

Shavuot - a
festival rich in
custom and
tradition
See page 2.

South African Jewish Report

www.sajr.co.za

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Young Jews celebrate in support of Israel

Johannesburg Jewish youth last weekend showed that they could be good Zionists while partying till the early hours of the morning! About 400 revellers packed a Rosebank nightclub to celebrate Yom Yerushalayim as well as to wish Israel a happy 67th birthday. Pictured are Ari Kruger, an organiser of the bash; Ben Swartz, chairman of the SA Zionist Federation; Zev Krengel, President of the Jewish Board of Deputies; and Benji Shulman. An array of top DJs played some of their latest compilations and spirits were high. This year's YH67 function followed on last year's ground-breaking YH66 party and was hosted by the SAZF and the Israel Centre. The venue was decked out in white, blue and silver, with Israeli flags galore. Israel's Ambassador to South Africa Arthur Lenk, thanked the crowd for their support of Israel. See page 3.

UCT Nazi propagandists get amnesty

UCT has granted a blanket amnesty to the students who hung posters of swastikas and Hitler prominently on campus.

10

Music courses through the veins of this talented cantor

Cantor Ivor Joffe, from the tender age of eight, was drawn to liturgical music and the ambience of the choral service at his shul.

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Barney's legacy lives on at KD Victory Park Primary

Barney Meyers, beloved former headmaster of King David Victory Park Primary School, passed away last week Friday, just short of his 90th birthday.

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Will Vatican's Palestine reference impact Jewish- Catholic ties?

When considering the Vatican's creep toward recognition of Palestinian statehood, think 'Israel-Vatican' and not 'Jewish-Catholic', say Jewish officials.



6

Blatter fears Israel vote could set dangerous precedent

Fifa President Sepp Blatter claims he will be facing his toughest task yet when he deals with PA demands at the AGM that Israel be expelled from Fifa.

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Happy Shavuot

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Ten Commandments: An instruction from G-d Himself



Parshat Bamidbar

Rabbi David Shaw
Sandton Shul
Beth Hamedrash Hagadol

Would one examine the entire Ten Commandments, which are mentioned twice in the Torah, once in Parshat Yitro and once again towards the end of the Torah in Deuteronomy, one would immediately notice that despite their universal appeal, there is not even one single novel idea.

These very words, which have had such an overwhelmingly positive impact on all of mankind, not just on the Jewish people, and have been accepted by almost all civilisa-

tions, past and present, are all concepts which I would argue, are ideas that we could and should have conceptualised and elected to practise, even if left to our own devices.

Don't steal nor murder nor blaspheme nor bow to idols. They are all pretty obvious, don't you think? A time out from the rat race, to rest up on a Shabbat and spend quality time with our loved ones around a grand dinner table with a scrumptious repast, seems obvious to me and in all likelihood to you as well.

How about honouring our parents and not coveting our neighbours' stuff? Even young children could intuit that this is unequivocally the correct way to go. Forgive me, I hope this is not too blasphemous but where's the brilliance? What makes these

formulations, these 10 proclamations so mind blowing and awesome?

Our Sages suggest that in fact what makes these 10 so exceptional is not their content alone. What makes them so incredibly special is that they are to be observed, not simply because they make good sense to us or seem so perfectly logical. We are meant to follow them because at the end of the day their source is Divine.

They are, we believe, instructions for living from G-d Himself.

I do not just desist from stealing or from murdering because it makes good sense to me not to do it. We do some and don't do others because our G-d has requested from us to do them or not to.

You see, if it were solely dependent on my

subjective view alone, or yours, then we may well only subscribe to all these rules for as long as it suits us to do so; but as long as our performance is driven by our logic, by our subjective biases, then perhaps under certain circumstances we would elect not to follow them.

We would rationalise everything and do whatever we wanted. Can you even begin to imagine what such a world would be like? The Chiddush (radical new idea) of these Ten Commandments is that they all come from G-d himself and that it is that which binds us to their observance and for that matter, to one another, forever.

I wish each of you and your families a Shabbat Shalom and a really altogether meaningful Shavuot.

Shavuot - a festival rich in custom and tradition



OWN CORRESPONDENT

Generally, among secular Jews in the Diaspora, Shavuot is not considered a highly important festival, save, perhaps, for those who go to synagogue to say Yizkor, a service conducted on the three pilgrim festivals. The other two pilgrim festivals are Pesach and Succot.

But the rabbis will tell us differently. For Shavuot commemorates probably the most significant day in the history of the Jewish people - when Hashem gave the Torah to the entire nation of Israel as they gathered at Mount Sinai.

Shavuot, also known as the Feast of Weeks and Pentecost takes place on the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan. It signifies the end of the Counting of the Omer, which begins on the second day of Passover.

Shavuot is also known as the festival of the first fruits in Eretz Yisrael.

It is customary to participate in all-night study - Tikkun Leil - during Shavuot.

The reading of the Book of Ruth is also part of the festival's traditions,

as is the decoration of homes and synagogues with greenery. Children at Jewish schools are encouraged to bring Bikkurim - the first fruits - to class to hand over to disadvantaged members of the community. The tradition of Bikkurim arose when the first fruits were brought to the Temple.

Another custom is to praise the Land of Israel where the seven species are grown - wheat, barley, figs, grapes, pomegranates, olives and dates.

Most of the traditions surrounding Shavuot are customary as, unlike other Jewish holidays, this festival has no prescribed mitzvot, apart from prayer services, refraining from work and its minhagim (customs).

Food, of course, plays a major role in most Jewish holidays and, on Shavuot, the eating of dairy products is part of the tradition. Dishes include cheese cake, cheese blintzes and cheese kreplach.

Prior to receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai, the Children of Israel were not obligated to follow the laws, which today are part of our halacha, and include the ritual slaughter of animals. It was therefore from the early days that the Jews opted to eat dairy foods as their pots and utensils had not been kashered to adhere to the law of the separation of meat and milk dishes.

It is thought by some scholars and rabbis that this led to the dairy tradition we follow today on Shavuot.

The reading of the Book of Ruth on Shavuot is significant because King David, Ruth's descendant, is said to have been born and died on Shavuot.

Ruth, as is known, was a convert, who was allowed to marry Boaz on the basis of the Oral Law's interpretation of the verse, "A Moabite may not marry into the Congregation of the L-rd", which applies only to Moabite men.

The main theme of the Book of Ruth is lovingkindness which personifies the Torah.

KASHRUT ALERT

The kashrut division of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues draws the community's attention to the fact that Danone Ultramel Zero erroneously bears the Beth Din logo. This product is, however, not kosher certified. The company apologises for the error.

Shabbat Times	
May 22 / 4 Sivan May 23 / 5 Sivan Parshat Bamidbar	
17:08	Johannesburg
17:32	Cape Town
16:50	Durban
17:10	Bloemfontein
17:03	Port Elizabeth
16:56	East London
Eruv Shavuot May 23/5 Sivan Candle-lighting	
17:59	Johannesburg
18:25	Cape Town
17:41	Durban
18:02	Bloemfontein
17:56	Port Elizabeth
17:48	East London
May 24/ 6 Sivan Shavuot Candle-lighting	
17:58	Johannesburg
18:24	Cape Town
17:41	Durban
18:01	Bloemfontein
17:55	Port Elizabeth
17:48	East London
May 25/7 Sivan Yomtov ends	
17:58	Johannesburg
18:24	Cape Town
17:40	Durban
18:01	Bloemfontein
17:55	Port Elizabeth
17:47	East London

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Community

SA JEWISH REPORT 4

Rabbi Ricky Seeff has big plans for KDVP Primary

SUZANNE BELLING

It's not the first time that a student has returned to his alma mater to become principal. And although he matriculated from King David High School Linksfield, where he was deputy head boy, Rabbi Ricky Seeff (pictured) has been appointed principal of the sister primary school, King David Victory Park Primary.

After studying at Ohr Somayach Yeshiva in Jerusalem, Rabbi Seeff returned to South Africa to complete his studies in electrical engineering at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The son of Stanley Seeff, president of the Sydenham-Highlands North Hebrew Congregation, and his wife Ingrid, Rabbi Seeff was no stranger to the Jewish communal world. He was actively involved in Bnei Akiva for many years and in 2004 became rosh machaneh.

Rabbi Seeff's love for Jewish learning led to him returning to Israel, where he studied at Yeshivat HaKotel and in 2006 he married Debbie Kaplan. They lived in Israel for a further three years, while Rabbi Seeff studied at the Mir Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

He obtained his smicha while in Israel from Rav Zalman Nehemia Goldberg, and the eldest of their three sons was also born in Israel.

It was then that South Africa's Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein approached him to come

back and work for the SA Board of Jewish Education to run the Beit Midrash programme at King David Victory Park High School, an offer he accepted. On their return he also learned and taught at the Mizrahi Kollel for two years.

"The Board of Jewish Education then created a new position - head of Jewish life - where my role was to oversee all matters of Jewish life, formal and informal, for the Board.

"I oversaw curriculum development, teacher training, supervised the Department of Informal Jewish Education, and helped create Keshet, the adult education division of the SABJE.

"The intention of Keshet is to inspire parents through different educational initiatives, including Hebrew classes, parenting classes, home learning groups and opportunities to learn with their children."

In April last year, the SABJE appointed Rabbi Seeff as acting principal of King David Primary School Victory Park, after principal Jannie le Roux left the school.

"I enjoyed the job and applied for the permanent position, to which I was appointed in September last year."

Rabbi Seeff says he is "passionate about Jewish education and passionate about the South African Jewish community" and hopes to "infuse the campus with a positive energy and educational excellence".

Photo supplied

News

Mikveh-peeping rabbi sentenced to 6½ years in jail

ANT KATZ

Washington's once-senior Orthodox rabbi, Barry Freundel, was sentenced last Friday to six and a half years in prison after admitting he had taken videos of dozens of nude women at a mikveh over an extended period of time. He also engaged in extramarital encounters with several women, which he had taped.

"You repeatedly and secretly violated the trust your victims had in you, and you abused your power," Senior Judge Geoffrey Alprin of DC Superior Court said at the sentencing, according to the Washington Post.

The former spiritual leader of a prominent Washington Orthodox shul, Keshet Israel, pleaded guilty in February to 52 counts of misdemeanour voyeurism. Freundel led the shul for some 25 years.

The prosecution wanted to throw the book at him; the defence asked for community service.

In the end, the judge gave Freundel 45 days for each of the 52 counts. He will serve the sentences successively, amounting to nearly six and a half years.

The rabbi, now 64, was arrested last October and charged with six counts of voyeurism after investigators found hidden cameras in the National Capital Mikveh's shower room and in his home. He was fired from the synagogue which he had led for 25 years, and which abuts the mikveh.

Freundel had recorded the 52 women while they were completely naked between March 4, 2012 and September 19, 2014.

He used between one and three cameras at a time, hiding the devices in a digital clock radio, a tissue box holder and a small tabletop fan, aiming them at the toilet and shower in the mikveh dressing room, according to the prosecution's memo.

Prosecutors noted that Freundel had recorded an additional 100 women between April 2009 and March 2012, but that the statute of limitations ("prescription") did not allow them to lay criminal complaints in those cases.

In addition to his crimes, Freundel videotaped himself engaging in "sexual situations" with "several women", according to documents released earlier this month. Many of the women may not have consented to being taped or were not aware that they were being recorded.

When Freundel was arrested, investigators seized materials from his home including five desktop computers, seven laptops, six external hard drives, 20 memory cards, 11 flash drives and an instruction manual for a recording device that was disguised as a fan. Additional equipment was seized from Freundel's office at Towson University in Maryland, where he taught ethics and religion.

Prosecutors had asked for the maximum 17 year prison sentence for Freundel.

Freundel had been a prolific author and scholar of Jewish law and led Washington's Orthodox conversion court as a conversion supervisor and mentor. In this capacity he instructed many women to engage in "practice dunks" at the mikveh - an unheard-of practice in Orthodox Judaism but one that provided him with ample opportunities to record them undressing.

"As many victims note, it was difficult if not impossible to say no to the rabbi in charge of their conversions," the prosecution's memo says.

"I thought I saw a holy man of G-d, a man whom I could trust to protect me from outside evils, but I have come to see the blackness which hid beneath the garments," said one victim in a court document.

Chag Sameach!

We wish all our Jewish students, parents and staff a Happy Shavuot.

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Troubled times need tough guy leaders



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

A politician who is too much of a poet, not enough of a killer, will not win the hearts of the people in troubled times. Which is why Yaakov Herzog, head of the Zionist Union, lost the recent Israeli elections to Benjamin Netanyahu.

An Israeli commentator, alluding to former British Prime Minister Harold Wilson’s view that one can’t be prime minister without possessing a killer instinct, summarised Herzog thus: “When [he] looks someone in the eye, it’s not in order to kill but in order to recite a poem.”

Similar things have been said of British Labour leader Ed Miliband’s defeat in the recent British elections - he is too “nice” to inspire confidence in an anxious populace looking for strength and the conviction to do what’s necessary in this scary world. Not enough of a “tough guy”.

Nelson Mandela was a tough guy - a warrior leader. His charisma and conviction saved this country from a bloodbath by making diverse South Africans follow him, feeling they were all building the same dream. Warrior leaders can take a multiplicity of voices and forge them into a unified vision through which to do great things.

Sadly, this feeling of common purpose seems to be dis-integrating lately as South Africans tussle over competing outlooks, leading to absurd incidents like black students at UCT throwing faeces on Cecil John Rhodes’ statue at the university, a veteran white journalist who fought apartheid his whole life - Allister Sparks - being hauled over the coals for saying Hendrik Verwoerd was a “smart” politician, and so on.

The old saying that the victors write the history books has long been true, whether in South Africa, Israel/Palestine, Europe and other conflict zones - the dominant narrative belongs to them. But the losers have theirs.

In Israel, a controversial far-left NGO, Zochrot, dedicated to raising awareness about displacement of Palestinians and destruction of their villages in Israel’s 1948 War of Independence, has created a mobile app called iNakba, downloadable onto a smartphone in Arabic, English and Hebrew.

It provides the Palestinian side of the story for Israeli me-

morial sites such as flashpoints of the war, tributes to fallen soldiers, and so on. So a tourist visiting these historical sites can now have instant access to an alternative, Palestinian version.

It maps 520 Palestinian villages which were destroyed, giving information such as their population in 1948, name of the Israeli military operation in which its residents were displaced, and names of Jewish settlements in or around the area after 1948.

Zochrot supports the Palestinian right of return and is regarded with hostility by mainstream and rightwing Israelis. Some have tried to shut it down legally for allegedly opposing “the existence of the State of Israel”.

How many competing narratives can one listen to at the same time without becoming paralysed?

Israel has been built as an incredibly successful country by drawing on its Zionist storyline, supported passionately by the vast majority of Jews worldwide. It was only through cleaving to this vision that creating and defending the Jewish state was possible. Yet hidden underneath it is the Palestinian narrative.

The now discredited “postmodern” ideology of the late-20th-century prided itself on giving equal status to all voices simultaneously, but ended up with a cacophony, a tower of babel from which nothing constructive could emerge. If something positive is to be built, the gaggle of voices have to learn to somehow sing together.

This is where leadership comes in. Mandela was able to listen to the divergent stories of all South Africans - even Betsy Verwoerd, who he had a very public cup of tea with - and out of this chart a course for the whole population to be inspired by.

The Israeli or Palestinian leader who can do this has yet to appear. Neither Netanyahu nor Abbas fit the bill - being able to give enough credence to the other side’s view, while still maintaining the allegiance and trust of their own people.

Buji Herzog has all the wholesome values of open-mindedness and the willingness to listen to the other side, but does not project the toughness to make Israelis feel safe in his hands. And a Palestinian leader who can understand Jewish history and the Israeli ethos, yet bring his own people with him, is nowhere to be seen.

said Jeremy Laurin, press secretary for Public Security Minister Steven Blaney. “The government will use its right of free speech to denounce these comments.”

Meanwhile, Honest Reporting Canada is asking the CBC to review the article and take “corrective action”. - Canadian Jewish News

ATTEMPTED HOMICIDE CHARGE AFTER NON-KOSHER DRINK

MONTANA - A Jewish man from Montana was charged with attempted homicide for shooting a bartender who served him a non-kosher drink.

Monte Leon Hanson, 59, allegedly shot Joe Lewis, who is also his neighbour, and killed Lewis’ dog the morning after the bartender made Hanson a red beer - beer and tomato juice - at his Hamilton bar, using the Clamato tomato drink rather than tomato juice. One of the ingredients in Clamato is clam broth.

When Hanson learned the drink was made with Clamato, he became angry, saying it was against his religion, according to the affidavit, The Missoulain reported.

Early the next morning, Hanson reportedly followed Lewis when he left their apartment building to take out his dog. Lewis carried his dog because it had a sore paw.

Another neighbour then heard four to six gunshots. He found Lewis holding his dog, dead from a gunshot wound to his head. Lewis also was injured from the gunshots.

Hanson is out on \$250 000 bail. - JERUSALEM POST

Around the Jewish World

QUEEN TO HONOUR ISRAELI ACADEMIC

LONDON - The Queen is to honour Israeli academic, Rivka Carmi. Professor Carmi, who is president of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, will be made an honorary CBE (member of the Order of the British Empire) for her work in strengthening ties between the UK and Israel.

She has played an important role in boosting scientific collaboration between the countries as the founding co-chairman of the UK Israel Science Council since 2010.

Prof Carmi said she was thrilled at the honour. - Jewish Chronicle

GROUP TO ENHANCE JEWISH-MUSLIM DIALOGUE

TOULOUSE - The Chief Rabbi of Moscow, Pinchas Goldschmidt, has announced the creation of a Jewish-Muslim leaders group to enhance dialogue between the two religions in Europe.

Speaking at the Conference of European Rabbis (CER) in Toulouse, Rabbi Goldschmidt, who is also president of the CER, said: “The mission of the CER is to be the vehicle to further Judeo-Islamic dialogue in Europe.”

In conjunction with Saudi-backed inter-religious group Kaiciid, the first meeting will be held in Paris next month.

Toulouse was chosen as the venue for this year’s convention in order to demonstrate solidarity with the local Jewish community, four of whose members were killed in 2012 when an Islamist went on a shooting spree at a school.

Chief Rabbi of Toulouse, Avraham Weill, said: “There was a life before the attacks and there is one after. It is not at all the

same. We have had to learn to live with that.

“We are getting back to normal little by little. The first few weeks were difficult, people in the community were in shock; we didn’t know how they were going to react. - Jewish Chronicle

HATE CRIME CHARGES AGAINST ADVOCATES OF ISRAEL BOYCOTT?

OTTAWA - The government of Canada is calling a CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) report that it is threatening to bring hate crime charges against advocates of a boycott of Israel “inaccurate and ridiculous”.

The CBC, however, is standing behind its report, saying: “Our reporter and our editors thought it was a strong, original story.”

On May 11, CBC ran an article on its website by veteran TV journalist Neil Macdonald, the network’s senior Washington correspondent and its former chief Middle East correspondent based in Israel, under the headline: “Ottawa threatening hate charges against those who boycott Israel.”

The article states: “The Harper government is signalling its intention to use hate crime laws against Canadian advocacy groups that encourage boycotts of Israel.”

It cites a number of NGOs that are concerned they might come under a hate crimes investigation, among them labour unions, student groups, the United Church of Canada and the Canadian Quakers.

“The allegation that we are using those laws in that way is completely false,”

said Jeremy Laurin, press secretary for Public Security Minister Steven Blaney. “The government will use its right of free speech to denounce these comments.”

Meanwhile, Honest Reporting Canada is asking the CBC to review the article and take “corrective action”. - Canadian Jewish News

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Hanson is out on \$250 000 bail. - JERUSALEM POST

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south african
Jewish Report

A woman’s right to choose

Last week the United States House of Representatives passed a bill to ban abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy because it is assumed that is the point when a foetus begins to feel pain.

Abortion has been a very divisive issue in US politics. The bill will most likely be vetoed by the US Senate (bills need be voted in by both the House and the Senate to become law) or at last resort, by the White House.

That the bill got this far, is symbolic of the growing influence of a religious Christian outlook on abortion - that life begins at the moment of conception, and in certain US states, abortion is already banned.

Those opposing the 20-week plus, or late-term abortion ban, say that US lawmakers have no right to exercise power in the private sphere of personal medical decisions of a woman and her doctor.

About 99 per cent of abortions occur before 20 weeks, because of rape, teenage pregnancy or financial constraints.

When they are contemplated later in pregnancy, it is often in very complex circumstances such as foetal defects appearing on the 17-week scan, evidence of Down syndrome from an amniocentesis, or if the health of the mother is in jeopardy - the kind of situation where a woman and her doctor should, without fear or prejudice, be able to consider every option available.

The proposed bill makes no exceptions for foetal anomalies - a major reason women would need a procedure at a later stage and would make doctors very wary to help, because any non-compliance could result in criminal charges.

A colleague of mine in Canada had to terminate a pregnancy due to questionable brain measurements found on a scan of a 22-week-old foetus. After deciding with her doctors that it was not worth the risk of continuing the pregnancy to term with such strong evidence of an abnormal foetus, she was told to get it done urgently to avoid going before a panel of strangers to decide her fate.

The panel, she was told, by Canadian law intervened at 24 weeks and could include a pro-life Catholic or Muslim who would probably not agree with her decision to terminate. If the panel ruled against her, she would have had to go to the US, one of very few countries to still allow elective abortions after five months of pregnancy. This option would go away if this bill is passed into law.

In Jewish law, unlike Christianity, even the most stringent interpretations of halacha do not view the foetus as a soul or a person until birth and rabbis have rarely compared abortion to murder.

The rabbis point to a passage of Exodus (21:22) as evidence that the foetus is not yet considered a human being. Two men are fighting and one accidentally bumps into a pregnant woman, causing her to miscarry. As punishment, the man must pay the woman’s husband damages comparable to those incurred for injuring a limb or other body part, but he is not punished for the murder of another human being.

That being said, the halachic point of view is that the foetus will become a full-fledged human being and there must be a very compelling reason to allow for an abortion. It is only really permitted if there is a direct threat to the life of the mother.

Because Jewish law never deems some lives more important than others, most rabbis considered qualified to decide these matters, forbid abortion in cases where deformities are found in the foetus.

As a person who has seen the very tough realities of life for brain damaged children and their families, it seems almost incomprehensible to me that a woman who has been told that her baby has a good chance of being born with defects, would not be allowed to abort under strict halacha.

In fact, one of the most highly regarded rabbis of the last century on this subject, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, ruled that an amniocentesis, an increasingly vital procedure in a world where chances of Down syndrome are higher with mothers giving birth later in their life cycles, is forbidden, if it may lead to the parents requesting an abortion.

Thankfully this halachic stringency has not filtered into modern Israeli law making. Despite these rather extreme views, Israel, a nation with a forceful religious lobby and a conservative prime minister, still has one of the most liberal policies on abortion.

Israel approved a healthcare budget just last year that allows women free abortions if they are between the ages of 20 and 33. Let us hope that the inclusion of two parties dedicated to the rights and welfare of Israel’s ultra-Orthodox Jewish population in the latest election will not lead to any repealing of these policies.

Here in South Africa, where our healthcare system leaves a lot to be desired, and the incidence of teenage pregnancy and rape is frighteningly high, women at least have sound, liberal reproductive rights with provisions for abortion on demand in most cases - a marked contrast to most countries where abortions are considered criminal unless a woman’s health is in danger.

If we start with the premise that there is no stronger love than that of a woman for her child (born or unborn), and that if she decides to abort, she must have very valid reasons, should we not place the responsibility to make that decision in the hands of the mother?

– Vanessa Valkin, Editor



Pope Francis warmly greets Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in a meeting last weekend.

Will Vatican’s Palestine reference impact Jewish-Catholic ties?

RON KAMPEAS
WASHINGTON

When considering the Vatican’s creep toward recognition of Palestinian statehood, think “Israel-Vatican” and not “Jewish-Catholic”, say Jewish officials involved in dialogue with the church.

A May 13 announcement on an agreement regarding the functioning of the church in areas under Palestinian control raised eyebrows in its reference to the “State of Palestine.”

The upset was compounded by confusion over whether Pope Francis, in a meeting over the weekend with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, praised him as an “angel of peace” or urged him to attain that vaunted status. On Tuesday, a Vatican spokesman said it was “very clear” that the pope was “encouraging a commitment to peace”.

But the Vatican’s shift from terming its Palestinian partner as the Palestine Liberation Organisation - the designation Israel accepts - to calling it Palestine comports with a shift in Europe toward accommodating Palestinian statehood aspirations, the Jewish officials said.

Referring to a State of Palestine was “disturbing, but not critical”, Abraham Foxman, the Anti-Defamation League’s national director, said in an interview with JTA.

Catholic-Jewish relations and diplomacy between Israel and the Vatican were “on different tracks”, Foxman said.

Israeli officials, speaking anonymously, said they were “disappointed” in the use of State of Palestine.

“Such a development does not further the peace process and distances the Palestinian leadership from returning to direct bilateral negotiations. Israel will study the agreement and consider its next step,” an official told the French news agency AFP.

A number of congressional Republicans also expressed “disappointment” in the pope, Politico reported.

Marshall Breger, a professor at the Catholic University of America’s School of Law who has led a number of Jewish dialogues with other faiths, said the use of the term Palestine was the product of an evolution in how the international community was treating the Palestinian question.

“De facto, the Vatican has accepted Palestine as a state,” he said. “It just adds one more country to the over 130 that have recognised Palestine.”

The issue is a matter of diplomacy and does not breach the sensitive issues under discussion between Jews and Catholics as they mark the 50th anniversary of the Nostra Aetate, the declaration that absolved Jews of responsibility for Jesus’ death, Breger said.

“It’s a minor event,” he said. “It should not interfere with Jewish-Catholic relations.”

Using Nostra Aetate as a basis, Jewish and Catholic officials over the years have addressed problematic references to Jews in the Catholic liturgy and the role of the Vatican during the Nazi period.

Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organisation of

America, told The Washington Post that the “Palestine” reference amounted to “appeasement of radical Muslims” and signalled “the historical Catholic enmity towards Jews”.

For the most part, however, Jewish organisations dealing with the Vatican were concerned about the statement, but only insofar as it represented another success in efforts by the Palestinians to secure statehood recognition outside the context of negotiations with Israel.

“We are fully cognisant of the Pope’s good will and desire to be a voice for peaceful coexistence, which is best served, we believe, by encouraging a resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, rather than unilateral gestures outside the framework of the negotiating table,” David Harris, the American Jewish Committee director, said in a statement.

Weighing in with similar statements were the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations and the Union for Reform Judaism.

When the Vatican launched talks with the Palestinians in 2000, it referred to the other side as the PLO, but over time shifted to Palestine. Pope Francis in his 2014 visit to Israel and the West Bank spoke of “my presence today in Palestine” during a Bethlehem stop and referred to “the good relations existing between the Holy See and the State of Palestine”.

Daniel Mariaschin, director of B’nai B’rith International, said the recognition of Palestine raised concerns, but they must be seen in the context of an increased willingness in Europe to recognise Palestinian statehood and not of Jewish-Catholic relations.

He likened it to the French and British parliaments’ recent nonbinding recognitions of Palestine and Sweden’s decision to recognise Palestinian statehood.

“It’s important, I won’t dismiss it, but it shouldn’t be seen outside that broader context,” Mariaschin said. “It raises the expectations of Palestinians to unmeetable levels and frustrates the Israelis who say we can’t get a fair deal in the international community.”

Obama administration officials continue to maintain that recognising Palestine outside the context of peace talks is counterproductive. However, prompted in part by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s seeming election eve retreat from supporting a two-state solution, they now will not count out withholding the US veto should the UN Security Council consider a Palestinian statehood resolution.

Seymour Reich, a former chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations, who also has been involved in Jewish-Catholic dialogue, said the Palestine recognition should serve as a “wake-up call” for Israel.

“It doesn’t affect [Vatican] relations with Israel at all,” Reich said. Instead, he argued, Vatican recognition of Palestine was another manifestation of European disaffection with Netanyahu’s hawkish policies and the expansion of settlements.

“It just puts more pressure on the Israeli government,” Reich said. (JTA)

Lots of snarling and threats in ‘Hitler lover’ Dlamini’s saga

ANT KATZ

Sparks are still flying around the dismissal of University of Witwatersrand (Wits) Students Representative Council (SRC) President Mcebo Dlamini.

Dlamini, who infamously posted on his Facebook page last month that he loved Hitler, was “removed” by Vice-Chancellor Adam Habib on May 4, for an offence unrelated to the Hitler comments.

But that was not the end of the story.

In a well-considered and measured 1 500-word blog on the Wits website last Monday, Habib stuck to his guns regarding his removal of Dlamini and openly answered all of his critics in his blog titled “Let us not become what we have always hated”.

Tackling a laundry-list of criticisms, Habib stated: “There is another view that I am a prisoner of Jewishness or whiteness. I find this distressing because of its inherent racist assumptions.

“Again, let me be transparent. I am an open critic of the Israeli state. I have written about the Gaza war and Israel’s atrocities. However, my criticism of the Israeli state cannot translate into a hatred of Jews just as my criticism of the US government cannot translate into a hatred of Americans.

“When we allow this, we violate the fundamental values of our Constitution, but also our liberation itself,” he wrote.

Just two days later, a defiant Dlamini - who by now has accumulated 5 000-odd Facebook followers and was doing a national tour of campuses where he was being hailed as a hero - posted the following on his Facebook page: “Tomorrow morning at exactly 11h30am I’ll be at the University of Limpopo to exchange views with bright black minds... at 17h00

same day tomorrow I’ll be in UKZN sharing ideas with black academics there...”

And, just in case anyone had missed the racist implication of that post, on Wednesday May 13, Dlamini posted: “Dear White people, we Black masses have reached a point of no return.”

The following day, the South African Students’ Congress (Sasco) issued two ultimatums. In the first, Sasco’s Gauteng provincial executive committee gave Dlamini until close of business on Monday May 18 to hand in a hand-written retraction of his “I love Hitler” statement or face the possibility of a disciplinary action.

Sasco’s second ultimatum on Thursday was directed at Prof Habib who, they said, should reinstate Dlamini as SRC president by close of business on Friday May 15, failing which it vowed to make Wits ungovernable.

SA Jewish Report has been unable to contact either Dlamini or Habib, but all seems to be quiet on the campus according to student sources.

On Monday May 18, The New Age reported that the Sasco Wits chapter was still threatening to bring the institution to a standstill unless it reinstated Dlamini, quoting Joy Phiri, deputy secretary-general of Sasco.

Also on Monday, the campus newspaper, Wits Vuvuzela, ran a story headlined “Ab-normalities’ in policy for SRC president’s removal” in which they made the case that Dlamini’s removal may have been irregular. Their source: the deputy head at the School of Law at Wits, Mtendeweka Mhango.

• Follow this intriguing story on our website, www.sajr.co.za where you can read the full content of Habib’s blog and the Vuvuzela article which makes the legal case.

Achievers nominations are now open

Nominations for the 17th annual SA Jewish Report’s “Absa Jewish Achiever Awards” are open and the 2015 event is sure to again raise the bar.

The annual fundraiser culminates with a gala banquet on August 23, which is, without question, the highlight of the Jewish Johannesburg social calendar. The glittering dinner honours members of South African Jewry who have excelled in business and the humanities.

Nominations are open to the public and all nominations should be sent via e-mail to nominations@sajewishreport.co.za.

See more on www.sajr.co.za - and anyone can nominate anyone.

The closing date for nominations is June 26.

The judging, especially in the audited business categories, has been described by many top financial people in the know, as the most rigorous and credible business awards process in the country.

Nominations should include:

- The nominee’s name, telephone number and e-mail address;
- The award for which the nominee is nominated;
- A short motivation for the nomination.

The Business and Entrepreneurial awards are judged by a panel of independent business people, financial journalists, stockbrokers and Absa representatives. The results are all audited by Grant Thornton.

The Jewish Report Humanities awards are:

- The Lifetime Achievement Award in honour of Helen Suzman;
- The Community Service Award, going to a Jewish person;
- The Arts, Science, Sports & Culture Award, going to a Jewish person;
- The Chivas Humanitarian Award in honour of

Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, awarded to either a Jewish or non-Jewish person.

The four Jewish Business Awards are:

- The Absa Listed Company Award;
- The Absa Unlisted Company Award;
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Torah's mathematical principles encapsulated in Graphic Kabbalah

SUZANNE BELLING

Based “on the totality of life experience”, Rabbi Dr Lionel Mirvis (pictured) has expanded his Kabbalah lessons in Cape Town to include Graphic Kabbalah - with DVDs in the pipeline - to “provide the means to deal with rapid change and to pave the way for satisfying, productive, and creative living”.

Rabbi Mirvis has been in the forefront of practical Kabbalah in South Africa for many years, founding the Spiral Institute for Kabbalah in 1986.

Unlike “Hollywood” Kabbalah, as studied by Madonna and her movie peers, he is excited about Graphic Kabbalah which he explains as follows: “The Torah, as the universal blueprint for life, is based on irrational mathematical roots which yield simple, rational and symmetrical patterns that regulate universal being.”

In other words, Torah is based on mathematical principles that govern all aspects of life.

“Once we know these principles we learn to understand the nature, purpose and function of mitzvot.” Rabbi Mirvis says these teachings give a total perspective on life - the way the world works.

“There are three principles on which this is based - the ‘insight’ it gives, the ‘in site’ perspective and back to the ‘insight’ of knowing everything about everything. It is possible to know everything about everything you want to know pertaining to the matter you want to know about.”

This may sound complicated, but to hear Rabbi Mirvis talk in his rational presentations, one grasps the full picture, as have his students - Jewish and non-Jewish alike. Some, who come with a Calvinistic background, feel a whole new world has opened for them.

Rabbi Mirvis also applies these Kabbalistic principles to business, consulting people on a one-on-one basis.

His student of many years, Lance Gilmour, said the Old Testament always held a fascination for him. “The Bible can be read in a straightforward manner or as an allegory. Rabbi Mirvis’ Kabbalah appealed to me as going into an intuitive state of mind. I like the connection between the after-world and this world.”

Sarel van der Merwe, who has a background in quantum physics and chemistry, says he has a solid



Photo: Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft

foundation in the Dutch Reformed Church, but Kabbalah “especially Rabbi Mirvis’ methods” gave him more depth and freedom of thought.

Van der Merwe’s wife, Elizabeth, comes to the rabbi’s lectures and conveys what she has learnt to her medical students at the University of Cape Town.

South African-born Rabbi Mirvis, who is the father of the Chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth, Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, says: “I don’t discriminate; I teach anyone of any religion who is interested.”

He became a fulltime rabbi in the early sixties after working in Johannesburg as a civil and structural engineer. He has four academic degrees in the humanities which provide the grounding for his knowledge of metaphysics. His intensive Torah study culminated in his obtaining smicha in Israel.

He was spiritual leader of three major Orthodox congregations in South Africa and was formerly a dayan on the Cape Beth Din. He lectured in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town, designing their courses, which included Kabbalah.

He is the author of “The Gem of Many Facets”, written under his nom de plume Hayahalom [the acronym of his Hebrew name, meaning “diamond”].

While proud of his son having gained Chief Rabbi status, Rabbi Mirvis is equally proud of his other children - Jonathan, Zvi and Lynette. He has 15 grandchildren and 32 great-grandchildren and his grandson, Rabbi Danny Mirvis, was recently appointed rabbi of the Mizrahi Shul in Melbourne.

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The Editor, PO Box 84650, Greenside, 2034 email: sharon@sajewishreport.co.za

When Israel declared independence, its army did not have a single cannon, tank or fighter plane. There was an arms embargo against the fledgling country but not against its aggressors, the Arab states. The Arabs had no difficulty in obtaining all the weapons they

Not a word thereof by Daitz.

Don Krausz
Killarney, Johannesburg

And, at the end of the day, relationships

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UCT Nazi propagandists get amnesty

ANT KATZ

The University of Cape Town (UCT) has granted a blanket amnesty to the “Black Monday” group of students who hung huge posters of swastikas and pictures of Hitler prominently on campus in March. The students said at the time that it was their intention to put their struggle against the Rhodes statue into a form that “Jews could understand”.

UCT Vice-Chancellor Max Price said last week that an “executive decision” had been taken to grant amnesty against prosecution to all students involved in protest-related incidents between March 9 and May 18, 2015.

The events on campus that the students could have also been charged for include the defacing of the Cecil John Rhodes statue and the occupation of an administration building on the campus.

“Granting an amnesty means that we recognise that there were incidents of unacceptable behaviour that



punitive action with respect to these contraventions.”

One of the reasons for granting the amnesty, he said, was that disciplinary action against the large number of students and some staff “would take months to resolve and would be an ongoing source of conflict”.

Price said that “restorative justice may achieve more than punitive disciplinary action”.

While he knew some would view an amnesty “as a capitulation to pressure” and call for more severe action, he said: “Our intention has been to insist on the boundaries of

what we consider acceptable behaviour.”

It had not been a unilateral action, the vice-chancellor said. “The executive have debated this extensively and we believe that the long-term interests of the university are best served by this course of action.”

Price, however, said clearly that an incident in which a student had been suspended for allegedly intimidating, verbally assaulting and racially abusing a staff member on May 1, had nothing to do with the protests and that that student would not be granted amnesty.

Only on the web this week

Our website, www.sajr.co.za, has a feast of great reading which users can print out for Shabbos and Shavuot reads. This week’s web-only stories include:

The full story on Wits’ “I love Hitler” fiasco - which seems far from over. Read: “Habib looks livid as ‘I Love Hitler’ problem grows”, “Adam Habib’s 1 500-word blog in full”, “Wits Law School says Habib could be walking on thin legal ice”, and watch the video of Mcebo Dlamini trying to justify his Hitler stance on e-NCA.

A story of tikkun olam - Free Market Foundation Jews Terry Markman and Perry Feldman have provided homeownership for 750. Their lofty goal: seven million! The FMF is determined to get there. Read the full story on our website.

A feast of the best Zionism reads from around the world selected for Jewish Report Online readers by Bev Goldman.

- Deisi head Olga Meshoe is becoming the darling of US Jewry too
- Natalie Portman’s Zionist Manifesto
- US Government comes up with definition of “anti-Semitism”

- German town’s first shul since 1938 used to be a church!
- Keep opinions legal and they’ll be heard
- Ostroff encourages Iqbal Survé to show responsibility
- New York Times’ public editor rebukes paper’s reporter for asking Jewish PhD candidate “demeaning” questions
- Could Israel really be barred from world soccer?
- Exposed: Libya’s new leader “sought discreet relationship with Israel”
- Join the conversation: Where all the top chirping is taking place

COMING NEXT WEEK: As Jews, we tend to think of D-Day as the beginning of the liberation of the death camps. But, when Capetonian reader Percy Tucker came back from a recent tour of the beaches of Normandy and submitted pictures of Jews who had fallen, SAJR Online went searching to find out about Jewish soldiers of the Second World War.

The answers were indeed difficult to source as it appears nobody has ever compiled information on the subject. So we did - and starting next week, in the run-up to the June 6 anniversary of the D-Day landings, we will publish a series of articles about the 1,7-million Jews who served, fought and fell in Allied armies. Any readers who have pictures, anecdotes or information, are welcome to send them to online.editor@sajr.co.za (use the subject line: WWII).



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KDVP High celebrates Yom Yerushalayim in style

HANNA BEN MOSHE

King David High School Victory Park celebrated Yom Yerushalayim in style on Monday May 18, with a special assembly.

The celebration of the unification of East and West Jerusalem included a grade 9 flag parade, singing, dancing and the reading of poetry by learners.

Guests of honour were Aviad Sela and Ori Glazer from the Israel Centre.



Photo: Yael Gordon

What a soccer fun day at KDVP it was!



Photo: Moira Valkin

RABBI RICKY SEEFF
PRINCIPAL KING DAVID
VP PRIMARY

On Sunday May 10, King David Victory Park Primary School had a School Soccer Fun Day at Discovery Soccer Park, organised by the PTA. Close to 200 KDVP pupils, with their parents in tow, joined in for a fun and healthy afternoon aimed at motivating and uniting the school community.

Yeshiva College shows its ‘arty side’ in exhibition

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Yeshiva College’s primary school learners and teachers outdid themselves by putting on a magnificent art exhibition. The school hall was transformed into a gallery space which showcased over 600 pieces of art. There was a variety of art forms on display, from self-portraits, to an exploration of various art genres. Well done to all the teachers and learners for all their hard work and creativity! The photograph shows the grade 6s’ emulation of the style of Henry Matisse.



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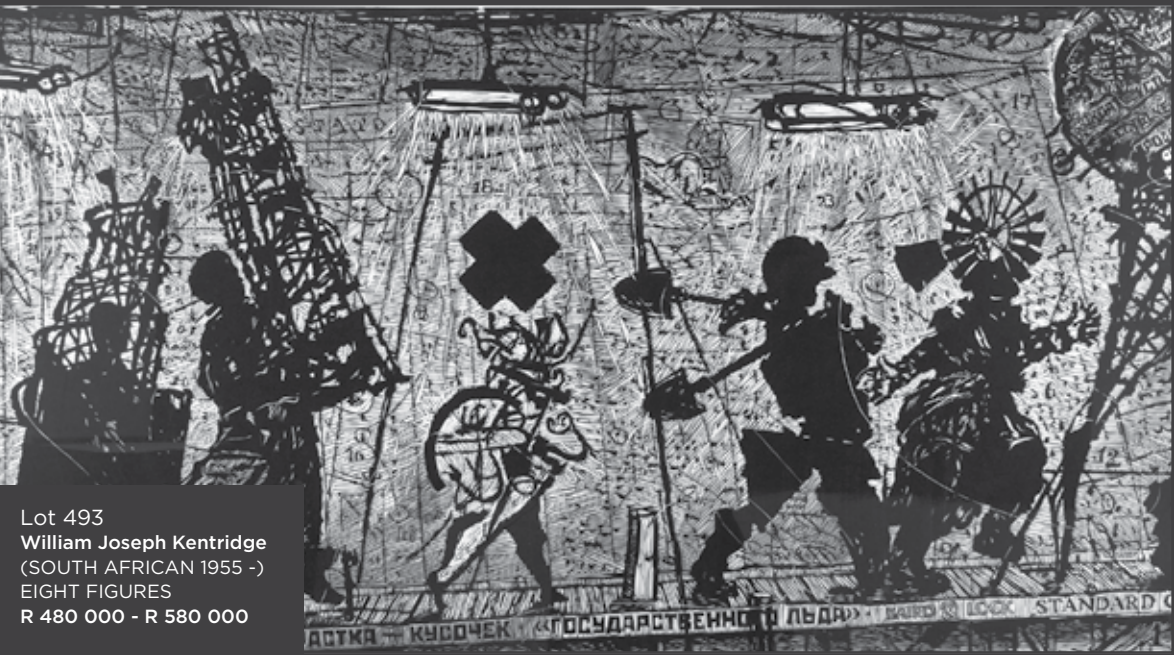
RABBI RICKY SEEFF

On Tuesday night May 12, the King David Victory Park campus invited the community to its Israel/South Africa Art Exhibition.

The beautiful exhibition showcased over 500 pieces of art from the schools’ talented learners – from grade R right up to matric. The theme was chosen to represent the identity KDVP learners embrace - proud and passionate about the State of Israel and simultaneously proudly South African.



Photo: Yael Gordon



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Fighting scourge of anti-Semitism at all levels

A major focus of the 2008 Global Forum to Combat Anti-Semitism (GFCA) was to confront the escalating phenomenon of anti-Semitism in social media. In a report presented on that occasion, this was defined as “the use of online social networking and content collaboration to share demonisation, conspiracy theories, Holocaust denial and classical anti-Semitic motifs with a view to creating social acceptability for such content”.

Since then, the problem has only got bigger, making it all the more imperative for world Jewry to devise effective collaborative strategies to deal with it.

SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn and Cape Council Chairman Eric Marx were among the many international Jewish leaders and communal professionals who participated at this year’s GFCA in Jerusalem last week.

Confronting cyber-hate was again a major part of the agenda, with experts in the field providing valuable insights into the workings of the social media and how it is being exploited by racists and extremists. The importance of constantly monitoring online anti-Semitism was emphasised, as was the need for effective counter-narratives to be devised.

In South Africa, one of the mechanisms through which cyber-hate can be addressed is the SA Human Rights Commission. The Board has lodged many hate speech-related complaints with the SAHRC over the years.

The adjudication process is unavoidably a lengthy one, given the many complaints that body must deal with and the strict guidelines it needs to follow to ensure that all parties to a dispute are given a fair hearing.

That being accepted, we have recorded a number of successful outcomes, most recently this week, when an indi-



Above Board
Mary Kluk
National Chairman

vidual who earlier this year posted threatening comments on his Facebook page, tended a written apology and confirmed that he had removed the offending material. Hopefully, having been thus publicly called to account, he will desist from posting such material in future.

The importance of rulings like this is that it sends out a message to tweeters and bloggers everywhere that having a social media platform does not give them the freedom to propagate hatred with impunity.

We have another, similar, case pending with the SAHRC, and as ever remain committed to leaving no stone unturned until we achieve what we regard as a satisfactory outcome.

Once upon a time, anyone wishing to distribute anti-Semitic propaganda would have to produce and print his own pamphlets and thereafter laboriously proceed from one mailbox to the next to distribute them. Today, it has become frighteningly easy, and inexpensive, for anyone with access to a mobile phone to do so. As a result, the sheer volume of what is out there makes it impossible for Jewish organisations, no matter how well resourced, to adequately monitor what is happening. For that, we are reliant on individual members of our own community to be our eyes and ears and pass on to us all cases of online anti-Semitism that come to their attention.

This Motzei Shabbat, Jews everywhere will be observing Shavuot, whose central theme is commemorating the giving of the Torah. As we prepare to mark this epochal event through the age-old Jewish tradition of coming together to learn, I wish all our community a Chag Sameach.

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

This column paid for by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

What’s On

Today, Friday (May 22)

- UZLC hosts David Fleminger on “The History of the Kruger Park”. Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 - 14:00. Contact: Gloria 072-127-9421 or (011) 485-4851.

Saturday (May 23)

- Limmud Johannesburg this Shavuot explores the mixed relationship to the “Other” in Jewish law, Israel today and in light of the recent xenophobic attacks. On Shavuot we read the story of Ruth, the classic convert. But how comfortable are we with outsiders today? Venue: 47 Boundary Road, Highlands North. Time: 21:00 onwards. RSVP: LimmudSA@gmail.com

- Beit Emanuel invites you to Tikkun Leil Shavuot, an evening of study, from 18:00 till midnight.

- Chabad House offers a Shavuot Dinner with acclaimed speaker Bronya Shaffer. Venue: Shul in Sandton Central. Time: 19:15. Cost: R200pp. Bookings: Batya, 072-801-7491.

Sunday (May 24)

- Chabad invites you to “Shavuot in Sandton” Venue: 8 Stella Street Sandton. Time: Shul at 09:30, The 10 Commandments at 10:30, followed by “Ice Cream Party for all Joyous”, guest speaker and evening service at 18:00. Information: Rabbi Ari Kievman 079-434-1293 or www.SandtonCentral.org.za or rak@chabad.org.za

- Beit Emanuel hosts “An Evening of Study - Tikkun Leil Shavuot” at the shul. Time: 18:00 till midnight.

Monday (May 25)

- Chabad holds a Yizkor memorial service in Sandton’s CBD Shul. Time: 09:30, Yizkor at approximately 11:30. Venue: 8 Stella Street, Sandton. Information: Rabbi Ari Kievman 079-434-1293 or www.SandtonCentral.org.za or rak@chabad.org.za

Tuesday (May 26)

- Chabad offers a “Multitplex of Shiurim” at Chabad House, Savoy: 09:45 lecture for men and women, “Point & Counterpoint”, with Rabbi Ari Kievman; 11:15 exclusive ladies shiur with Aviva Goldman. Free transport, refreshments, lunch. No cost. Information: (011) 440-6600 or www.chabadsouthafrica.org

- UJW adult education division hosts Arlene Bernstein, former head of LifeLine, on “Psychology: Issues Worrying You - An Informal Discussion Group”. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 09:30. Donation: R35. Contact: UJW office (011) 648-1053.

Wednesday (May 27)

- WIZO Meir Szold Branch screens the movie “Sunshine”. Venue: Beyachad. Time: 10:00. Donation: R45 (incl tea). Bookings: Cecily (011) 882-9996.

- Chabad’s Jewish Seniors Club hosts a lecture for men and women. Venue: Chabad House, Savoy. Time: 09:45. Information: (011) 440-6600 or www.chabadsouthafrica.org/seniors

- Chabad offers “Judaism Decoded: The Origins & Evolution of Jewish Tradition”. Venue: Kirsh Goodness & Kindness Centre, Sandton. Time: 19:15.

Information: www.JLI.org.za

- RCHCC presents a one-man play, “Bereh”. Venue: Clive M Beck Auditorium. Time: 19:30. Donation: R80 (incl refreshments). Booking: Hazel or René (011) 728-8088/8378, a/h: (011) 728-8378, e-mail: rchcc@telkomsa.net or rene.s@telkomsa.net or www.greatpark.co.za

- UJW adult education division hosts Dr Lorraine Chaskalson, former lecturer in the Dept of English at Wits on “Contemporary Poetry and its Relevance to Our Own Lives”. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 09:30. Donation: R35. Contact: UJW office (011) 648-1053.


Thursday (May 28)

- WIZO Johannesburg “Ladies Day”. Time: 09:30 for 10:00. Cost: R500 (incl lunch). Space is limited, bookings are essential. For venue and booking details contact Nadine (011) 645-2515 or wizojhb@beyachad.co.za

- Beit Emanuel will be screening a video documentary by Rabbi Sa’ar Shaked, “Gate Was Sealed”. Venue: Slome Auditorium. Time: 18:30.

Friday (May 29)

- Shalom Masorti Seniors Club welcomes anyone who would like to make new friends and have some light-hearted fun on the last Friday of each month. Tea will be served and there will be a selection of board games, cards, including bridge. Time: 14:30. Contact: Esther, (011) 485-5619.



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Music courses through the veins of this talented cantor

SUZANNE BELLING

Rare is the person born with a gift which manifests during childhood and reaches potential to become a career of fulfilment, a source of joy and a means to earn a living.

One thus favoured is Cantor Ivor Joffe, chazzan, singer, musician, composer and recording artist, who, from the tender age of eight, was drawn to liturgical music and the ambience of the choral service at the former Tifereth Israel (Schoonder Street) Shul in Cape Town.

“While my peers would rush off to the children’s service, I preferred to stay in shul, to hear the cantor and choir. I was in awe, I was inspired,” Joffe told SA Jewish Report.

“I was a member of Bnei Akiva and, on my way to shul, used to stop off at Highlands House to conduct Kabbalat Shabbat for residents of the home.”

The then choirmaster, Les Wexler, inquired if anyone wanted to sing solo - the young Ivor Joffe did, leading to the boy soprano being chosen. He was the youngest soloist and chorister. Wexler suggested to Joffe’s “highly supportive” parents, Hilary and Tevis, that their son should have music lessons. The late famed Audrey Mantel was his organ and piano teacher for many years, followed by singing tuition under the tutorship of Lloyd Strauss-Smith.

“I had wonderful role models in my career,” he said, paying tribute to his mentors, who, at Schoonder Street, included the Av Beth Din and shul’s spiritual leader, the late Rabbi Eugene Duschinsky and the great Cantor Simcha Koussevitzky in this former “Round Shul” which was almost akin to an opera house.

In Sea Point he was influenced musically by Cantor Philip Badash and spiritually by the late Rabbi Jack Steinhorn and

Photo: Miguel



currently by Rabbi Dovid Wineberg.

“Initially, I tried my hand at commerce, studying advertising and public relations. But, in spite of the commercial diplomas, I always knew in my heart I wanted to go into music.

“It’s almost as if there was a path set for me and I followed that path - my interests - and can honestly say ‘I love my work’. It is a privilege to be able to do what I enjoy.”

Joffe, who has recorded several CDs with the Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation Choir, has performed in the major centres in South Africa at social events, concerts and simchas. He is even able to pre-record his own accompaniment.

In 2000, Joffe was invited to take up a position in Melbourne at the Doncaster Shul and was appointed head of music at the Leibler Yavneh School of Music.

“I did pretty much the same as in Cape Town Jewish community and remained in Australia for two years.”

Straight from Australia, Joffe returned to Sea Point where he has been the chazzan at the Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation (Marais Road Shul) for nearly 15 years. He composes music for the choir, trains the choristers and sometimes steps in as choirmaster. The choir is considered one of the best in South Africa and the congregation is probably the largest in this part of the country. The congregants love their warm, friendly cantor. He keeps them in stitches with his brilliant impersonations of well-known communal figures and has fooled many people over the telephone.

Joffe often refuses payment for charitable appearances as he did with his convening of “Bring Him Home”, a concert which raised R150 000 to help free Prof Cyril Karabus, the paediatric oncologist who was imprisoned and detained in the United Arab Emirates for nine months.

Community

Barney’s legacy lives on at KD Victory Park Primary

JEFFREY WOLF
FORMER HEADMASTER OF KDVP HIGH SCHOOL

Barney Meyers (pictured), beloved former headmaster of King David Primary School, Victory Park, passed away last week Friday, just short of his 90th birthday.

To speak of Barney in a few words is a daunting challenge for he epitomised so many outstanding qualities. Though orphaned when he was just six years old, he never allowed adversity to be an excuse, but used it instead as a spur to spectacular achievement and success.

His happy and productive years at Arcadia, the children’s home, and Parktown Boys’ High School made him a deserving winner of a scholarship to study at Wits University. At the same time he excelled as a sportsman in soccer, rugby, athletics and also hockey, in which he captained the Maccabi Hockey XI team in 1947.



He began teaching in government schools but in 1956 began his illustrious career in Jewish education with his appointment as vice-principal at King David Primary School, Linksfield. Ten years later he was headmaster of the then newly-established King David Primary School in Victory Park, where he served for 24 years and became the legend that he was.

Barney’s motto “mens sana in corpore sano” (a healthy mind in a healthy body) was not just a tribute to his Latin major but a maxim by which he ensured that the generations of pupils under his charge benefited optimally both in the classroom and on the sports field. He formed special relationships with every pupil, and a rapport steeped in respect and

warmth.

His professional commitment and dedication were unique. First to arrive at the school each morning and last to leave at dusk, his was an example that none could emulate. Such was his devotion that at the time of his retirement in 1990 he had never missed a single day of school; because of ill health.

I was privileged and honoured to be his colleague from 1969 when I came to the high school in Victory Park as deputy principal. Throughout my years as headmaster we enjoyed a very close and cordial relationship and I came to respect his superlative qualities as an educationist with ever-increasing admiration.

His indefatigable energy, his gentle but firm approach to the parent body, his staff and pupils, and his endless kindness, were such an inspiration to me. He motivated the King David community to become a family in which integrity and respect were paramount values.

Barney’s wife Bess and their two daughters, Tammy and Ingrid, were happy to share the illustrious man in their lives with the school he espoused so dearly and, as a family, gave him all the moral support he needed. After Bess passed away in 2007, Barney became a resident of Our Parents Home where he spent the last years of his life.

Although small in stature, Barney is a giant in the educational history of the South African Board of Jewish Education. His legacy lives on in the minds and hearts of all who were privileged to know him. His memory is a blessing.

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World News in Brief
Israeli Foreign Ministry seeks to shut down anti-Semitic websites

JERUSALEM - Following a special forum of some 1 000 experts put together by the Israeli Foreign Ministry, the ministry has decided to act to combat the spread of anti-Semitism in Europe, including online. The Foreign Ministry's Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism, which held a three-day conference in Jerusalem last week, determined a series of practical steps to change what it called "a discourse of hate speech".
The ministry will take action to have websites that promote Holocaust denial shut down, and to keep hate sites out of Google searches, particularly when searches for the word "Jew" direct users to anti-Semitic sites.
The Israeli ministry will also establish special units in each country where it has a presence to compel Internet companies to enforce their own rules against storing hate material, and to enforce existing legislation on the issue. (JNS.org)



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Blatter fears Israel vote could set dangerous precedent

JACK MILNER AND JTA

There has always been a belief in world soccer that what Fifa President Sepp Blatter wants, Sepp Blatter gets. However, he claims to be facing his toughest task to date at this year’s annual congress of soccer’s governing body on May 29, when the Palestinian Authority will attempt to put through a vote to have Israel

expelled from Fifa. Fifa’s 209-member countries will vote on a PA motion calling for the suspension on claims that Israel is hindering Palestinian soccer and breaking international law. The PA would need three quarters of the votes for its motion to pass. Israel’s Foreign Ministry has been lobbying governments to oppose the motion on the

grounds that it’s a political dispute unrelated to soccer. Soccer is Israel’s most popular sport, and though Israel qualified for a World Cup tournament only once, in 1970, Israeli soccer teams frequently travel abroad for matches. Blatter, who recently turned 79, will be seeking re-election as president of Fifa at the congress, but this “crisis” could blot his copy book. Blatter,

who is a master at playing both sides, has been relatively supportive of Israel, but his main concern is that a dangerous precedent could be set if the PA goes ahead and asks for a vote to suspend Israel. Blatter admits the dispute is “the biggest challenge” facing him as he comes to the end of his current mandate, and added that Israel had not broken any Fifa statutes. The Palestine Football Association (PFA) has accused Israel of hampering their activities and restricting the movement of players between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Israel cites security concerns for the restrictions and the Israeli FA has argued that it has no control over security forces. Palestinian sports officials have long been railing against Israeli restrictions on their teams. In 2012, the head of the Palestinian Olympic delegation voiced similar complaints to JTA about freedom of movement. Two years ago, Blatter convened a meeting of the heads of the Israeli and Palestinian soccer associations and created a task force to resolve the issue.

The PA has been a member of Fifa since 1998. It also opposes the participation in the Israeli league of five clubs located in Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The PFA claims that Israeli settlements’ soccer teams should not be allowed to play in Israel’s league, saying they are located in Palestinian territory. The Palestinians are also basing their request for Israel’s expulsion on the “racism” against Arabs at some Israeli clubs. Israel Football Association (IFA) chief Rotem Kamer acknowledged a problem existed but said it was not unique to

Perplexed Fifa President Sepp Blatter is a worried man ahead of the Fifa congress later this month.



Israel. He said the authorities had taken harsh steps against Beitar Jerusalem, which has notoriously ultra-nationalist fans. “Our national teams are combined with Arabs and Jews, we have joint leagues, joint clubs,” he said. Blatter confirmed he would travel to the region again next week and meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Blatter said that if the Palestinian Authority proposal was approved, other nations could use football to air political grievances. “This could open the doors; where would we go? We want to be in sport and not in politics, we could set a very dangerous precedent.” But Blatter said he was optimistic of finding a last-ditch compromise. “I’m hopeful and positive that, at the end of the day, there might be a solution before the congress. “I want to try and find a solution to avoid us going to a vote in a Fifa congress and speak about the dismissal or suspension of a federation; this is not the sporting spirit.” He added: “Palestine is expecting from the government of Israel a gesture, especially

when it comes to the control of the circulation of persons in the checkpoints and when foreign teams come in.” A suspension would mean Israel, who is affiliated to Uefa, the European football body, could no longer compete in the Euro 2016 qualifiers and its clubs would be barred from European competition. “I wouldn’t like to go into a vote to say that one association shall be suspended, if there is nothing against the statutes of Fifa and we have to make clear there is nothing (by Israel) against the statutes of Fifa. “When Fifa stops football, then everyone is unhappy. To suspend a federation, you must make an investigation, you cannot just say I want to,” said Blatter. “This is my number one challenge, actually, from now until the election. It’s a very delicate problem.” IFA chief Kamer said a Palestinian attempt to oust it from Fifa was “cynical” and contrary to the spirit of sport. He argued that the Palestinian demand had “nothing to do with sports”, adding: “We see it as a clear mix of politics and football, something which should not find a place in the Fifa congress.”

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