

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



On Wednesday morning, we woke up to the devastating news that the Beit Midrash Morasha synagogue had burned down and along with it, seven Torah scrolls were destroyed in the blaze. The symbolic and religious significance of a burning shul cannot be overstated. Nor can the destruction of Torah scrolls. In an effort to get a sense of the events and the mood, I spoke to a number of community members and rabbis in the area. I did so on air and off.

One witness, Jeremy, described the moment when people were informed that the Torahs could not be saved. He sobbed as he recounted it, and spoke in detail about the kaddish that was recited and songs and prayers that were sung.

One such song was *Hatikvah*. The circularity of the singing of *Hatikvah* cannot be ignored. Three weeks ago, two Grade 9 boys at Herzlia Middle School achieved notoriety by “taking a knee” during the singing of Israel’s national anthem at a prize giving. The reaction was severe, and has served to be one of the more divisive moments in Cape Town’s history. The school initially tried to discipline the boys and then – given the tremendous pressure it faced in mainstream media and from some Jewish circles – seemed

to retreat. The final result is pretty much unknown. But all around the Jewish media world, the Herzlia boys who “took a knee” were discussed and debated. And then, on Tuesday evening, after a fire decimated a shul in Cape Town, *Hatikvah* was sung. I am pretty sure that no one went down on their haunches. I am even more certain that if the Herzlia boys were present that night, they would have sung as loudly and as strongly as they could have. I don’t remember the name of a man who addressed us at the Jewish Media Summit in Jerusalem last week. He was not a famous Israeli politician. He was not a well-known journalist. I am not even certain why he spoke to us.

It was a week of sound bites. A week of tweetable quotes, and instagrammable moments. But his comment was profound and stood out as one of the more powerful of the trip. That is something, considering that he was up against the Israeli prime minister, president, members of Knesset, journalists, and authors. “You can’t feed a healthy Jewish body on a diet of tragedy,” he said. He is so right. We need to look at the Morasha fire. We need to consider the loss of seven Torahs during the festival that brings and spreads light. We need to look at young children who “take a knee”. And, we need to look at the singing of *Hatikvah*. They exist in a continuum. They are interlinked and they can’t be separated. Each of us needs to identify for ourselves what thread it is that links them.



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IUA-UCF’s Naomi Hadar moves onto new challenges

JORDAN MOSHE

Naomi Hadar, the Chairperson of the Israel United Appeal United Communal Fund (IUA UCF) for 17 years, stepped down from her position last week. For those who know Hadar, she is a connector of people, with an extraordinary list of friends and contacts, someone always willing to go out on a limb to help others. In fact, Israel Ambassador Lior Keinan expressed gratitude to her for exactly these qualities. “She was the first to introduce me to Jewish community leaders so that my transition to South Africa would be easier when I arrived,” he said. “She cares for Israel passionately, and though you can take her out of Israel, you can never take Israel out of her.” Hadar’s sojourn in South Africa was not meant to be long term. She came here 25 years ago because her husband, Ishi, landed a two to three-year contract as a mechanical engineer, and they didn’t leave. The daughter of Holocaust survivors, Hadar was born on a moshav into an environment of familial warmth. Her father – who lived to be 103 – was especially proud of raising a Jewish family in Israel. Says Hadar, “He and my mother arrived in Israel in 1946 after marrying the previous year a few months after the war ended. He used to say that he had defeated Hitler by creating a family, educating them as Jews, and raising them in Israel. He believed it was his way of taking revenge for what the Nazis had done.” Though there were few other children her age on the moshav, she has only good memories of her upbringing. “My mom worked two jobs and my father worked three to support their growing family,” she says. “They did everything they could for us. I had the most amazing childhood because of their commitment to me.” After completing six years of primary school on the moshav, Hadar went on to attend high school, served two years in the Israeli Air Force, and then completed a degree in science and biology. Eager to serve others, Hadar began volunteering in every sphere imaginable. “I’m hyperactive,” she says. “I’ve always involved myself in volunteering, organising, and being part of big projects. From cultural clubs to adult education, I involved myself in whatever I could.” When she and Ishi first arrived in South Africa, their stay was finite. “We arrived here with our two children, and though we were really settled in Israel, we looked forward to seeing the wider Jewish community and exposing our children to it.” A staunch Zionist from the beginning, Hadar remained determined to return to the moshav in which they lived as soon as possible. She recounts: “All the furniture we bought here was purchased with Israel in mind. We always tried to envision where it would be placed back home. We even considered not opening the gifts we received here, thinking there was little point if everything would be going back to Israel.” Still, Hadar became increasingly involved in the South African Jewish community. Approached by Rabbi Zigmund Suchard, Hadar was invited to teach Hebrew at Wendywood

Primary and High School in an informal setting. “The rabbi asked me to be involved for only three weeks,” she laughs. “It became a commitment of a few years.” Thanks to Hadar’s involvement, the programme became part of an educational curriculum, and would eventually inform the teaching programmes of other schools. Although principals headhunted her and sought to involve her in their teaching programmes, Hadar opted to volunteer at the IUA-UCF, and became a lay leader in the organisation. After chairing the Partnership2Gether project for some time, Hadar rose up the organisation’s ranks, eventually heading up the organisation. Under her leadership, it made multiple, meaningful contributions to the local Jewish community. “One of the things that really troubled me when I arrived was the way in which Yom Hazikaron was observed,” she says. “It was a minor day for the community. I went to the commemoration and saw no more than 50 people in the room. It really upset me. “I had lost a friend to one of the wars fought for Israel, so I took it on myself to promote Yom Hazikaron and show the community just how important it was. Today, I think it is something of a highlight. More than 1 000 people attend the ceremony. That is something special.” Hadar’s other achievements include



Israeli Ambassador Lior Keinan and Naomi Hadar

arranging several missions to Israel and Poland, organising a visit to South Africa by the late Shimon Peres, and supporting Israel continuously through projects which included donating playgrounds to the Jewish state on its 60th birthday. She says that she befriends every person she meets, thereby establishing an impressive network of true friends to whom she can turn to for assistance on any occasion and for any cause. From ambassadors to politicians, academics to ministers, Hadar certainly has an impressive circle. “People always tell me that I’m the one to call when there’s an issue,” she laughs. Although she has stepped down, Hadar will continue to serve the community by playing the role of Executive Director of the South African Friends of Sheba organisation, a position which she intends to take up with zest starting next year. “If you want something you’ve never had, you have to do something you’ve never dared. I want to continue pushing myself and taking on new challenges, helping people along the way, and making a difference,” she says. Says Zev Krengel, the vice-president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, “Naomi has always been very caring and committed to South African and world Jewry. She was always willing to help, especially when working with the Israeli government. I wish her luck as she begins this new step in her journey.”

Weaving the threads

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Local conceptual artist Kim Lieberman and United States Supreme Court Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg have connected across continents over a deep understanding of the concepts underpinning lace. It all started in a mud bath on the Italian island of Vulcano. “I was chatting to an American woman I’d just met, and I mentioned that I make conceptual art and lace,” recalls Lieberman. “She asked if I’d heard of Judge Ginsburg – also known as RBG. She told me that she wears lace collars to make political, feminist statements. You can just imagine the shivers I had. So many of the concepts she spoke of I embed in my lace works. I knew I had to make RBG a lace collar. I



Retired Judge Albie Sachs and Kim Lieberman

immediately also knew how it would look, and the concepts it would convey – the same concepts with which she imbues her own collars.” On her return to South Africa, Lieberman shared her plan with retired Judge Albie Sachs, with whom she also has a special connection. “I first met Sachs on a beach,” recalls Lieberman. “I told him I’d like to donate a work to the Constitutional Court, and that’s how *Constellations* came about.” Painted on postage stamp paper, *Constellations* depicts 18 different people each connected to the court from the judges, including Sachs, to the tea lady, and the car guard outside. All 18 figures – a number chosen because it signifies *chai* (life) – are painted in blood red oils and are linked by a blood red silk thread. *Constellations* has been hung in the court since 2009. Years after completing the work, Lieberman read Sachs’s book, *The Free Diary of Albie Sachs*. In it, he writes, “I reflect to myself that relationships on the court are so intricate that each individual profoundly affects the total dynamic. This is the story I would love to write one day, capturing the way that ideas emerge like strands of silk from the bodies and

impact the lives of anyone in the city, no one’s life is going to be improved by this name change... it comes from a tiny party scoring political points.” He said city policy required extensive public participation. In addition, the motion passed by the council might be flawed because of other departures from policy and procedure. Williams said policy required that the process of naming and or renaming must be undertaken in a consultative manner, and this must be clearly demonstrated before a final decision could be taken. Ward councillors had to be consulted, public notices needed to go up in strategic positions, and at least one public meeting must be held. “As an affected ward councillor, I shall help ensure compliance, including at least one public meeting. The people of Ward 90 shall have their say,” he said. Williams also pointed out that the policy states that place re-naming should be done “sparingly” to eliminate unnecessary expenses, including costs for businesses and other stakeholders. According to the policy document, “The naming of features after exceptional people is recognised as being a way of

minds and personalities of each one of us.” “It looks like I made that work for that quote, but I read it four years after I’d completed it. Amazing!” says Lieberman. She maintains regular contact with Sachs, and is working on a sculpture for Constitution Hill. “Within five minutes of my mail about RBG, Albie wrote back to me saying this was wonderful news,” says Lieberman. “Not only does he have a very special relationship with her, but she also wrote the foreword for *Art and Justice* a book on the art collection of the Constitutional Court of South Africa in which *Constellations* is featured. We’re all so connected.” What’s more, that same week, RBG was featured in the *SA Jewish Report*, and RBG, a documentary about her life was screened at the Bioscope in Maboneng in celebration of Women’s Month – it was August at the time. Sachs asked Lieberman if she could have the lace collar ready by November, and offered to deliver it to RBG himself during a scheduled trip to the United States. Practicalities and her vision of a white silk collar aligned, and Lieberman met the deadline. Discussing the collar, Lieberman talks about the history of lace, which reflects the societal inequalities of 17th and 18th century Europe. “In those days, it was illegal for peasants to wear lace,” she says. “Peasants were the lace makers, yet lace was worth more than gold, and only royalty and above was allowed to wear it.” Lieberman is currently working on a series of artworks called “Why the Collar”, which questions why people frame the head. It questions whose heads we are framing now, here in Africa. “I believe that royal thought – which to me means integrity, values, leadership – can come from anyone, it’s not blood driven,” says Lieberman. “I’m challenging that European concept of only royals wearing lace.” The work includes people like Judge Yvonne Mgoro, Advocate Thuli Madonsela, and Sachs himself, but not all her models are famous. “There’s amazing young people in this country,” says Lieberman. “The work ties into RBG wearing lace collars as a political statement, wearing it like jewellery, a neck-lace as it was worn in the olden days.” Reflecting on why she responded so strongly to RBG, Lieberman says, “She’s been challenging and transforming gender-based laws and perceptions for decades. At 85, she must have been pivotal at the start of the feminist era. She has continued to press issues of that nature. It seems like people celebrate her integrity and her stance, and what must be the dignified yet fierce way she has had to uphold and place her value system. “Her use of the lace collar was the link to me reading up about her, at a time when what she stands for is fuelled by the politics that abound. She’s not only been a feminist, but also fights for gender rights – it’s about fairness. Her path allowed her not only to stand her ground, but to fill very influential positions where she helped to mould human rights. That fascinated me because I’m very interested in

honouring outstanding individuals for their contribution to the development of the city and the country, and should be done sparingly and with careful consideration. “Only in rare cases should people’s names be used, and any submission petitions to name after a person must be accompanied by a detailed motivation and profile indicating why the specific person is worthy of the honour. Every effort to gain consent from family members of the person who is being commemorated should be demonstrated. Supporting evidence that shows attempts by the council to consult with family members should accompany the proposal”. In this case, Williams said, there was no evidence that the family had been consulted. “Nor was a detailed motivation and profile submitted in time for consideration by the council indicating why the person was worthy of the honour.” Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, Herman Mashaba, and Dos Santos issued a statement regarding the proposed name change, in which they asked, “How do we justify spending limited resources by changing street names which are not offensive, as opposed to seeing to the dignity of our residents?”

influence and integrity. Her reason for wearing a collar is a fit with my reason for making lace. Lace is not utilitarian, it’s about presence, about who you are as a human being. I’ve been writing about this for years, and she’s doing it. The concepts I explore within artworks, she’s activating.” For Lieberman, having Sachs deliver the collar was a natural link in the thread. “I respect Albie deeply. He’s an elegant human being in his integrity, and he was one of the people who wrote our brilliant Constitution. Albie told me that RBG loves our Constitution. Her connection with Albie and my connection with Albie was quite amazing, and I was very happy to go that route. My relationship with Albie is so easy and open. Then, he has this historic connection with RBG, and they are both connected in similar ways to their own courts. They make laws, they’re guiders, what they do is good for human beings.” In an email, Sachs told Lieberman of RBG’s reaction to her unexpected gift. “She gasped, literally gasped,” he wrote. “She felt and touched the necklace, placed it round her neck, and put it back on the soft, dark cushion. She said she wasn’t sure if she would wear it or display it as an artwork. “While I’d have loved to have seen a visual, the way Albie wrote about it was better than a picture. It was more emotive,” says Lieberman. “I like the way the story unfolded.”

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Second-hand book store provides glimpse of a life well lived

JORDAN MOSHE

A chance finding of books, letters, postcards, tram stubs, dinner invitations, and concert tickets of a David Polnay in a second-hand bookshop in Johannesburg led to a voyage of discovery for this journalist of a life lived almost a century ago.

When he was not penning letters to the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), Polnay enjoyed attending symphony concerts (admission by invitation only) or advising the Johannesburg Art Gallery on how its lighting could be improved. While he was committed to his job at the city council, he always found time to hop aboard the tram and visit his local music shop in search of the latest album.

Polnay was what some would call a man of culture, and though it has been almost a century since he walked the streets of Johannesburg, a chance discovery at a local second-hand bookshop effectively brought him back to life again.

“David Polnay was a book, watch, stamp, and vinyl collector of extraordinary energy,” says Richard Welch, the owner of Kalahari Books in Orange Grove, where the items were found. “He collected books for about 75 years, and he died in his home in Berea when he was 97. He was a pipe-smoker, pipe collector, Mars-Bar eater, and accumulator of a unique propensity.”

Although the two never met, it was through Polnay’s possessions that Welch became acquainted with him. A dealer in second-hand books for several years, Welch has had a few adventures with books, acquiring them from estate sales, emigrating families, or individuals looking to make room in the house. “Such occasions are nearly always emotionally exhausting,” he says, “because a person’s books are an accurate reflection of the inner person whom one confronts uniquely.”

His encounter with Polnay was no different. It was through a friend who hailed from an old Northumbrian family, Mary Lipnicky (now in her late nineties), that Welch was first introduced to Polnay’s collection about ten years ago.

Lipnicky had lived a few houses down from the Polnays in Honey Street, Berea, and had known the family for years. Says Welch, “Hearing I was in the book-business, she told me she’d be in touch about books in a friend and neighbour’s house in her street. He had recently been admitted to Sandringham Gardens Old Age Home after collapsing in the kitchen at home where he lived alone. His name was Alan Polnay, the son of David Polnay, and his cousin, Louis Shakenovsky, had asked Lipnicky to dispose of the household effects.”

Scaling the perimeter wall, Lipnicky retrieved the key to the Polnay home, and showed Welch in. What he saw was nothing short of extraordinary, starting from the moment he walked into the kitchen. “The kitchen was full of books,” he says. “The walls of the passage were lined with books. The sitting room, bedrooms, the bathroom – all were



A postcard from amongst Polnay’s documents

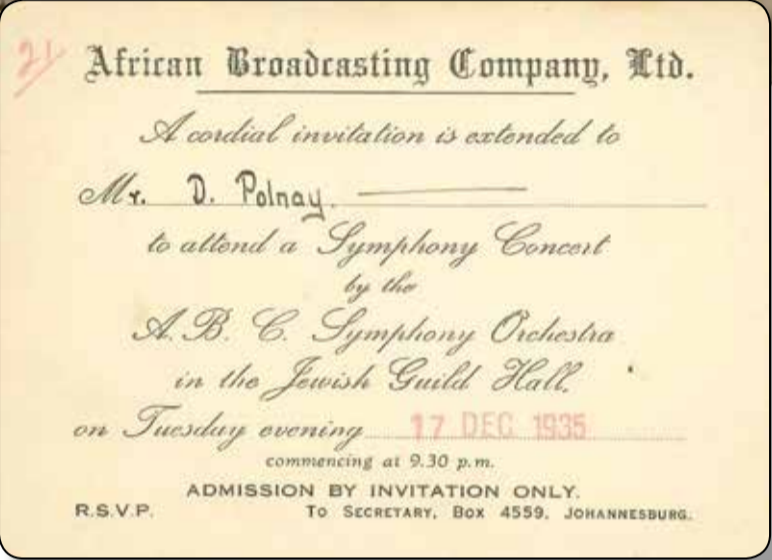
lined with books, magazines, and newspapers.

“She showed me the library, where, to head-height, all over the carpet, the room was full of books. It even had a small passage carved through piles of books, newspapers, and magazines, and in the very middle was a kind of nest with an armchair, where the old man had sat, reading the newspaper and smoking one of his pipes (pipes were everywhere) and eating his chocolate bars (petrified bars were all over).”

According to Lipnicky, the house and remained virtually untouched since David’s death about thirty years earlier, and many of its rooms had remained closed while his son, Alan, had lived there. In spite of the enormity of the collection it housed, Lipnicky heard that David wasn’t much of an actual reader. She told Welch, “Alan,” I once said, “Your dad must have been a prolific reader.”

“I don’t think he read much,” said Alan. “He collected.”

It was into this collection that Welch threw himself, working through it all until the early hours for interminable weeks. For thirty years, books, vinyl records, watches,



A concert invitation to Polnay

pipes, and other items had become vulnerable to rats, dust, and disorder. Finally, after removing the damaged and unsellable items, Welch came away with a sizeable quantity of material, most of which was taken to his shop for sale.

With time, Welch has learned much about Polnay and his family. He shared what he could with me in detail. “He’d changed his name when he came to South Africa after an unfortunate sojourn in Palestine as a very young man, fleeing the Poland of that day. Poloniewski sounded a bit like one of his admired authors, Peter Polnay, so that seemed a good and pronounceable name for

someone who wanted to make his way in a new country.”

Polnay had been a communist since his youth in Poland and he remained a communist, if a sedentary one, his whole life. Through the apartheid era, he wrote to and received post and communications, books and pamphlets from the Soviet Union, and had a vast collection of Russian literature.

The rich tapestry weaved by Polnay’s effects tell the story of a man who resided at 19 Honey Street in Berea, corresponded with art galleries and radio broadcasters, travelled extensively, and kept up

to date with world affairs. During the course of the early 1900s, Polnay’s recipients included the BBC, Portuguese Mozambique Radio, the London Gramophone Monthly Review, and even relatives on the continent with whom he corresponded in Yiddish. Before the books took over, he and his wife would entertain friends at cultural evenings, where they’d play records and discuss music and books.

It is clear, however, that when South Africa found itself drawn into World War II, Polnay left this life behind, and chose to join the armed forces. While based at the Lyttelton military camp in the then Transvaal, Polnay kept in regular contact with his wife, Dora, and son, Alan, sending regular missives penned in a looping fountainpen. Although he finds little fault with his bungalow accommodation, he seems particularly peeved by the lack of comfortable bedding. “We’re well-provided for,” he writes, “but they haven’t given us pillows!”

Says Welch, “In the many years he worked as a clerk for the municipality, he would walk or ride on his bicycle to work in town, and he continued doing this when he got a job as a clerk at the Chamber of Mines. He was a prolific letter writer, corresponding with stamp societies, record clubs, radio programmes and societies, and clubs of every type the world over. He wrote innumerable letters to the city council and public bodies drawing attention to problems in the city. He was a master-complainer about the discourtesy and inefficiency of public officials, shop assistants, and their employers.”

For all his oddities, the changing of his name, and his obsession with collecting, Polnay represents one of the hundreds of Jewish personalities which populated a burgeoning Johannesburg, engaging with its culture and challenges as the 20th century unfolded. While no descendants of this unique individual are around today, we are fortunately still able to gain access to the life of a man who once lived at 19 Honey Street, Berea.

Alarming findings in Stan & Pete kashrut investigation

>>Continued from page 1

accreditation body, the Association of Kashrus Organisations (AKO), that CCTV and recording systems be installed in all catering establishments, and that the Beth Din Kashrut Department should have live access to such systems.

It recommended that the Kashrut Department have an “action plan” for dealing with situations like what happened with Stan & Pete, including the ability to gain immediate access to the premises and secure relevant documents to obtain information and statements.

It also suggested that *mashgichim* and inspectors be “trained to identify indicators and clues” in chicken which may point to the chicken originating from a producer of non-kosher chickens.

Following the release of the report, the UOS put out a statement, saying that it “completely accepts Bowmans’ findings, and apologises to our community that this breach of kashrut standards occurred”.

It thanked the community for its patience during the lengthy investigation, and thanked

Bowmans for the professional manner in which it conducted its investigation, and for doing the job pro bono.

“Emerging from the crisis, the UOS was and is determined that the standards of kashrut in our community should be upgraded and strengthened,” it wrote.

The UOS is determined that the organisation and our community will emerge from this crisis stronger and better.

Earlier in the year, the UOS brought out the world’s leading kashrut experts from the AKO to do another investigation. The Kashrut Department, under the guidance of the Beth Din, has committed itself to implementing all of the AKO’s recommendations for improvement.

Rabbi Dovi Goldstein, the head of the

Kashrut Department, has been given the mandate to revamp the department. Goldstein told the *SA Jewish Report* this week, “I feel encouraged by the Bowmans report. As my role is to help bring in a new era for kosher in South Africa, and to improve the kashrus system, the recommendations contained in the Bowmans report are most welcome.”

He gave his assurance that the kosher department would implement the AKO and Bowmans’ recommendations, and that extensive changes had already been introduced.

In its statement, the UOS said it was determined to serve the community better by ensuring a higher level of kashrut for all, under the supervision of the Beth Din. “The real tragedy of a crisis is to emerge unchanged by it. The UOS is determined that the organisation and our community will emerge from this crisis stronger and better,” it said.

The *SA Jewish Report* tried on numerous occasions to get comment from Shull, but at the time of going to print, he had not responded.

Albania’s righteous Muslims testimony to the power of good

MIRAH LANGER

“How many people would lay down their lives for a stranger? Albanians would.” So says American photographer Norman H. Gershman, explaining why he devoted his time to capturing a visual record of Albanians – predominantly Muslim – who saved the lives of Jews during World War II.

So generous was the care that the country showed to Jews in this dark period, it was essentially the only country in Europe that had more Jews after the war than before. This is what Gershman wants the world to know through his work.

Gershman’s views are contained in a documentary about his work screened at the opening of an exhibition of his photographs at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre in Parktown, Johannesburg, last week.

In it, Gershman expresses the urgency of his photographic project. “[The Albanian rescuers] risked everything, [yet] they are forgotten. If I get a remnant of a story, it has to live as a remnant of the goodness of people. We owe it to these people.”

The exhibition consists of black and white photographs of various Albanians – mostly Muslim and some Christian – who themselves or through family members helped to rescue and protect Jewish people under the Nazi regime. The photographs have been supplied by Yad Vashem.

Prior to the screening, the holocaust centre’s education specialist, Rene Pozniak, gave context to the story of Albania during World War II.

By the time Hitler came to power, Albania had about 800 000 people – “only about 200 of whom were Jewish”.

Then, as Hitler tightened his grip across Europe, about 600 to 1 000 Jews sought refuge in Albania.

“What is remarkable is that the Albanian people

defied the orders from Nazi Germany to give up lists of all [the country’s] Jews.”

Furthermore, it was not only ordinary Albanians who protected Jews. “There were even government agencies that gave false papers to Jews so that they could mingle and be protected”, said Pozniak.

“Albania was a beacon of light in a very dark continent.”

The exhibition and documentary are both titled *Besa*, which refers to a code of honour in Albania whereby a promise made becomes a righteous obligation for life and across generations.

Sadik Kalaja, one of the rescuers photographed, defines the code as an “order” he was taught by his father that “if there is a knock on the door, take responsibility”.

Brothers Hamid Veseli and Xhemal Veseli expand on the faith that led their parents to protect Jews: “Our parents were devout Muslims, and believed as we do that every knock on the door is a welcome from G-d.”

One of the rescuers photographed, Kujtim Chiveja, describes in her caption how her father, Qani, described it is a privilege to have helped Jews. “It gave him joy to put into practice his Islamic faith,” she says.

Other Albanian rescuers speak of hiding Jewish women behind traditionally Muslim veils, and forging passports to change their names to those which sounded more Islamic.

In the documentary accompanying the exhibition, Albanian Muslim Rexhep Hoxha explains how a pledge his father made to a Jewish family he sheltered during World War II became a *Besa* passed on for generations.

Hoxha describes how when he was a teenager, his father, Rifat, told him of a couple, Nissim and Sara Aladjem, as well as their small son, Aron, who had fled from Bulgaria to Albania, and were taken

in by his family.

Hoxha’s grandfather, a Muslim cleric, and his wife, moved out of their room in order to house the Jewish family, who were total strangers the Hoxha family had found wandering the streets.

When the Aladjems decided to flee before the end of the war, as the Nazis tightened their grip on the main centres of Albania, they left behind three books in Hebrew and therefore indecipherable to the Hoxhas.

“They are beautiful and full of mystery,” muses Hoxha in the documentary.

Sixty six years later, he holds them with reverence, and keeps them in a box he made in woodwork class as a teenager.

Nissim promised to return for them after liberation, fearing that if they were caught with them before then, their Jewish identity would be discovered.

“I am trusting you to keep them safe. Protect them as if they were your own eyes,” Hoxha’s father recalled Nissim telling him.

Hoxha said that his father regarded the promise as sacred. When Nissim and his family never returned and Hoxha’s father grew older, he passed on the *Besa* on to his son.

It is Hoxha’s journey to fulfil this promise that forms the core of the documentary. It led him to Israel to return the books – discovered to be *Machzors* for Pesach – to their rightful owner, Aron, now an elderly man with a son of his own.

Hoxha’s story is just one of the exceptional stories that are revealed behind Gershman’s portraits of ordinary heroism.

A Jewish survivor, Johanna Neumann, who speaks in the documentary, is at pains to remind the world how rare it was that even government officials, as well as the king of Albania at the time, King Zog I, actively refused to collaborate with the Nazis against Jews.

“Everyone knew we were Jews, and no-one ever made an issue of it or denounced us,” she says.

Gershman, too, lauds the choice made by the tiny country. “There was a collective agreement to



Family of Destan Kormaku – one of the photographs in Norman H. Gershman’s exhibition

save people while the rest of Europe was turning its back. This little country doing what it did – it has something to teach the world.

“It reminds us that there are far more good people in the world than bad people.”

Ultimately, declares Gershman, “What I have learned about Albania is that your greatest export is not fish; it is not metal, it is *Besa*.”

Gershman’s own mission, he says, “is to counter the paranoia about Islam that is dominating the West”.

“The common humanity that we all share is my battle, and I am fighting it with my camera,” he says.



Stanley Pinker, *Puzzle Picture*, 115 x 63 cm, Estimate: R900 000 – 1 500 000

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King David at 70: the legacy

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Braving the tuckshop queues for a Sloppy Joe. Passing notes in class. Checking out the good-looking prefects. Releasing balloons for Yom Ha’atzmaut. Singing and dancing at Encounter. Laughing at the eccentricities of favourite teachers. Finally, taking our rightful seats on the matric wall. Making it through finals. That’s a King David experience.

King David is not just a path to educating our children, it’s the very fabric of the Johannesburg Jewish community, past and present. And, it all started in 1948.

“The founding of King David coincided with the founding of Israel,” says Elliot Wolf, the Director of the King David Schools Foundation, and former principal of King David High School Linksfield.

Though underpinned by Zionist foundations, King David’s beginnings were somewhat controversial. “It was just three years after World War II, and world Jewry was still very conscious of the Holocaust and all aspects of being separated and living in ghettos,” says Elliot. As a result, there was much opposition to the idea of establishing a Jewish day school in Johannesburg and of separating Jewish children from the mainstream.

“King David’s founding was to the credit of people like Solly Yellin and Louis Sachs, in particular, who were absolutely passionate about the idea of establishing a Jewish day school,” says Elliot.

Starting with just seven children in Grade 1 and Grade 2, King David opened in Yeoville in an old, double storey, semi-detached house. The school moved to its current Linksfield premises shortly afterwards.

Having secured a home for the primary school, King David’s founders worked to acquire more of the surrounding property for the future high school. But first, Sachs had to convince the owner of Vrede Hoek, a beautiful Cape Dutch house on the property, to sell the house and surrounding land.

“It belonged to the Marks, a Jewish couple,” says Elliot. “Mr Marks had died, and Mrs Marks was living there on her own. She’d become a bit of a recluse, and the house was like a museum.”

After Sachs badgered her for almost two years, she eventually succumbed, and sold the house and, as Louis Sachs described it, “G-d’s precious 14 acres”. On this land, they built King David Linksfield High School, which opened in 1955. Vrede Hoek still serves as the school’s administration block.

When it came to choosing a name for the school, it was Johannesburg’s illustrious King Edward VII School – now known as KES – that served as inspiration.

In 1960, seeing the need for a King David school in the western suburbs, King David Primary School Victory Park opened. “Linksfield catered for the north east of Johannesburg, and there was a feeling that since there was quite a sizeable Jewish community living in Emmarentia, Greenside, and Victory Park itself, which was then quite a new suburb, there would be enough people to

establish a school,” says Jeffrey Wolf, Elliot’s twin brother, and the former principal of King David High School Victory Park.

Sachs was chairman of the board at the time. He was able to procure an area in Victory Park which had been a peach farm, and establish the school there. They started with a primary school and then the high school was established in 1964 under Eddie Tannenbaum. He had been vice-principal at King David Linksfield, and then became the first headmaster

“The great beauty of Victory Park was that in being a smaller school, there was a greater chance for children to be seen and recognised as individuals. It had a more personal and familial feel than a much bigger school. I think that was our great appeal.”

King David is now the largest Jewish school network in the southern hemisphere, with 11 schools, ranging from nursery to high. These are found across five different Johannesburg campuses

name, are all part of the King David legacy. Among the primary school’s legendary principals was the late Barney Meyers, who started as vice-principal of King David Primary Linksfield, and later became principal of King David Primary Victory Park, where he remained for 24 years. Known for his motto, “mens sana in corpore sano” (a healthy mind in a healthy body), he was considered a mensch by all who knew him.

King David High School Linksfield’s first principal, Norman Sandler, led

of an altercation about who should be accorded this honour. Sandler ultimately prevailed, and likely a bit ruffled by the preceding discussion, stood up to make the introduction.

“Ladies and gentlemen,’ he said, ‘It gives me great pleasure to welcome our guest speaker – Mr Adolf Eichmann.’ The whole hall laughed, and he corrected himself. It’s one of those incidents I’ll never forget!”

Also in 1968, Sandler initiated what would become the school’s Wolf legacy by appointing identical twins, Elliot and Jeffrey, as teachers. Elliot had been working at Parktown Boys’ High School for ten years at this stage.

“Mr Sandler was looking for a new Latin teacher, and had heard about me,” says Elliot. “I was in London on long leave when I received a very wordy letter from him – Mr Sandler used to love long sounding words – offering me a position at King David.”

Eventually the two met for an interview, and Elliot mentioned his brother Jeffrey, an English teacher who had recently married and could do with a salary increase. “So Mr Sandler said, ‘I’ll have you both,’” recalls Elliot.

“We came to King David Linksfield together, Jeffrey as head of English, and I as head of Latin. Then they seconded Jeffrey in 1969 as vice-principal of King David Victory Park. I was appointed deputy principal at Linksfield in 1969, and I became headmaster here in 1974 when Sandler retired.

In 1975, Jeffrey was made headmaster of Victory Park, and so the cycle began. Elliot retired as Linksfield’s principal in 2001 after 28 years, while Jeffrey retired from Victory Park in 1998.

Elliot’s King David story – which is not over yet – is a definitive part of the massive history of King David, for which seventy years is clearly just the beginning.



The original house which now serves as the administration block

at King David High School Victory Park. Jeffrey followed.

“When I came to Victory Park, it was pretty small, but I was proud to see it grow enormously in the almost 30 years that I was there,” says Jeffrey. “I consider Victory Park my magnum opus, my big task. My years there were very happy, they were golden years in my career. I’m very proud of what we achieved. The school stood for the same things as Linksfield, and being run by twin headmasters, I suppose our approach was very much the same.

– King David Linksfield; King David Victory Park; King David Sandton; Minnie Bersohn Pre-Primary School; and King David Rosabelle Klein Nursery School, Waverley.

King David Ariel, the first Jewish remedial school in Johannesburg, opened on the Victory Park campus this year. In total, King David schools have about 3 300 students and 300 teachers.

Considering its beginnings, King David’s growth has been phenomenal.

Innumerable stories filled with memorable characters, too many to

the high school for its first 19 years. An anecdote Sandler himself used to share, was his unfortunate slip of the tongue at the opening of the new high school hall in 1968. “Sachs had wonderful contacts in Israel,” recalls Elliot.

“He had invited Gideon Hausner, who was the judge at the Adolf Eichmann trial, to be our guest speaker at the opening of the hall. At the opening, Sandler was sitting next to Sachs, and they hadn’t decided beforehand who would introduce Hausner. So they were having a bit

The lighter side of King David life

MIRAH LANGER

Pranks and fun are part of school life. Often, they are the moments we remember the most. King David schools have had plenty of fun over the past 70 years.

Elliot Wolf, a long-time principal of King David Linksfield High School, recalls a few lighter moments. He and his brother, Jeffrey, then the principal of King David Victory Park High School, were identical twins, but sometimes a third fictional identical brother was required.

“In the days when you went to Sun City to gamble... I had been there for a weekend,” recounts Elliot. “On Monday, I came back to school, and one of the students ran up to tell me that they had seen me playing on the ‘one-armed bandit’.”

“Playing on the one-armed bandit?” an indignant Elliot retorted to the student at the time. Somewhat chastened, the student then revised his comment, suggesting, “Well, it was either you or your twin brother.”

To save face, Elliot joked, “I’m sorry, but you are unaware of the fact that we are a triplet set. We have a third brother whose name is Simon. He is the black sheep in wolf’s clothing... It must have been Simon that you saw!”

Elliot says mistaken identity between him and Jeffrey was, in fact, a frequent source of humour.

Often, mothers would corner the wrong

headmaster at Pick n Pay Hyper or the like to offer their perspective on a schooling matter or two.

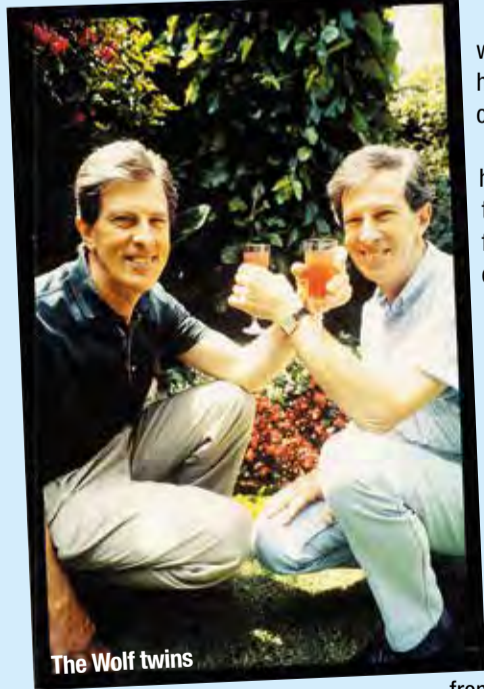
Jeffrey says that until today, he is frequently mistaken for Elliot when shopping at the Norwood Hypermarket.

“Without fail, while I am there, three or four people will come up and start talking to me, or else smile at me.”

He says that he and Elliot have an agreement that when someone they don’t know is “friendly in their attitude towards us”, they will always be polite.

“So, I do stop and say, ‘Hello, how are you?’ But I can only take it up to a certain point. When they start telling me about the achievements of their children, then I have to say, ‘Look, I’m very proud of what you have been able to tell me – but you are not speaking to Elliot. You have the wrong one.’”

Elliot says he is always indignant when Jeffrey tells Linksfield parents, “I’m sorry, but you have the wrong brother.”



The Wolf twins

“There’s nothing wrong with me,” Elliot admonishes his brother. “I’m just the other one!”

Jeffrey says Israeli military hero Moshe Dayan was one of the most famous people who found themselves perplexed over the brothers’ identity.

“He was brought out to South Africa, and he visited the schools, first going to King David Linksfield. He spent an hour there, hosted by my brother.

“Then, immediately afterwards, he came across to Victory Park. He had not been told there were twin headmasters.”

“He asked me, ‘Do you fly

helicopter?’”

“I had to tell him, ‘No, that was my brother. I have been waiting for you patiently for some time.’”

In the past, a highlight of the Linksfield calendar was the school tradition of finding “different ways of amusing and entertaining Mr Wolf on his birthday.”

“Every year, they chose something different. Once, I arrived at school with a fire brigade, another

King David turns to emigres for funds

SHIRA DRUION

A staggering 500 King David scholars – out of more than 3 000 – are being subsidised to enable them to get a Jewish education.

It has become increasingly challenging for South Africans to afford a Jewish education for their children, what with the parlous state of the South African economy. Because of this, there has been a steep rise in students on subsidies.

This means that the King David Schools’ Foundation (KDSF) has a huge job to secure sufficient funds to ensure that no Jewish child is turned away because their family can’t afford the fees.

The foundation’s Executive Director, Raelene Tradonsky, and Director and pedagogic legend, Elliott Wolf, pride themselves on their tireless efforts to ensure that they have sufficient capital for this purpose.

The foundation relies on alumni for assistance, many of whom have long since emigrated and set up lives elsewhere. Many do so willingly, grateful for what they received in their school years.

“I matriculated in 2004, and our year has remained particularly close,” said alumnus Marissa Lewis. “It amazes me how a big group of our year has stuck together. I see it every time I am back in South Africa.

“I would say that about 80% of my closest friends from all over the world are Davidians. King David was the baseline for our connection. I continue to support King David whichever way I can.”

The quality of the King David school system is recognised the world over as it continues to strive for excellence across all spheres. It has ensured that its alumni have made their mark in every discipline.

“We cherish the privilege of allowing students to go through our school system who we know would not otherwise be able to do so,” said Tradonsky.

“A Jewish education is an insurance policy. We do everything in our power to realise the dream of being able to offer it to the children of our community.

“More than ever, we are finding that we have to travel globally to reach our targets. With the rising cost of living, the South African community cannot keep up with the rising

demand for subsidies.”

The situation has required alumni who have left the country to step up to the plate by giving back to their alma mater, enabling the next generation of South African youth to join the ranks of Davidians who continue to achieve excellence.

The foundation relies on those alumni who feel a debt of gratitude to King David, and want to give back to the school to ensure that the students in the system are given the education they deserve.

New York and London are both home to hundreds of Davidians who enrich their communities with the wholesome values inculcated during their school years. Recently, two successful reunions were held in those cities, where alumni gathered to celebrate 70 years of King David schools. At these events, they were able to catch up with Wolf and Tradonsky, and pledge their support to the school. That is, only after an evening of laughter thanks to legendary comedian Nik Rabinowitz.

Reflecting on her recent trip to the United States and England, Tradonsky said, “My trips are always fraught with such highs and lows. There is the absolute privilege of travelling with Elliot [who is so revered by alumni] and meeting those who have become ‘world greats’ in their respective fields. Then, I feel the pain of seeing the extraordinary wealth and talent that has left South Africa.”

Indeed, the remarkable Davidian footprint is as significant as ever. Lewis, the Head of Americas for financial publishing group Citywire, who organised the New York event, said, “I can’t really articulate exactly why I feel compelled to help, but a lot of it has to do with the connection I still feel to the school. Even though I no longer live in South Africa, I recognise how King David helped me to grow into the person I am today.

“King David offered us a Jewish academic environment without ever sacrificing a world-class secular education, and I know and appreciate how unique that is,” she said.

New York based Greg Smith, the head of business development and partnerships at online investment management service Wealthsimple and formerly at Goldman



Fay and Marissa Lewis

Sachs said, “Mr Wolf and King David have played a substantial role in my life, and in the opportunities I am grateful to have had to study and work in America.

“Academically, King David is a pre-eminent institution that can stand next to the very best in the world. The Jewish values taught, examples set, combined with academic prowess, created a really potent combination. This has allowed Davidians to achieve success, move the needle, and to have an impact their communities the world over. It is extraordinary, and so many of us want to give back to that which built us.”

Ex-Victory Parker Marc Menashe is a lawyer living in London, currently the legal counsel for Credo. “With the cost of Jewish education in South Africa rising and the ‘tax base’ of financial support shrinking, Jewish South Africans living abroad have an obligation to support South African Jewish institutions so that another generation can benefit from, and eventually grow up to be, contributors to our community infrastructure,” he said.

Marius Barnett, also a Victory Park alumnus, also lives in London and runs a direct investment platform backed by a high-net-worth family. “I was fortunate to go to King David Victory Park with the support of generous donors. Having lived in many countries, and having travelled extensively, one can see how brilliant the King David schools and education system really is by viewing the impact that Davidians have made on a global level. This can’t have been coincidence, as it has been demonstrated across many platforms and over multiple generations.”

Said Menashe, “King David is an extension of your home, it aligns your values, and enriches the many realities in your life. It motivates each student intrinsically to reach great heights unique to each individual, without living in a world of continuous comparison. Being able to give your child an education of this calibre is possibly the greatest gift they can receive, and is a gift that can travel with them anywhere in the world.”

Smith agrees, saying, “We are proud Davidians, and will continue to support the wonderful work of King David Schools Foundation for many years to come.”

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time with limousine, even a tank, and once... with a Hell’s Angel motorcade.”

However, when Elliot turned 60, the school went all out.

“I was driven to the Germiston Lake to have what I thought was breakfast with a student-leader group or something.

“Instead, it was to take me to an airport to get onto a helicopter.

“I went on the most wonderful tour of the West and East Rand, and eventually landed on the rugby field with the whole school waiting for me. There was a brass band playing ‘happy birthday.’

“It was the closest to royalty I ever got!”

Elliot also remembers a time when corporal punishment went a little awry with a previous principal. “He used to prowl around the school, and a class had been misbehaving. He told them, ‘All the boys are to go to my office’.”

About eighteen of them traipsed to his office and went in, one at a time, to receive their punishment. “The last person came in, and he wasn’t in uniform. The principal said, ‘You are going to get one extra because you are not in your uniform’.”

“He gave this man a hiding. He was actually the student teacher!”

Current Linksfield Principal Lorraine Srage recalls that the staff played a prank on one of their own. “We handed a list of serial killers to the

person who read the announcements,” she says.

“At the appointed time, the staff member switched on the intercoms and began, ‘Can the following please come to the admin block.’ She read all the names: Charlie Manson, David Berkowitz [Son of Sam], Jeffrey Dahmer etc...”. “She never knew... That was a real classic!”

Srage also remembers an occasion in the 1990s, when the valedictory medals were accidentally blown up. “A parcel arrived with a name that nobody knew. Nobody could claim it. Even the board didn’t know the recipient.

“Eventually we took the parcel, put it on the rugby field, and called in the bomb squad.”

Although it was after school, the students that were still around were shepherded off to the swimming pool. “The bomb squad brought in dogs. If a dog sat down next to the parcel, we knew there was a problem.

“The first dog disregarded the parcel, but the second hound settled down next to it. We all ran like lunatics; they blew the parcel up.

“The valedictory medals exploded all over the place. All that *naches* [pride] for bobbas and zaidas in smithereens!

“The worst part was that the person who had ordered them had gone to the hairdresser. She was oblivious.”

These are just a few of the many lighter moments at King David schools.

What does it take to get an EU passport?

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

While the British government is embroiled in extricating itself from the European Union (EU), an increasing number of South African Jews are bent on joining the bloc. With the majority of their ancestors hailing from Eastern European countries that are members of the EU, this is feasible.

There are a number of professionals in South Africa who have made it their job to help these people achieve this goal. Among them are Advocate Avi Horesh and Nida Degutiene.

Horesh works to prove his clients are entitled to European citizenship, enabling them to obtain EU passports. For those wanting Polish citizenship, he tries to get documents from Poland to prove his clients’ parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents were Polish citizens after 1918, and after turning 18. In the case of attaining Lithuanian citizenship, he needs documents to prove the same, as well as the fact that his clients’ family was not registered as having lost their citizenship before 15 June 1940.

“Most important,” he stresses, “is that Polish and Lithuanian citizenship can be obtained only via citizens who left that country after 1918.”

“Obtaining documents in Poland or Lithuania usually depends on the amount of



information you have,” he says. For Polish citizenship, the original citizen can’t have served in the South African army prior to 19 January 1951, because a requirement for Polish citizenship is that the original citizen did not serve in a foreign army prior to that date.

Degutiene of Next Steps specialises in tracking family roots in Lithuania and restoring Lithuanian citizenship. Not everyone with Lithuanian roots is eligible. “Unfortunately, the descendants of people who emigrated from the current territory of Lithuania [prior to 1918], which until 1918 was part of Russia, are not eligible to apply for reinstatement of Lithuanian citizenship,” she says.

“So either a person had to be born in Lithuania after 1918, or they had to have lived there and left as citizens of the country after 1918. There have been a few waves of emigration from Lithuania to South Africa, the first of which took place in the early 1900s.”

Any personal document, like a birth certificate, passport, or marriage certificate, issued by the Lithuanian authorities after 1918 would be proof of Lithuanian citizenship. It is important, she stresses, to be able to prove that one’s ancestor was a citizen of Lithuania, and departed between 1918 and 1940.

“We assess every case very carefully. We do full research in the Lithuanian archives, and check whether there are any legal obstacles for a person to get their Lithuanian

citizenship reinstated.”

The initial verification is performed free of charge. They take on a case only if they are sure they can deliver. “Therefore our success rate is 100%,” Degutiene says.

Horesh says most South African Jews do qualify for European citizenship as they are descendants of emigrants who left Europe after 1918. In terms of Ashkenazi Jews (Polish and Lithuanian), he says his success rate is 100% once the documents are found, and once he recommends filing an application.

His success rate for obtaining Portuguese citizenship for Sephardi Jews, likewise, is 100%.

The cost depends on which citizenship is needed, and how many documents one already has. Generally speaking, the cost for the first passport is about 2 500 Euros, with the price decreasing as additional family members file applications.

The process takes on average between one and two years.

Next Steps works on a success fee basis. An initial fee covers processing of applications and submitting them directly to the relevant migration department. Only if and when the citizenship of an applicant is reinstated, does it



charge a success fee.

Degutiene confirms that there is a “big” financial benefit to applying as a family versus individually, as multiple applicants can share certain costs that are fixed regardless of the number of applicants. “The bigger the number of applicants, the lower the fee per person.”

“We charge fixed fees. We do not work on hourly rates, thus our clients know in advance how much the entire process will cost. We never ask for additional payment, even though some cases are extremely difficult, and require lots of additional time, cost, and attention.”

What are some of the difficulties encountered along the way? Often South African *Litvaks* think that if they do not possess the original documents of their ancestors, such as birth certificates or passports, they are not eligible to proceed, she says.

“We find about 98% of the documents in the Lithuanian archives! Sometimes we have difficulty in recreating the original spelling of the names and surnames of our clients’ ancestors, because the majority of them changed their names and dates of birth upon arrival in South Africa, but we are often able to resolve even the toughest puzzles.

“I would say the biggest problem South Africans encounter is the sometimes ridiculously long waiting time for their own personal documents to be received from the department of home affairs, such as unabridged birth certificates,” Degutiene says.

She notes that a Lithuanian passport is recognised as “very powerful” as there are 160 countries that allow such a passport holder to travel visa free.

Letters

BARRING OF ISRAELI ACADEMICS HYPOCRISY OF THE HIGHEST ORDER

A conference titled “Recognition, Repatriation, Reconciliation: The Light and Shadow of Historical Trauma” being held at Stellenbosch University this month had a number of Pro-Palestinian delegates call for the barring of Israeli academics on the grounds of the usual trumped-up Israeli abuse of Palestinian human rights.

For these so-called “academics” to make such calls must rate as hypocrisy of the highest order. Surely these scholars are more than aware of the dismal state of education in this country, where a mere trickle of learners ever finishes their basic primary education, thus condemning them to a life of mediocrity with no hope of a decent future.

But, they focus on the plight of the Palestinians, where almost every child receives an education, albeit nurtured on a diet of hatred for the Jewish people and that Jews are but a sub-species of the human race. Even more hypocritical is that they single Israel out for human-rights abuses, when more than 85 000 children in the Yemen have been mercilessly slaughtered in that

troubled country. Nor have they mentioned the plight of the children of Syria and other Arab countries.

CNN is currently running an expose of anti-Semitism in Europe and other parts of the world, where the oldest of all hatreds is rearing its ugly head again also through this one-sided targeting of Israel, where every child, be they Jew or Arab, enjoys one of the highest standard of education in the world. That applies to boys and girls. In most Arab countries, the state of girls’ education must leave a gaping question for these “academics”.

It is blatantly clear that the likes of Roshan Dadoo, Zackie Achmat and company, all well known for their hatred of the Jewish state, which as CNN demonstrates amounts to hatred of Jews, will use any forum, even an academic conference, to manifest their anti-Semitic sentiments. Surely the same calls that they make for Israeli academics to be barred should be extended to other – real – human-rights abusers, of which there are many attending this farcical conference. – **Allan Wolman, Johannesburg**

KHUMALO GOT OFF LIGHTLY COMPARED TO SPARROW

I see that Velaphi Khumalo “eventually apologised” for his arrogant remarks, such as that blacks should do to whites what Hitler did to the Jews! Some of his remarks reported in the *SA Jewish Report* are illiterate, such as, “Noo must be bushed alive and skinned and your off springs used as garden fertilizer” (23 November 2018). In comparison to Ms Sparrow, he escaped lightly, and had to be taken to court before apologising.

May I add that I have some misgivings about Albie Sachs’s views on land expropriation without compensation reported in the same edition of the paper. So, the “solution” is to be carried out in a “transparent and public way”. Most farmers and land owners didn’t steal the land, they had to borrow money from banks, and with toil and sweat, work hard to pay off their bonds.

So, one might regard land expropriation without compensation as transparent theft. Yet, this government thinks people will invest here when there is no security of property, a precept enshrined in the Constitution. No soft soaping will convince people that this is not a violation of a basic right. – **Peter Onesta, Johannesburg**

HATIKVAH MORE THAN AN ISRAELI ANTHEM

Hatikvah is a popular song and anthem of the Jewish people expressing the aspirations and hopes of the majority.

It dates from 1878, and thus precedes/antedates its later adoption as an anthem by the Zionist movement (from 1897 onwards) and the state of Israel (1948 onwards). It is not particular or restricted to these entities .

It is not appropriate to disrespect this song publicly in a Jewish diaspora environment on the basis of disagreement with current Israeli government policies as the song is much more, and has a far wider context and history than just being the anthem of the state of Israel.

Hence, disrespecting Hatikvah means disrespecting the feelings and aspirations of the majority of the Jewish people. – **Anthony Pamm, Cape Town**

WHERE IS FREE-SPEECH OUTRAGE OVER STELLENBOSCH'S EXCLUSION OF ISRAELIS?

I refer to the racist decision by Stellenbosch University to exclude all Israelis from the conference titled “Recognition, Reparation and Reconciliation: The Light and Shadow of Historical Trauma”.

These people were excluded purely because of their nationality – that is racism.

BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) and South African Jews for a Free Palestine (SAJFP) were behind this. Remember the three traitorous agitators from SAJFP who were seen as martyrs by Judge Dennis Davis and others for being denied a platform at Limmud? Davis sets himself up as a great champion of free speech and inclusion, but where is his voice when these people were excluded from a university conference just for being Israeli – and the three SAJFP agitators who he championed are among those who are behind this?

Just an aside regarding the two traitors at Herzlia who showed disrespect for Israel as a nation, the Jewish people, and their school by taking the knee during the singing of *Hatikvah*. What tolerance would there be for pupils at a Muslim school declaring solidarity with Israel, and who would speak out for them?

Are only Israel-haters entitled to free speech?

In his book *Israel: Reclaiming the Narrative*, Barry Shaw pens a letter to a pro-Palestinian human-rights activist, and asks him, “Why have you not expressed your outrage for other far more critical human-rights disasters as I have done. I understand you like political adventurism, like flotillas to free Gaza. Why have you not joined a flotilla to feed and care for the thousands of dying children in Africa?. What is it about the Palestinians that gets your juices flowing over all other humanitarian tragedies? Could it be that you cannot incriminate Israel in human-rights crimes perpetrated in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Burma, Russia, China , Pakistan, Turkey, Kurdistan, and Cuba so these abusive regimes do not get you emotionally involved?”

Let Islamists, Palestinians, far leftists, academics, demonisers, sociopaths, and boycotters realise that they will not succeed. They will not destroy Israel. There will always be those of us who challenge their lies and Satanic campaigns. – **Gary Selikow, Johannesburg**

Acceptance of diversity makes anti-Semitism almost non-existent in India

HUGH RAICHLIN

Two days after my return from a Jewish heritage tour of India, Robert Bowers, 46, opened fire on a congregation of Jews assembled at their synagogue on a Shabbat morning in Pittsburgh in the United States. He is quoted as having said to special weapons officers at the scene, “All Jews to die”, in an incident that federal authorities have charged as a hate crime. Bowers’ anti-Semitic hate crime stands in stark contrast to the Indian society I had just experienced. India has the rare distinction of the local population never once displaying anti-Semitism in more than 2 000 years of Jewish history in the country.

The only two occasions in which anti-Semitism reared its ugly head in India was, first, during the 16th century, when Catholic Portuguese colonialists destroyed several synagogues in Cochin. Then, centuries later, in 2008, Pakistani Muslim terrorists murdered Rabbi Gavriel and Rivka Holtzberg, together with a number of their guests, at the Nariman Chabad House in Mumbai. It horrified and embarrassed the Indian population.

Former United Kingdom Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in his book *Future Tense*, makes the point that throughout history, Jews have borne the burden of difference.

Whether in Christian Europe or the Muslim Middle East, they were the quintessential “other”. In today’s world of rising anti-Semitism, the globe has much to learn from the predominantly Hindu culture of India, which has created a society where there is no “other”.

A historical overview of India



Sarah Cohen and Hugh Raichlin in Cochin

reveals that the Jews of India, from the very earliest settlement of Jews in Cochin, were given an honourable place in the communities of the Hindu rulers. The Jews served in the armies of the rulers, refraining from fighting on the Sabbath, and played a valuable part in the local economy with their international contacts.

The Raja of Cochin went so far as to give Jews protection and friendship, even providing a site for the Paradesi synagogue next to his palace. Our group was privileged to spend Shabbat at the Paradesi synagogue.

Fifty years ago, on 15 December 1968, the late Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister of India, delivered

a speech at Paradesi synagogue in which she stated, “This is not my first visit to this ancient synagogue. Each visit is a reminder of the long history of our country with which the Jews of India and certainly, the Jews of Cochin, are associated, and also of the tradition of religious and cultural tolerance, which is our very great heritage.

“We welcomed the Jews of India as indeed we have also welcomed others who have had to leave their original homes because of political or religious persecution or for various reasons. The Parsis are another notable example. Our tradition has not been one of communalism or parochialism, but of tolerance, of mutual exchange, and of peacefully living together. This is the teaching of our great men. The Emperor Asoka proclaimed that reverence for one’s faith rested on reverence for the other’s faith.

“Our heritage is the mingling of numerous streams, great and small, which have joined the river of India’s progress at different times. Together, all these differing parts make up the whole. To deny or ignore any – even the smallest or the most recent – would be to diminish India. It is a matter of pride for us in India that all the great religions of the world are respected in our country.”

Prime Minister Gandhi expressed the deeply held beliefs of Hinduism,

which embraces cultural and religious diversity, in fact, a tolerance for every moving, living being. This was apparent on the heavily congested roads of India. Millions of people, vehicles of every description, and a wide variety of animals, are all able to navigate the roads safely and peacefully. There is no ego, no road rage, no aggression. People give each other space, literally and figuratively. India is a place where there is the absence of fear and hatred of difference, as exemplified by the hate filled shooting in Pittsburgh, and the terror that currently grips the world.

While taking a hike in tough winter conditions as a national serviceman in the South African Air Force many years ago, we were about to cross a freezing river shortly before nightfall (which we were all loathe to do), when I asked the non-Jewish group if we could please pause while I said my afternoon prayers.

While saying my prayers, a message came through that there had been a change of plan, and as we had not yet started the river-crossing, we should divert along another route. My prayers had clearly brought about a miracle!

Some of the boys even spoke of converting to Judaism, to which I replied, “Different religions are like different instruments in an orchestra. As long as we play the same music together, our differences enhance the



Paradesi synagogue, Cochin

sound of the music, we don’t all have to be the same!”.

Peace is possible. Jews have lived in total peace and security in India together with their Hindu, Muslim, and Christian neighbours. They have survived as a distinct community without resentment from their neighbours. But tolerance can exist only where there is an inherent recognition of the value of others, where members of society do not see differences as a threat, but rather as enhancing the fabric of society. Diversity must be seen as a strength not a weakness.

The world has much to learn from India.

• Hugh Raichlin is a Johannesburg attorney, an amateur historian, and international tour guide.

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ORT partnership teaches business skills to disabled



Participants, helpers, and ORT SA facilitator Sarah Malape in the grounds of Our Parents Home, where the training takes place

People with disabilities don't get a lot of development opportunities after school, says Naomi Schauer, Chevrah Kadisha's Programme Co-ordinator Disabilities. That's why Chevrah Kadisha Protected Employment has embarked on a learnership programme with ORT SA and partner Hudaco Industries to teach a group of 10 disabled people business skills. The programme aims to encourage participants to start small businesses. The participants attend twice weekly sessions, and are busy completing the communication module. Five "helpers"

assist with writing, and supervise group work activities. The objective is to prepare a business plan for each idea. So far, these include a coffee shop, a transport business, and a skills-development academy. ORT SA trainer Sarah Malape says, "This learnership is completely life changing for the participants. You cannot put a price on empowering previously disadvantaged individuals to learn and look at their world differently. Thank you Hudaco and ORT SA for making this opportunity available to us."

Beauty and the Beast perfect enchantment for the holidays



Jemma Cohen, a nine-year-old King David Linksfield Grade 3 pupil, is playing the part of Chip in *Beauty and the Beast JR* at the Peoples Theatre at the Joburg Theatre Complex in Braamfontein until 23 December. Chip is a young boy who works with his mother in the Beast's castle kitchens and was cursed by the enchantress along with the other inhabitants of the castle. He was turned into a chipped cup and is magically restored to his human form at the end of the story. "This musical is perfect for the holidays as it offers humour, romance, and enjoyment for all ages," Jemma says. Aside from being great fun, she points out that the musical has a great message: don't judge a book by its cover.

King David Pre-Primary casts light on life's miracles

On the first night of Chanukah, Jews around the world light the first candle of the chanukiah to commemorate the miracle of light in the Temple. In the same celebratory sentiment, King David Pre-Primary School Linksfield (KDPPL) recently hosted a magnificent Chanukah lighting ceremony with Rabbi Avtzon, Rabbi Bank, students, and their families to express gratitude for all of life's miracles.



Rabbi Avtzon with students of KDPPL in the background

UJW adult education division celebrates another successful year

The adult education division (AED) of the Union of Jewish Women (UJW) recently celebrated another successful year of weekly thought-provoking and stimulating talks. Members danced to the sounds of the Beatles, Buddy Holly, Tom Jones, and others as they celebrated the year that has been. Hilary Fineberg and Marcia Kaplan were given certificates of appreciation for their committed service of more than 40 and 60 years respectively. The division has been running for more than 60 years providing weekly talks for the community. Funds raised from the talks are donated to the different projects of the UJW. For more information about the AED, contact UJW on 011 648 1053 or email info@ujw.co.za.



The committee of the Adult Education Division

More than ready for Chanukah

After a workshop on chanukiahs with the DIJE (the department of informal Jewish education) and the King David School Jewish Department, Grade 4s at King David Sandton were more than ready for Chanukah. Students built their own chanukiahs from scratch, while learning the laws of how to light the candelabras.



Dancers honoured with official SA colours

Five King David pupils have been awarded South African colours for dance by the South African Body of Dance, an associate member of DanceSport SA and the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC). The dancers, who competed in a series of national competitions through the country this year, were honoured prior to competing in the International Dance Organisation's (IDO) World Ballet and Jazz Championships, starting on 30 November.



Lily-Rose Brenner, Zara Jacobson, Dani Allan, Dina Segal, and Amy Katzman

WIZO spreads festive cheer

Every year, the women of the Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) endeavour to spread a little festive cheer to those less fortunate in our society. This year, Sithandiwe Disabled Care Centre was the recipient of these efforts, with WIZO throwing a Christmas party for its recipients and caregivers. Sithandiwe is a community-driven project based in Johannesburg's Alexandra township. It cares for children with profound or intellectual disabilities between the ages of three and 18. More than 44 children benefit from this exceptional place every day. The centre first opened its doors in 2006, after Thandi Ndhlovu, a physically disabled woman who champions the rights of those living with disabilities, saw the need for such an organisation.



Clamber Club generously donated its services, providing a morning of fun activities and smiles. Nando's ensured all bellies were fed. WIZO's own Santa gave the kids much appreciated gifts and toys, including soccer balls generously donated by Sportsman's Warehouse. The party was a wonderful success, confirmed by the smiles and laughter on each precious face. It also gave everyone involved time to appreciate what is often taken for granted, and realise that that the true gift is in the giving.



Monday (10 December)

- Chabad House hosts a talk with clinical psychologist Tracey Farber titled *Building resilience: go where the love is*. Time: 09:45. Venue: Chabad House, 27 Aintree Avenue, Savoy. Contact: 011 440 6600 or email rak@chabad.org.za
- Join the Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) every Thursday for a *Lunch & Learn* shiur with Rabbi Michael Katz. Time: 13:00 at Beyachad, 2 Erray Street, Raedene. Contact: WIZO office: 011 645 2515

The disgrace of a country that lies to its children



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

The children of South Africa have been betrayed by the education system. And the clamour to enter universities has given them a false sense of a passport to a better life. But it isn't doing so, given the declining state of our universities, and the abysmal matric system which sent them there.

Now, in an unbelievable move, the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Naledi Pandor, has lowered the minimum admission requirement for entry into a bachelor degree at a university. This includes attaining only 30% in the language of learning and teaching of the university they're applying for – which is mostly English – among other very low requirements. Yes, 30% for matric English is now enough to get a university-entrance matric! The implications are heartbreaking.

The overwhelming feeling among academics at South African universities is despair about the

direction in which they are going, including the former best, such as Wits.

A huge percentage of students coming in today have little adequacy in intellectual and analytic ability. In addition, lecturers report that it is established practice by many universities to boost their numbers artificially by condoning passes. Remember the era when to get a university degree was a prized, difficult achievement?

Wits also once brimmed with Jewish students and faculty, who worked hard to get their degrees, but came from a rigorous basic education, not only from private schools. Now it has few Jewish students.

With such low competence levels because of an appalling basic education, students simply cannot cope with a university environment. Jonathan Jansen, distinguished professor in the education faculty at Stellenbosch University, calls the 2017 matric results – which government touts as an improvement – a “disgraceful freak show”.

To believe that the 2017 matric pass rate was 75.1%, about 2.5% higher than in 2016, is asking, says Jansen, “that you forego

common sense”. About 78% of children in Grade 4 cannot read with understanding. This finding that Jansen cites placed South Africa last among 50 countries with which it was compared. Actually, the rot has set in from Grade 1.

“It is not as if the few who passed and even those who graduated with a so-called bachelor's pass have a solid academic education to see them through tertiary studies” he says. The quality of the matric examination is “so weak in the intellectual demands made of pupils that any fool can scale the 30% passing hurdle”. Most will drop out.

Flip Smit, the former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Pretoria, says the move by Pandor to lower university entrance requirements is reckless. Universities already receive between five and nine times more applications than they can accommodate.

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matric bachelor's pass, and open the flood gates for additional applications. And, the ease of achieving a matric pass misleads learners into thinking they can complete a degree course.

does this mean for your children and those of other middle class South Africans, white and black, including the Jewish community, who were able to send their children to quality private schools



Jansen says this government and its basic education department “are a disgrace to the nation. They have failed our children, mainly black and poor learners stuck in dysfunctional schools.”

You might be an alumnus of a South African university. But what

where they received a good education? Less and less will send their youngsters to South African universities, rather they will send them overseas. And when you have studied overseas, you are unlikely to come back.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

For censorship to exist, it's sufficient for academics to do nothing

Since the early years of this century, regular attempts have been made on university campuses throughout the world to impose a boycott against Israeli academics and academic institutions. In real terms, the boycotters have had little to show for their efforts.

While not succeeding at a macro level, boycotts do from time to time result in Israeli scholars being excluded, whether directly or indirectly, from taking part in academic gatherings. This, unfortunately, was the case last week, when it emerged that seven academics from Israeli universities and one from a Palestinian institution were removed from the speaking programme of an upcoming conference at Stellenbosch University in response to threats of disruption by anti-Israel activists.

What made the situation worse was the university's stubborn refusal to acknowledge, in the face of all the evidence, that the academics had been excluded from the programme in the first place. Instead, it has persisted in saying that they “voluntarily” chose not to attend the conference – something Professor Rivka Carmi, the President of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, has compared to saying that a mugging victim “voluntarily” surrendered his wallet after being threatened with a gun.

Before taking any action, we made a concerted effort to clarify what had happened. Our investigation, which included communicating with the academics themselves and their universities, as well as with the Stellenbosch administration, confirmed that the conference programme was, indeed, altered to exclude not just Israeli speakers, but also a Palestinian academic, Professor Mohammed Dajani.

Dajani was removed from the programme, as

according to the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) lobby, he was not an “authentic” representative of the Palestinians. This lack of “authenticity”, one finds on closer examination, is due to Dajani being a noted peace activist who works to foster dialogue aimed at achieving mutual empathy and understanding between the two peoples. This is why the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) brought

him out as a speaker for “Israel Apartheid Week” in 2016. We find it particularly appalling that this previous association between Dajani and ourselves was cited by the organisers as a reason for the cancellation of his session.

The SAJBD will continue to lobby strenuously against censorship and intolerance at our universities, and assist students as much as we can whenever they are confronted with it. At the end of the day, though, those who should be at the forefront of this fight are members of the academic community themselves. The latest

antics of the BDS lobby have yet again revealed the movement to be anti-peace, anti-dialogue, and contemptuous of fundamental democratic norms and standards. Of all people, one would expect members of the academic profession to recognise the BDS movement for what it is, and treat it accordingly.

In view of Stellenbosch University having asserted that the speaking programmes of the eight academics were not, in fact, cancelled, the board wrote to it to suggest that in that case, it should have no problem in reinstating the original programme, thereby putting the whole controversy to rest. Perhaps unsurprisingly, we are yet to receive an answer.

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



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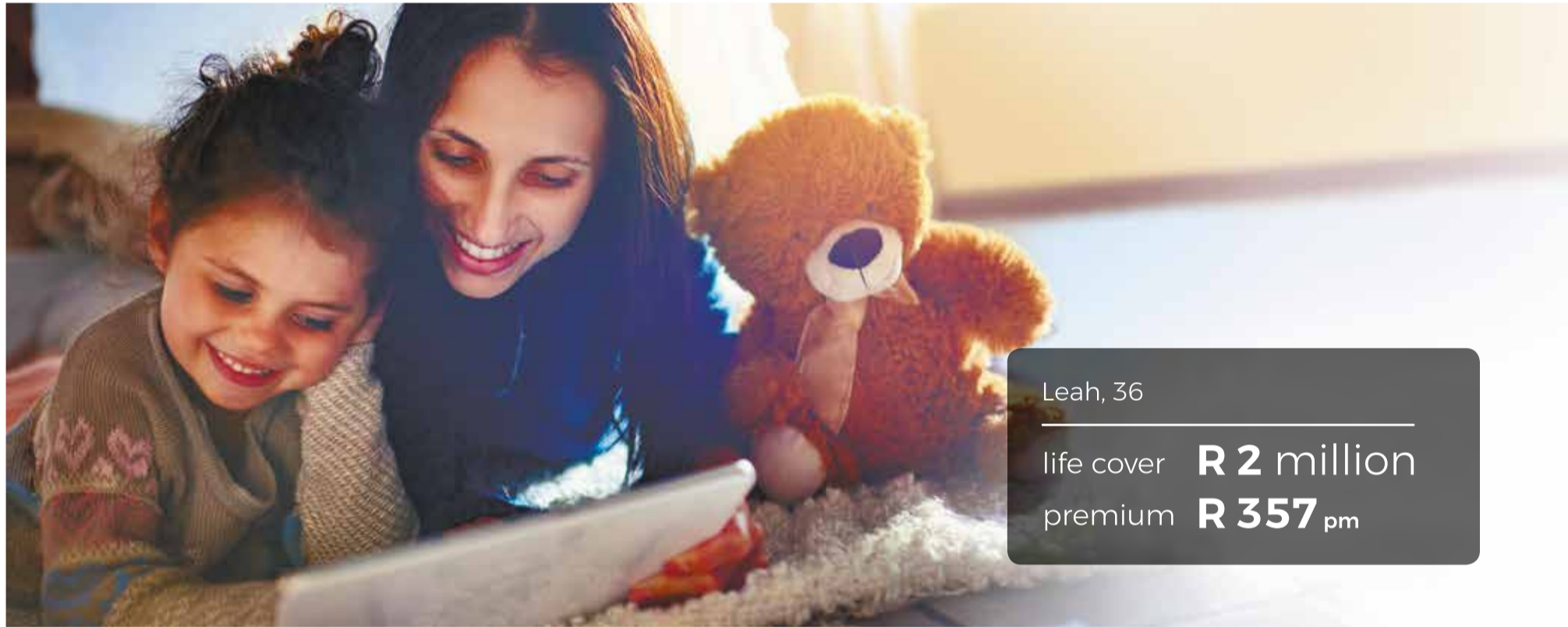
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