



Generation Sinai, initiated by Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein, goes from strength to strength. Page 3.

South African Jewish Report

www.sajr.co.za

Photo: Jason Crouse

Protecting the legacy of the Torah

Generation Sinai, when children, their parents and grandparents sit down together to study Torah, is fast becoming an integral part of the annual rituals of South African Jewry, and is catching on across the globe. It culminates in the much anticipated Sinai Indaba later in June, where an array of foremost Jewish scholars discuss topics impacting Jewish life. Through Generation Sinai – the brainchild of Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein – children and parents at more than 100 Jewish day schools across six continents participate in learning on the days before Shavuot. Shavuot is the holiday which marks the actual giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. The mission of Generation Sinai is to ensure that the legacy of the Torah that Hashem gave to His people will remain in this world for generations to come. Pictured are Ivan Schapkaitz and his grandson Saul Gelbart studying together at Yeshiva College. See page 3

Copperbelt University and Tel Aviv University co-operate in medicine

The joint programme of Zambia's Copperbelt University and Tel Aviv University is more than a vision - it is a reality. So says CU Rector Naison Ngoma.

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UJW - as usual - truly walks the walk

The Union of Jewish Women is being called on increasingly for the provision of basic needs, Diane Levine says in her chairman's report at the UJW's AGM in Johannesburg.

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Students today show 'appalling grasp of history' - Jansen

The atmosphere at some SA universities has become "ugly and intolerant", Prof Jonathan Jansen, rector of Free State University, told a Beit Emanuel audience.

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Tensions between Netanyahu and Obama have calmed, for now

Two months after questions about Netanyahu's commitment to a two-state solution threatened to upend the US-Israel relationship, tensions have abated, for now.



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Nervous wait for Israel ahead of Fifa congress

As the time ticks away towards the weekend's Fifa congress, it looks as if it could come down to the wire as to whether Israel is able to survive a veto vote brought by Palestine.

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Nazirites and nunneries



Parshat Nasso

Rabbi Yossy Goldman
Sydenham Highlands
North Shul

The mightiest man in the Bible was, of course, Samson. He took on the most savage of beasts and levelled a stadium with his bare hands. In the end, Samson was undone by Delilah who cut his hair.

So, why should such an innocuous event have sapped his strength? The answer is that Samson was a Nazirite. And as we read in this week’s parsha, the sacred vow of the Nazirite precludes him from cutting his hair, coming into contact with the dead and drinking wine.

At the end of a person’s Nazirite period, there were certain atonement offerings he needed to bring to the Temple. The Talmud asks why should a Nazirite, who essentially was taking upon himself voluntary prohibitions beyond the letter of the law, be required to seek atonement? What sin did he commit?

One Talmudic opinion suggests that

because he denied himself the pleasure of drinking wine, it is considered sinful.

Now the question is: Why is it wrong to deny oneself anything? Just because the Creator allows us to enjoy the fruits of the vine, is it wrong to decline? Will I really be held accountable for every product that bears a kosher certification which I choose to do without?

Just because a popular ice cream was recently approved by the kashrut authorities, am I a sinner for sticking to sorbet? And if I haven’t yet made it to that fancy kosher restaurant in Manhattan, am I desperately in need of some atonement?

The answer, it would appear, has more to do with attitude than with blatant iniquity. What is the right way to live? What should be our approach to G-d’s creation and the material world? Do we need to divorce ourselves from society in order to be holy? Should we reject anything that isn’t wholly spiritual because we fear it may interfere with our piety?

There are ideologies which preach celibacy and revere those who sequester themselves from the daily grind of worldly activity. They see the body as unclean and marriage is a

less than ideal concession to human frailty.

Then there are some who climb mountains to escape to the spiritual realms. The heavens are far more blissful and sublimely beautiful than the crass street corners and alleyways of city life.

Judaism sees it differently. We follow neither rejectionist nor escapist theologies. We embrace and engage G-d’s world. Of course, there are clear guidelines, even rules and regulations. But within the Torah framework we should work with the A-mighty’s universe.

“In the beginning G-d created heaven and earth.” Earthiness, too, is part of His vast, eternal plan. That plan is that earthly beings, men and women, should invest their time, energy, wealth and wisdom to infuse G-dliness into the material realm.

Every mitzvah we do, achieves just that. We take the physical and transform it to the material, not by breaking it or running away from it, but by confronting it and moulding it into something sacred and purposeful.

“Jews have no nunneries,” goes the proverb. A yeshiva is not meant to be a monastery but a school which will teach and train our students to add spiritual value within

the material world.

So the Nazirite who, in his quest for heightened spirituality, found it necessary because of his own moral weakness to distance himself from that which the Creator has permitted us, is somewhat sinful after all. And his attitude does indeed require some atonement.

Judaism calls upon us to live a higher, otherworldly, life within this world. Rather than allowing the emptiness of a society to bring us down, we are challenged to assertively insist on changing our society for the better.

By all means drink the wine, but make sure you make Kiddush and say l’chaim.

Shabbat Times		
May 29 / 11 Sivan May 30 / 12 Sivan Parshat Nasso		
17:06	17:57	Johannesburg
17:28	18:22	Cape Town
16:47	17:39	Durban
17:08	18:00	Bloemfontein
16:59	17:53	Port Elizabeth
16:53	17:46	East London

Around the Jewish World

BRITISH QUEEN TO VISIT BERGEN-BELSEN

LONDON - Britain’s Queen Elizabeth II is to visit the site of Nazi concentration camp Bergen-Belsen during her state visit to Germany next month, Buckingham Palace said. The 89-year-old queen and her husband Prince Philip will visit what remains of the camp and see a memorial to Anne Frank, the teenage Jewish diarist who died of typhus there in 1945.

The British monarch will also meet Holocaust survivors and some of those who helped liberate Bergen-Belsen in northern Germany. More than 50 000 people deported from across Europe and 20000 prisoners of war died at the camp between 1941 and 1945. It was liberated 70 years ago by British forces, who took pictures which gave the world the first visual proof of the Holocaust.

German President Joachim Gauck paid tribute to the liberators last month, saying they had restored “humanity” to the country.

The royal couple’s state visit to Germany takes place from June 24 to 26 and is also due to include a meeting with Chancellor Angela Merkel and a state banquet. - Times of Israel

REPORTER EXPLAINS ISRAEL’S REVOLUTIONARY STRIDES IN HEALTH CARE

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK - The Jewish Federations of Rochester and Omaha invited an ISRAEL21c reporter to give talks in their communities.

Armed with a 45-minute presentation featuring samples of Israeli innovation in all fields of healthcare, as well as two videos on med-tech, Viva Sarah Press set off for the United States to share the latest blue-and-white technologies changing the way we live and deal with diseases.

From the moment she touched down, everyone who heard about the subject of the talk wanted to be invited or wanted her to come to their communities as well. People are eager to know how the latest technologies from Israel can improve their lives.

From new brain-tech that will better treat Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases to novel stem-cell treatments for ALS; from mobile health solutions to advanced surgical procedures; interest in Israel’s contributions to the med-tech arena is widespread.

At the talks in Rochester and a presentation in Omaha, Press introduced medical and non-medical professionals to technologies such as novel vaccines and cool smartphone-based diagnostic tools.

Mona Kolko of the Jewish Federation of Greater Rochester praised it as “a presentation that dazzled our audience”. - ISRAEL21c

PM TRANSFERS DIASPORA AFFAIRS TO HIS OWN MINISTRY

JERUSALEM - The Israeli government announced that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had transferred responsibility for Jerusalem affairs from

the Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs Ministry to his own office - meaning that there will now be a functioning government ministry dealing solely with the Diaspora, outside the context of immigration and absorption. Representatives of the ministry declined to comment on the move, with Netanyahu and then Bayit Yehudi leader Naftali Bennett running the newly-formed Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs Ministry.

Bennett continues to head the ministry in the new government.

For most of its history, the title of Diaspora Affairs minister was relatively empty, lacking an attendant bureaucracy and organisation to back it up. Over the last several years, however, an actual ministry has grown up around the title, and there are expectations that with the recent rise in anti-Semitism worldwide, it will continue to grow - although many think it will remain small.

Over the past year, there has been some friction between the ministry and the Jewish Agency - the state’s traditional interface with the Diaspora - especially regarding their respective roles in a government plan intended to promote Jewish engagement in communities abroad. According to expat South African Michael Jankelowitz, a former Jewish Agency spokesman and an observer of the country’s Diaspora policy, the Cabinet decision does not signify a shift in the ministry’s direction.

“The Jewish Agency for Israel in whatever form will always be the

primary address for official Israel-Diaspora relations, based on its covenant with the government,” he told The Jerusalem Post.

Aside from working on the government’s Diaspora identity initiative, the ministry under Bennett has also worked to help resettle Ukrainian Jews displaced by their country’s civil war, donating several million shekels through the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. - Jerusalem Post

NEW FACTS ON LIZ TAYLOR EMERGE THROUGH BIOGRAPHY

HOLLYWOOD - According to biographer Kitty Kelley, Elizabeth Taylor felt empathy for Jews after their persecution during the Second World War and felt “attached” to the Jewish heritage. Actress, superstar and model, she converted to Judaism after the death of her Jewish husband, Mike Todd.

After her year long process of conversion, Taylor took the Hebrew name Elisheba Rachel.

Elizabeth’s Jewish identity proved to be an obstacle during the 1962 production of the movie “Cleopatra”, when the Egyptian government announced that “Miss Taylor will not be allowed to come to Egypt because she has adopted the Jewish faith and supports Israeli causes”.

Ultimately, the ban was lifted and the movie was filmed in Egypt as planned. Elizabeth further established her voice as a Jew by publicly condemning the UN’s “Zionism is Racism” resolution in

1975.

She affiliated herself with Jewish organisations, and raised a great deal of money for Jewish and Israel-related charities. She also narrated a Simon Wiesenthal Centre film about the Holocaust.

One of Elizabeth’s most memorable actions was linked to the 1976 Operation Entebbe.

After terrorists hijacked an Israeli flight, and made outrageous demands, Taylor offered to help by trading herself for the kidnapped passengers.

The Israeli ambassador politely declined her offer, but told her that the Jewish people would never forget her generosity.

After Elizabeth died, Rabbi Jerry Cutler followed her instructions to begin the ceremony 15 minutes late, so she could be late for her own funeral. - Accidental Talmudist

KASHRUT ALERT

WHAT IS KOSHER AND WHAT’S NOT

The kashrut division of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues advises that FUTURELIFE® products are kosher certified and milchik. Please note that the logo on the packaging does not specify their kosher status. The company apologises for the error.

Ocean Fresh curried fish and Ocean Fresh pickled fish bear an unauthorised kosher sign. The company apologises for the error.

Zambia’s CU and TA Uni co-operate in medicine

SUZANNE BELLING

The joint programme of Zambia’s Copperbelt University (CU) was “more than a vision - it is a reality”, said the university’s vice-chancellor, Prof Naison Ngoma, at a ceremony in Tel Aviv to mark the launch of the “Zambian Jewish Community Public Health Wing and Exchange Programme” at the Sackler Faculty of Medicine at Tel Aviv University.

Visiting Israel for the occasion, were Ngoma; Michael Galaun, president of the Zambian Jewish community; Ann Harris, acting president of the African Jewish Congress (AJC); and Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, spiritual leader and CEO of the AJC.

Ngoma told the story of the “news that changed everything”, when Galaun informed him of the planned project and the donation of \$1million for the School of Medicine. The building at CU should be completed by the end of October; it has campuses in Kitwe and Ndola.

Ngoma recalled Michael Galaun’s father, Abe, and the generosity of the Galauns and the Jews of Zambia. “Never have I been so moved by what the strength of humanity can do,” he remarked.

He referred to Israel’s achievements “against the odds. Whatever Israel has touched has turned - not to gold - but to green,” he said.

Galaun gave a brief history of the Jews of Zambia. He said Jews first came to Zambia at the turn of the previous century. Numbers grew during the Second World War and the Holocaust, when his father, Abe, settled there.

“At one stage there were 1 200 Jews and seven shuls in the various towns where Jews lived,” Galaun said. “Only about 30 Jews remain today.”

The ethos of the Jewish community of Zambia had always been the mitzvah of giving. Many illustrious people were part of the Jewish community of Zambia in its heyday, including judges, members of parliament, mayors, a Cabinet minister and Dr Stanley Fischer [who is currently vice-chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve (US) and prior to that, governor of the Bank of Israel].

Galaun also acknowledged the great efforts of Edwin Wulfsohn, a former Zambian and chairman of Stenham Limited, an international financial services group; and of Dr Aviva Ron, a volunteer planning consultant at Ziv Medical Centre, both of whom were present.

“We recently sold the Lusaka Shul and, as a result, our financial coffers have expanded. We put two and two together - the University of the Copperbelt and Tel Aviv University - in the Faculty of Health because that is where it all begins.

“The CU is relatively young and Israel is on the cutting edge. This [project] is not only bricks and mortar,” he added, saying, students from Israel and Zambia would be involved in an exchange programme to visit each other’s universities.

“I think this is one of the finest days in the history of the Jewish community of Zambia,” Galaun said. Zambia restored diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992 and there is now a Zambian embassy in Israel.

Generation Sinai goes from strength to strength



OWN CORRESPONDENT

Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein initiated the Generation Sinai project in South Africa in 2011. Today, at more than 100 Jewish day schools across six continents, children and parents study Torah together before Shavuot – the holiday which marks the actual giving of the Torah. Parents and children celebrated this global togetherness and learning last week.

Rabbi Goldstein’s project aims to ensure that the legacy of the Torah that Hashem gave to His people on Mount Sinai will remain in the world for generations to come by Jewish parents handing it on to their children.

According to Rabbi Goldstein, the Torah is the unifying factor of the Jewish people, who are otherwise separated by oceans and mountains, continents and climates, language and culture

“It always amazes me how we can trace our

chain of tradition all the way back to that momentous day that we received the Torah from Hashem at Mount Sinai,” said Rabbi Goldstein. “It got me thinking about how powerful and important the connection between each and every generation is.”

The Chief Rabbi said it brought to mind a story about his great-grandfather Kalmin Meir Goldstein and he invited the Jewish community to watch this story on *generationsinai.com*

“...Generation Sinai takes us right back to where it all started, where we encountered the single most important event in our history as a people.” Shavuot in 2015/5775, the 6th day of the Hebrew month of Sivan, made this year exactly 3 327 years since the momentous event.

“It may sound far away and a very long time ago, but, in this time together, we will discover how close to that day we really are and how much it means to us,” Rabbi Goldstein said.



Michael Galaun, president of the Zambian Jewish community; and Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, CEO of the African Jewish Congress.

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UJW – as usual – truly walks the walk

STAFF REPORTER AND UJW

The Union of Jewish Women is being called on increasingly for the provision of basic needs, Diane Levine said in her chairman’s report at the 83rd AGM in Johannesburg. However, commendable outcomes are no longer easily achievable, she said.

“As expected, in our ever-changing world, we are still faced with serious challenges. As a result of socio-economic changes, there are fewer and fewer women available who are able to commit to giving of their time to doing voluntary work on a consistent, long-term basis and particularly to assume leadership roles in service organisations,” she said.

Despite this, the committee of the Johannesburg branch had decided to create a new position for a social worker and Cindy Kree had been employed to assist with projects.

Guest speaker Justice Sharise Weiner gave a talk on xenophobia and the Jewish experience. She reflected on how Jews were not unique in being hated. Foreigners also suffered in a similar way for being different. She explained that xenophobia came from an unreasonable fear of something foreign or strange.

She gave a detailed reflection of different examples of xenophobia in different countries and told her audience of lessons to be learnt from Zambia in dealing with xenophobia. In Zambia they had introduced a curriculum into the school programme to allow children to understand why people migrate and to have a sense of acceptance and empathy.

Weiner reflected on how this prevented xenophobia from turning into what had been experienced in South Africa in 2008 and now again in 2015.

Levine highlighted the UJW’s main projects:



Photo: Cindy Kree

Helen Slavin (volunteer of the year); Diane Levine (chairman); and Justice Sharise Weiner (guest speaker).

- Kosher Mobile Meals, the flagship project, has grown from 118 beneficiaries in 2006 to 162 in 2015. As the community moves northwards (due to demographic change), the range of suburbs covered has increased. “Presently our reach extends as far as Sandton, Illovo Linksfield, Edenvale and Lombardy East,” said Levine.
- The Friendship Club Lunch is for senior citizens with limited mobility. They are treated to lunch and entertainment on a weekly basis;
- Panic buttons - 32 of the meal recipients who live on their own were provided with panic buttons connected to a security company, because many of those recipients live in unsafe areas such as Hillbrow, Berea, Yeoville and Bellevue;
- Adult education - 32 speakers were hosted;
- House and Garden Circle - this is a highlight for many. Visits to beautiful gardens and homes around Johannesburg are arranged;
- Granny and child-headed households - 62 families with 320 family members are being taken care of in Pimville, Soweto. They are given monthly food parcels, clothing and treats;
- Three Alexandra crèches are being assisted

- with food and financial support;
- The After Care Centre in Alexandra has 45 children daily with the assistance of the Hirsch Lyons School;
- Feeding schemes - some 120 adults and children are fed daily in Alexandra; 70 unemployed men are fed every Friday in Orange Grove: 4 000 cups of soup are supplied per month to patients at the Hillbrow Community Health Centre; 150 children daily are given lunch at the Johannesburg Preparatory School in Berea, and children of refugees at the Albert School receive a donation of rice and soup;
- Support for victims of sexual assault is given to about 100 people a month at the Legal Unit of the Hillbrow Community Health Centre. They are provided with comfort packs of clothing,

- toiletries and food;
- Maternity unit patients at the Hillbrow Clinic are provided with baby clothes;
- The Betrams Primary School - with the assistance of Habonim, the school was renovated;
- Sewing school - an empowerment project in partnership with Impact for Christ Ministries in the inner city, to teach skills to unemployed people to be able to support themselves;
- Domestic Workers’ Appreciation Day - about 90 people attended this and goody bags, talks and entertainment were on offer.

Highlights of the year were the Mandela and Mitzvah Day projects which provided 1 500 pairs of school shoes to children in poverty-stricken areas.

Another highlight was the participation in the recent Israel Expo organised by the SA Zionist Federation to showcase Jewish organisations.

The committee members for 2015-2016 are Diane Levine, chairman; Elaine Katz, treasurer.

Members: Phyllis Radford - Adult Education Division; Shirley Ancer and Estelle Cline - co-chairman, Kosher Mobile Meals; and Shirley Ancer, honorary secretary and immediate past-chairman.

Helen Slavin - House and Garden Circle; members: Omnia Nock, Phyllis Seligman and Sivea Stein. Hillary Feinberg, who has been chairman of Adult Education Division for 20 years, has stepped down from her position and the UJW welcomed Phyllis Radford.

Technology

Connected cars equals connected traffic jams

A recent study has shown that the amount of data connected cars transmit, could cause jams in many mobile networks.



GOLDSTUCK ON GADGETS

A new independent study from Machina Research reveals the network management challenges that connected cars will present to mobile operators. The report, commissioned by network assurance and analytics company TEOCO, reveals that rush hour will have grave implications for mobile networks, with certain cells set to experience a 97 per cent increase in data traffic over the next 10 years. Connected cars will be the key driver of this sharp increase in network usage.

“Connected cars, as with other M2M (machine-to-machine) devices, don’t behave like smartphones,” said Matt Hatton, founder and CEO of Machina Research. “They represent a very diverse set of challenges to operators through highly varying network traffic patterns at different times of the day.”

Mobile operators are preparing for a significant rise in M2M connections. By 2024, Machina Research anticipates that mobile networks will see these connections increase from 250 million in 2014 to more than 2,3 billion worldwide.

Despite this, M2M applications and services will account for just four per cent of overall network traffic in the same timeframe. M2M devices, including connected cars, might not consume high volumes of data, but they do have very different demands to tablets and smartphones, which operators must make special plans for.

Hatton continues: “In terms of overall data volumes, connected cars don’t present much of a problem. But network resource management

is not based on total traffic volume; it’s based on particular cell sites during peak times of network use.

“If connected cars regularly cause network traffic spikes in a particular location that can’t be met, there are implications for operators in meeting SLAs (service level agreements) and delivering a positive quality of experience.”

“The connected car is just one of many M2M use cases that will put new and unusual demands on network usage that mobile operators will need to resolve,” said Steve Bowker, VP Technology and Strategy of TEOCO. “In all cases, operators will need to identify where and when the network traffic is generated, measure volume, and analyse the type of traffic as well.

“They’ll need to more seriously consider how to cope with these demands for reduced latency, higher bandwidth, more signalling and higher quality of service. This requires a more sophisticated and comprehensive approach to mobile network planning.”

To plan effectively for greater M2M connections, the report from Machina Research says that operators will need to cope with and manage the inter-relationship between all access networks including Wi-Fi and LPWA networks at their disposal. M2M connections are likely to make up two thirds of all connections within the next ten years and operators will also need more sophisticated planning tools that can cope with this diversity.

Each of these devices has the potential to introduce interference into the network and degrade quality of service for all other users. A robust certification process and service assurance capabilities are therefore needed.

- Arthur Goldstuck is founder of World Wide Worx and editor-in-chief of Gadget.co.za. Follow him on Twitter on @art2gee, and subscribe to his YouTube channel at <http://bit.ly/GGadgets>

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The lynching of a ‘racist’ is so easy these days



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

The Israeli bureaucrat at Israel’s interior ministry who committed suicide over the weekend after being called a racist on a Facebook post which was shared 6 000 times, is a new form of lynching.

Calling someone a racist is almost as bad as it gets in today’s “politically correct”, super-connected world. Some people now refer to the Internet as the “lynchternet”.

Along with the freedom of expression for which the Internet is rightly celebrated, there has come an insidious disease: the “shaming” phenomenon in which an individual or group is slandered by multiple postings which quickly go viral, with no recourse to defend himself.

The crudeness and injustice of it is no less than what used to happen when the Ku Klux Klan - its members dressed in their trademark garb which shielded their true identity - used to hang a terrified black man from a tree after accusing him of some random evilness.

Shortly before taking his life, Ariel Ronis wrote in a Facebook post that he had been deeply wronged by masses of people who never knew him. The matter arose from an incident where a black Israeli woman felt discriminated against for her treatment in a queue at the office where Ronis worked. She had come to get a passport for her son. Soon afterwards, all hell broke loose.

He wrote: “...I got a phone call from the public complaints division. After a few hours a (Facebook) post appeared as well as an article on (Israeli Facebook group) Mamazone, an interview (on Israeli television Channel 10) and a whole media circus. Not two days later the post had over 6 000 shares, each of them a sharpened arrow in my flesh.

“Me? A racist? All of my work over the course of my entire life was swept away instantly, ended momentarily by someone asked to stand in line like everyone else. The sharers continued

to fire their arrows at me, not stopping for a moment to question.”

It is impossible, of course, to ascertain from this circus trial whether Ronis was indeed a racist, or whether there was any justification in his accuser’s anger. What we know is that he was lynched by the chattering of the thousands on social media - which is far too crass an instrument for making a judgement of this sort.

A year and a half ago, a woman called Justine Sacco, the communications executive for American media and Internet company IAC, gained worldwide notoriety after she tweeted: “Going to Africa. Hope I don’t get Aids. Just kidding. I’m white!”, a short while before boarding an 11-hour flight from London’s Heathrow airport to Cape Town.

While she was in-flight, thousands of people shared her tweet throughout the world, calling her a hateful racist.

By the time she landed in South Africa, she had lost her job at IAC and had become a despised figure on the Internet. It was as if a mob had gathered in the woods to lynch her in the name of some “liberal” and “moral” outlook through which she was declared an enemy, with no chance to defend herself. She was demonised for making a sarcastic remark that the Twitter masses took at face value because she was white.

Sarcasm is saying something so outrageous that it is obviously not meant as true. She should have been more careful in putting something out on social media that required some sophistication to understand properly and could be interpreted in a sinister way. But in this case, she was in reality the victim of racism rather than the racist.

Something has gone wrong in the noble fight against racism and other social ills. It has become too easy- even fashionable - today to call out the mobs. All it needs is the click of the “send” button.

Twitter and Facebook have brought a whole new world of positive means for expression. And indeed, many genuine racists and other abusers have been exposed in this way. But the lynching of Ariel Ronis illustrates that unbridled freedom of expression can be sometimes as much a curse as no freedom of expression.

Students today show ‘appalling grasp of history’ - Jansen

IRWIN MANOIM

The atmosphere at some South African universities has become “confrontational, ugly and intolerant”, Professor Jonathan Jansen, rector of the University of the Free State, told a packed hall at Beit Emanuel synagogue in Johannesburg last Wednesday night.

Jansen was delivering the Auerbach Interfaith Memorial Lecture, now in its 11th year, and named for Dr Franz Auerbach, renowned educationist, author and activist, and a founder of Jews for Social Justice, an early Jewish anti-apartheid group.

Asked about the Mcebo Dlamini “Hitler” incident at the University of Witwatersrand, Jansen said he never expected to see in post-apartheid South Africa the kind of casual racism that had now become part of public discourse. Students today often showed an appalling ignorance of recent history, which was why he has decided to take a forthcoming tour group to Auschwitz.

The theme of the lecture was that universities across the country were in turmoil, with the tone of campus protest angry and confrontational, ugly and intolerant. There was very little university authorities could do to dampen down the anger once it blew up, other than to concede. This sent the wrong message, that bad behaviour could attract plenty of attention and had no consequences.

Yet the underlying grievances, that universities have failed to transform sufficiently, and that black students are not graduating in sufficient numbers, was legitimate. Government is also refusing to acknowledge that the root of the crisis was the quality of school education, Jansen said.

The correct approach from universities is to deal with the issues “during peace time”. Jansen makes himself as approachable as possible to students, either by sitting outside once a week, where they can informally approach him with problems, or by dealing with them one-to-one on social media, or by holding public meetings to explore contentious issues. Over a period of two difficult years, he has managed to tame one of the country’s most toxic and racially polarised universities, create dialogue, improve the pass rate among black students and create outreach programmes to lift standards among the poorest of the local township schools.

He has succeeded to the point where this year, he was proud to say, a black woman was elected SRC president at the University of the Free State.



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Jewish Report

Buses, bloodshed and apartheid

Last Wednesday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cancelled a proposed plan from his new defence ministry that would have forced Palestinian day labourers returning home from jobs inside Israel, to take separate buses from Jewish settlers who live in the territories after crossing back into the West Bank.

While some reports say that Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon had approved the proposal, other reports said he did not. It is also not clear if Netanyahu knew about the plan prior to it being brought before the Knesset or whether it caught him by surprise.

But either way, the timing of the vote could not have been worse for Israel. It occurred on the very same day that Fifa President Sepp Blatter visited Ramallah in the West Bank to try to convince the Palestine Football Association to drop a proposal for a vote on Israel's suspension from Fifa for alleged discrimination against Palestinians. And the same day that the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, was visiting Israel to talk about furthering peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Netanyahu called the separate bus plan unacceptable following a tide of criticism both in the Knesset and from outside observers once the news broke. The policy, one of the first decisions by Netanyahu's newly-minted conservative government, opponents said, was scarily reminiscent of South Africa's apartheid laws and would be a moral embarrassment for the country.

The apartheid law of separate buses, the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, Act No 49 of 1953, legalised the racial segregation of public premises, vehicles and services; only public roads and streets were not included.

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, considered a conservative, also publicly condemned the proposal while the leader of Israel's left-wing Meretz party, Zahava Gal-On, said: "This is how apartheid looks. There is no better or nicer way to put it. Separate buses for Jews and Palestinians prove that democracy and occupation cannot co-exist."

Israel's ministry of defence defended the policy, which had been brewing for months, as a security measure. It would have forced Palestinians to undergo security checks on the way home from work as well, and would have lengthened their commute.

Throughout history, public transport has been associated with civil rights battles. Rosa Parks' refusal to obey a bus driver and give up her seat in the coloured section of a bus for a white passenger, and her arrest and court case for disobeying segregation laws became iconic in the fight for equal rights in the US in the 1950s.

And so too, in South African and Israeli history – buses have been connected to struggle and bloodshed.

During the apartheid era, Putco was the main "blacks only" bus transport company and was often seen as a symbol of the oppression. The company was frequently targeted in attacks and boycott actions. On September 5, 1984, a Putco bus was torched with the aid of a petrol bomb after Putco employees did not participate in a national anti-apartheid strike.

In the well-known Evaton Bus Boycott of the 1950s, people protested against poor services, fare increases and unfair employment practices instilled by transport operators.

In Israel, blood-splattered images of Israeli buses have been strewn across international media and recall some painful incidents in the country's history. As recently as January this year, a Palestinian man from the West Bank stabbed at least 17 people in an attack on a bus in central Tel Aviv.

In 2012, an explosive device was detonated on a crowded passenger bus in Tel Aviv's business district by an Israeli citizen of Arab descent, injuring 28 civilians.

Netanyahu did well to scrap the separate bus proposal for many reasons. The discriminatory implications would have been hard to swallow for anyone and from Israel's perspective, tough to defend amid growing global criticism of its policies.

The world is watching closely as Fifa's Blatter tries to protect Israeli football from being banned from international competition and as the EU's Mogherini is under greater pressure to get tough on Israel.

But more importantly, it was a good move because separation creates further distrust. Our only hope for reconciliation is through dialogue.

Arabs and Israelis sitting alongside one another on a bus, is not going to be the solution for Middle East peace but it does create opportunities for contact – perhaps a smile, a helping hand for an elderly person – and these are steps in the right direction.

– Vanessa Valkin, Editor



Photo: Pete Souza/White House

The relationship between President Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, seen here after Obama's arrival in Israel on March 20, 2013, is improving.

Tensions between Netanyahu and Obama have calmed, for now

RON KAMPEAS
WASHINGTON

Two months after questions about Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's commitment to a two-state solution threatened to upend the US-Israel relationship, tensions have abated, but not because peace with the Palestinians is any nearer.

There has been no more talk recently from President Barack Obama's White House about "re-evaluating" how the United States approaches defending Israel. Netanyahu, meanwhile, has been enthusiastically embracing the concept of two states in interviews and meetings with foreign dignitaries.

The tamped-down rhetoric is not a product of agreement between the two administrations, observers say, but rather of the looming Iran nuclear deal, expected to be finalised by June 30.

The Obama administration does not want to create further opposition from Israel, and from those in Congress who oppose the deal between Iran and the major world powers. At the same time, Netanyahu wants to ensure the US protections Israel enjoys in international forums – the UN Security Council, the International Criminal Court, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review – even as the prime minister leads a government thought to be the most right-wing in decades. (For the first time since the 1993 Oslo Accords, the governing coalition does not include a single party that explicitly favours two states.)

"The White House seems determined not to give added ammunition to the critics" of the Iran deal, said David Makovsky, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"Netanyahu knows the limitation for his government of what is possible," in terms of reaching out to the Palestinians, "but he wants to avoid exacerbating the fallout".

Until last year, Makovsky was a member of a US team that attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to broker Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

The relationship between Obama and Netanyahu, already made tense by deep differences over Iran policy and Netanyahu's speech to Congress slamming the nuclear deal, became fraught on the eve of the March 17 Israeli election, when Netanyahu appeared to back away from the two-state solution, saying he would not allow a Palestinian state on his watch.

Immediately after his re-election, Netanyahu backtracked, saying he meant simply that the region was in too much turmoil for the stability required to underpin Palestinian statehood.

But Obama and his officials at the time suggested they could no longer take Netanyahu at his word, and pledged to "re-evaluate" how best to defend Israel in international forums.

These days, Netanyahu appears determined to emphasise his two-state credibility, and was as outspoken as he has ever been in endorsing the outcome when he met last week with the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini.

"I don't support a one-state solution – I don't believe

that's a solution at all," he told Mogherini. "I support the vision of two states for two peoples – a demilitarised Palestinian state that recognises the Jewish state, and I look forward to discussing with you how we can advance that vision forth in a practical, secure and responsible way."

In his appearance with Mogherini, Netanyahu touted his backing for "practical steps" to promote Palestinian stability, such as "economic steps, added measures for reconstruction and development and ensuring ongoing humanitarian support".

Obama administration officials once insisted that humanitarian economic improvement measures were welcome but inadequate and demanded of Israel serious consideration of diplomatic proposals.

Now, Obama seems resigned to such measures as the best possible way forward for the time being.

"If we can start building some trust around, for example, relieving the humanitarian suffering inside of Gaza and helping the ordinary people in Gaza to recover from the devastation that happened last year; if we can do more to create business opportunities and jobs inside the territories – if we can slowly rebuild that kind of trust, then I continue to believe that the logic of a two-state solution will reassert itself," Obama told the Saudi-owned news channel, Al Arabiya, on May 15, referring to the Israel-Gaza war of last summer.

The US and Israel appear to be in crisis management mode for now, said Ori Nir, spokesman for Americans for Peace Now. "There appears to be a tacit agreement that real negotiations are not possible in the foreseeable future and you do what you can do to keep things from deteriorating."

Notably, Obama did not in the Al Arabiya interview use any of the "re" words, like reassess and re-evaluate, that had so spooked Israel and the pro-Israel community in March.

Obama said he was committed to Israel but added that criticising Israel when it was at fault, was necessary to maintain credibility when he was defending it.

Jonathan Schanzer, vice president at the Foundation for Defence of Democracies, said the regional players who traditionally nudge the Palestinians toward peace talks were not available, because they were preoccupied with Iran and the Islamist violence wracking the region.

"The traditional camp that delivers the Palestinians to the negotiating table is not in a position to do so," he said. "I don't see the Sunni states, the Egyptians, the Saudis, the traditional power brokers, I don't see them taking up this cause right now."

But the détente between Obama and Netanyahu on two-state issues may not last longer than it takes to get an Iran deal in place. Notably, around the same time that a deal would kick in, in September, France plans on bringing up at the UN Security Council a resolution that would give Israel 18 months notice of Palestinian statehood recognition. Obama administration officials have indicated that they may not block a statehood recognition with a veto.

"The attitude to Netanyahu is: 'You said what you said, now show us,'" Matt Duss, president of the Foundation for Middle East Peace, said, referring to the Obama administration. "The things Netanyahu chooses to do and not do between now and then could have an impact." (JTA)

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8 SA JEWISH REPORT

Letters

29 May – 5 June 2015

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

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WHEN ‘MORALISTIC CONCLUSIONS’ ARE NOT BASED ON FACT

The letter of Shereen Usdin and Emma Daitz two weeks ago in Jewish Report and an article by Saul Musker in another publication on May 9, shows a glaring contradiction as to the reasons for the residents of (the village of) Lubya (in Israel) leaving the town.

Musker, who presumably attended the same tour as Daitz and Usdin, writes about the refugees from Lubya that “[t]hose that did flee... fled out of fear of what would happen if they stayed”.

However, according to Usdin and Daitz, the same refugees “were expelled by the advancing Israeli Haganah forces”. These two different narratives contradict each other: Either the Haganah forces expelled the inhabitants of Lubya as stated by Usdin and Daitz, or they fled out of fear of getting caught up in the war as stated by Musker.

Yet, despite differing on the facts, the same conclusions as to the guilt of the South African Jewish community and Israel are reached by the three. Thus, Usdin’s, Daitz’s and Musker’s moralistic conclusions are not based on facts, which are meaningless to them, but are instead based on an ideology, an ideology that believes in the wrongfulness of the founding of Israel. It is this ideological prism through which people such as Usdin, Daitz and Musker see the situation in the country. People with such a biased and intolerant world view cannot be the best arbitrators of the demands for justice.

Daniel Lifshitz
Sandringham, Johannesburg

THERE’S A STRONG CASE FOR A UNIVERSITY IN BRAKPAN

Minister of higher Education Blade Nzimande and four other office bearers have the will and time to involve themselves in university education in Palestine but not in Brakpan (on the East Rand) where Ekurhuleni’s young unemployable 750 000 (mostly black) youth do not have the opportunity to obtain a university education.

I have been working towards the establishment of a university in Brakpan for the past five years and approached him, the Deputy Minister, the President, the Deputy President, (ANC Secretary-General) Gwede Mantashe, the Mayor and hundreds of other influential people and not one them has been to see what exactly I am talking about.

There are three important reasons why we promote a university for Ekurhuleni in Brakpan:

1. Most of the infrastructure is already in place and won’t cost billions of rands to establish.
2. There is no need for accommodation as students will attend classes in the day and return home at night.
3. The university could be running in record time. All that is required are the teachers and an administration (by becoming a satellite of an established university).

The minister is upset about not being granted a visa for Palestine, but here in Brakpan he would be welcomed with open arms to come and see what we are talking about for the establishment of a university and for that, he won’t require a visa.

Although Brakpan may seem so far away from Johannesburg, Tshwane, eThekweni and Cape Town, culturally and scholastically, it will make a lot of sense to establish a university in Brakpan for Ekurhuleni, as it is the fourth largest metro in the country by way of population, and economically it leads many of the other metros.

Ernest Waner
President, United Hebrew Institutions of Brakpan

WAITING FOR A ‘FAIR-MINDED’ FOLLOW-UP BY USDIN AND DAITZ

Shereen Usdin and Emma Daitz demonstrate so clearly, in their letter to the SAJR two weeks ago (on the village of Lubya) just what a free society Israel really is. What the pair and their colleagues experienced, was contrary to what most mainstream newspapers print almost daily, labelling Israel as an oppressive apartheid state. How can it be, given what they were able to do with such ease, which could only happen in a free society as they so aptly described?

Interesting also how freely they moved between Israel and Palestine without the hindrance of the “checkpoints” we read about. More interesting is how the Israeli army which is so often demonised in the columns of our newspapers, did not harass, nor hinder them.

They write about the ceremony that their group participated in at the South African Forest in the Galilee and despite all the negativity that we read almost daily about the terrible, restrictive Israeli regime, Emma, Shereen and friends from far afield, proved otherwise. And here your readers have it first hand from two pro-Palestinian activists. (We know this as we have read Daitz’s articles in the press).

Now, the two would have done some research on the subject of Lubya. Surely in the course of their research they might have come across another narrative that would have aroused some curiosity?

As fair-minded folk, (Daitz has previously written under the banner of Jewish Voice for a Just Peace), they would certainly have heard the old adage of “three sides to every story - yours, mine and somewhere between lies the truth”.

I therefore look forward to their next “instalment”, giving us a balanced viewpoint. In particular, as they mentioned the residents of Lubya who fled to Lebanon and Syria, I am sure your readers would dearly like to hear why their work has not extended to those who were exiled to these two countries where in Lebanon they live a most precarious existence with little or no rights whatsoever; surely these people need their attention?

But more importantly, what about those Palestinians being murdered in Syria by both the Assad regime and the Islamic State militants? I would imagine that these hapless people are far more in need of Usdin and Daitz’s attention than those in Israel/Palestine.

Allan Wolman
Rosebank,
Johannesburg

HISTORY SHOWS THAT JEWS HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO LAND OF ISRAEL

Easton’s Biblical Dictionary says Galilee was the scene of the “most memorable events of Jewish history”.

Since the 12 tribes conquered Israel in the 13th century BCE, Galilee has been Jewish. This endured until the Assyrians vacated and relocated the entire population out of Galilee; 600 years later the Galilee returned to Jewish control.

Although the Galileans practised Judaism, they were considered different to Jews from Jerusalem. Galileans were also renowned for their fierce and unstinting valour in fighting the Romans.

We all know that the Romans plundered and destroyed Israel and its people fled. Mind you, this was in the time of Jesus and long before Muhammad.

Fast forward 4 000 years of extraordinary history of the Jews as a people, and their perseverance through several persecutions. Today, the Arab world and indeed most of the Western world tell us that Israel is “an occupier” of Palestinian land.

Proponents of this notion use 1948 (and other dates) expediently to make their case. Perhaps, after the 1967 War, if Moshe Dayan had not asked the Palestinians to stay on, (they allegedly were getting ready to flee to nearby Jordan) there would not be this “problem” today.

The Palestinians know well that they were not dispossessed of land. They know also that they are descendants of Philistines, who are now in Jordan.

A cursory glance at the Palestinian flag and the Jordanian flag shows a remarkable resemblance. My conclusion is that there is no solution to the “problem” the world has with Israel’s occupation. In fact, it is not an occupation but a country where Jews can live.

Nathan Cheiman
Northcliff,
Johannesburg

BARNEY MEYERS LEFT AN INDELIBLE IMPRESSION

I am deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Barney Meyers. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family, particularly his daughters and grandchildren.

I’ve been recalling poignant memories of “Mr Meyers”, which date back to January 1984, when I attended my first assembly as a pupil at King David Primary School, Victory Park, during his tenure as headmaster, through to the last occasion where we saw each other, at a funeral of a former pupil of his, in September 2001.

“Mr Meyers” invested a deeply personal and genuine interest in each of his pupils, which persisted beyond their leaving his charge. He knew each of us by name, and recalled every detail, effortlessly and indefinitely.

As time passed, I’d expected him to forget me, however after having not seen him in a decade, he reminisced over a discussion we’d had 15 years prior.

I shall certainly remain humbled and grateful for having been privileged enough to have been one of his pupils. His guidance and nurturing in academics, sportsmanship, discipline and spirituality have been influential pillars in my life, shaping the ethics and standards to which I conduct myself, and ultimately, expect to be measured.

I shall remember him as an authoritative figure, an educator, a mentor, a chess player and a true friend.

He wasn’t the tallest of men, yet he towered over us all.

**Brad Rigden
London**

SWEEPING STATEMENTS AND PERSONAL ATTACKS DON’T WIN ARGUMENTS

I was alarmed to read about Howard Sackstein taking over as chairman of the Board of the SA Jewish Report. This brings another ANC left-winger into power at the helm of a South African mouthpiece.

I also noted that the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and the SA Zionist Federation (run by the Krengels Inc and ANC lackeys) issued a joint statement viewing the Blade Nzimande visa rejection by Israel as “most regrettable”. Have you ever heard of a communal Muslim organisation condemning an Arab government?

I wonder who in the ANC instructed the Krengels to print that statement? We Jews in South Africa should be ashamed of the spineless SAJBD and the SAZF. In particular, we should say to Krengel Inc: “You do not speak for all SA Jewry. You have no right to make statements that a sizeable section (if not the majority) of the community do not agree with.”

Be warned, SA Jewry: The SAJBD and the SAZF under Krengel Inc is becoming the mouthpiece of the ANC government. This is why Krengel Inc ran to meet (Mahmoud) Abbas (with Jewish blood on his hands).

They had been instructed to do so by the ANC. And just watch how the SA Jewish Report moves in the same direction under Sackstein.

We, the Jews of SA, buckled under when apartheid ruled. Let’s not make the same mistake. It’s time to make all communal organisations more representative of the SA Jewish community.

An article by David Saks in the same issue asked why the young black population of South Africa was embracing anti-Semitism. The answer is simple. The “leadership” of our community has failed to tackle the problem. A dedicated professional organisation is needed to direct an ongoing campaign against anti-Semitism.

Instead of having an office for this and an office for that, energy should be poured into one agency to combat this scourge. If this is not done, the days of SA Jewry will be numbered and we will be blamed for the poor economic conditions that exist and which will get worse. If we do not stand up and say enough is enough, we will be blamed for unemployment in our country and for the perceived wealth of our community.

There are a number of Jewish organisations in SA that do incredible work, especially for the poor and marginalised black community. We should be shouting this from the rooftops and talking to as many young blacks as possible.

Let’s say to our “leaders”: If you want to prevent SA Jewry from being engulfed by an anti-Semitic backlash, get out of your plush offices, get off your behinds and do something.

Instead of running off to Israel, America and other places at the drop of a hat, do what you’re supposed to be doing, namely to protect the Jews of South Africa.

**Sonny Myerson.
Oranjezicht, Cape Town**

It is our paper’s policy to create in our letters page a platform for diverse opinion. But one of our cornerstones is fairness. Our letter writer makes sweeping statements about Howard Sackstein as an ANC lackey and of “Krengel Inc” ruling the roost at the SAJBD and SAZF and also being in the pocket of the ANC government. Sackstein is being tarred even before he has had a chance to assume office. Let’s judge Howard Sackstein on what he’s doing at (and for) the paper and not what you think he might do in future. As for “Krengel Inc”: Ben Swartz is chairman of the SAZF, with Avrom Krengel now treasurer; Mary Kluk is national chairman of the Board, with Zev Krengel president. Due to space constraints, your letter has been slightly shortened. - Editor

ASSIMILATION: CHABAD RABBIS SHOULD DO THEIR WORK IN THE US

The US has the biggest Jewish population by far, outside of Israel. They, as well as Latin America, are experiencing a clear trend of massive unprecedented assimilation.

It baffles me that our rabbis and our communal leaders keep shtum, preferring to look the other way... They seem not to understand that whatever happens there, will inevitably have repercussions on practically all other Jewish communities around the world, including Israel.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe sent many emissaries to Jewish communities around the world, many years ago. Maybe it is time to send some of those rabbis back to America.

I am afraid that Judaism may become a colossal failure. What a pity. I would like to see public discussions about Judaism and the effect of religion on our history.

**Yossi Bogacz
Highlands North, Johannesburg**

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**BARBARIC
YAWP**

David Saks

It took many years for me to shed, more or less, my dislike for the English. Part of my antipathy was due to jealousy - having grown up thoroughly immersed in English schoolboy literature (William, Billy Bunter and the like), I bitterly resented not being a Brit myself.

Another reason was that, being of a glib disposition, I pretty much accepted the Christian National “Verdomde Engelse” version of South African history, in which pious Afrikaners were continually being done down by perfidious, arrogant Rooinekke.

As a result, from an early age I hero-worshiped the gallant Boere who gave the mighty British Empire such a run for their money in the 1899-1902 Anglo-Boer War (not to mention a bloody nose in the previous conflict, in 1880-1).

Frustratingly, with rare exceptions, the Brits always seemed to come out on top in military conflicts (the wretched French invariably seemed to come off second best against them), but in the intrepid Boere of the veld, they undoubtedly met their match, and only prevailed in the end through sheer weight of numbers.

In due course, I learned that a number of Jews fought on the side of the two Republics. Not surprisingly, this quickly became an obsession, resulting in a number of articles and eventually a book on the subject.

For me, the famed achievements of

big-time captains of industry like Barney Barnato and Alfred Beit, or even the prominence of Jewish activists in the annals of the anti-apartheid struggle pale in comparison with those 300 or so Yidden who rode in the commandos and took part in the epic battles and sieges through which the might of the British Empire was kept at bay for so long.

One thing I always kept a wistful look out for, was a mention somewhere of one of my own forebears, David Taback (after whom I am named, as it happens). According to his daughter, my late grandmother, o”h, he had taken part in the war on the Boer side, because she “remembered him talking about it”.

His name never did come up, however, in the various archival lists that I hopefully trawled through. Eventually my slight hopes were dashed by my great-uncle Pinky, who was adamant that his father had never borne arms, although he may have supplied the commandos with milk from time to time.

Years later, and quite out of the blue, information has come to light fleshing out a little more, not only the experiences of Great-Grandpa “Oom Dawid” during the war years, but those of his father, Heimann Taback, and uncle, Louis, as well.



Eventually my slight hopes were dashed by my great-uncle Pinky, who was adamant that his father had never borne arms, although he may have supplied the commandos with milk from time to time.

Like many other Jewish traders, they suffered severe losses through the commandeering, if not outright seizure, of their assets, and after the war the honourable Brits cynically denied their claims for compensation based on technical citizenship grounds.

Both Heimann and Louis also assisted the Boer cause by doing night duty in the Pietersburg Town Guard - not quite the same as storming the heights of Spioenkop perhaps, but it was at least something. David’s experience was to have his shop, a general dealer’s business at Makapansgat between Pietersburg and Pietpotgietersrus, plundered by troops belonging to General Plumer’s column and to be dispatched to Pretoria in April 1901, presumably on suspicion of having supplied the Boer commandos.

In the end, he seems to have remained in Pretoria, where his father subsequently joined him. Both are buried in the Pretoria Jewish Cemetery. Heimann’s grave is easy to find, since it is located alongside the fenced off tomb of legendary entrepreneur Sammy Marks. Regrettably, the name on the stone is rendered as “Hyman” - a highly unfortunate Anglicisation of “Chaim” that was commonplace in those days but which

has now mercifully fallen into disuse.

The above information came to light in Charlotte Wiener’s forthcoming new history of the Jews of Limpopo, which I was providentially engaged to edit. The author (the mother of well-known local author and radio reporter, Mandy) was a stalwart member of the Pietersburg Jewish Congregation during the years when it constituted the largest Jewish presence north of Pretoria.

There were also functioning Jewish communities in Messina, Potgietersrus and Louis Trichardt, as well as smaller settlements like Gravelotte, Marble Hall and Tzaneen - all places few Jews today will ever have occasion to visit, let alone settle in, and which, in addition, no longer even bear their original names.

Like nearly all country Jewish centres, these ceased functioning many years ago, and only a small cemetery in each centre testifies to there ever having been a Jewish presence. Pietersburg hung on longer than most country communities before finally closing its doors in the early part of this century.

In all, today only a few dozen Jews remain in Limpopo. Charlotte Wiener’s book is a fitting memorial to the Jews of bygone times who were among the pioneers of the various towns, villages and industries of the province, as well as being a genealogical treasure trove for those wanting to find out more about their South African forebears that vague familial traditions can supply.

Hopefully, it will in due course be available online, thereby supplementing the impressive work already being conducted in this field by the SA Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth.

Community

Deisi’s Olga Meshoe wows America on a whirlwind visit

ANT KATZ

A young, black South African woman has fiercely flown Israel’s flag on a recent visit to the United States, inter alia refuting the “Israel is an apartheid state” canard.

Olga Meshoe (pictured), COO of Deisi (Defend Embrace Invest Support Israel) which is a fast-growing SA Christian Zionist organisation, recently returned from her whirlwind trip, where she met with the top tier of American Jewish communal leadership, to raise Deisi’s profile and with an eye towards fundraising.

Meshoe and her organisation have become known for their passionate pro-Israeli voices on the South African scene. She is the daughter of the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) leader, Rev Kenneth Meshoe, whose party is a strong Israel supporter in Parliament.

Her schedule in the US was hectic. A highlight was meeting US Jewish media magnate, Rabbi Mark S Golub, president and chief executive of America’s Jewish TV network JBS (Jewish Broadcasting Service). Meshoe was a guest on JBS’ talk-show, “Eye On Israel”.

After meeting her, Golub posted on his Facebook page: “Every now and then, each of us encounters a human being who touches our heart, mind and soul in a profoundly moving way. It doesn’t happen often. But when it does, we know we’re in the presence of something extraordinary.”



The talk-show host, Shahar Azani, asked Meshoe for her views on the widespread sentiment on American college campuses that Israel is an apartheid state.

Meshoe dismissed any American college student who uses the term “apartheid” in relation to Israeli policy regarding the Palestinian issue, as woefully ignorant of what apartheid was in South Africa. When asked if her pro-Israel stance has generated any personal animosity towards her, Meshoe said it did not matter to her what her peers thought of her; rather it was history that would judge the morality of her deeds.

Meshoe was also hosted by Rabbi Yaacov Kermaier of New York’s famous Fifth Avenue Synagogue where she spent a Shabbat. She met with a host of other high level executives at major American Jewish organisations, including the American Jewish Congress; World Jewish Congress; StandWithUs; Hillel International; the powerful lobby group, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and B’nai B’rith.

Meshoe also attended a meeting with Christians United for Israel’s (Cufi) Raj Nair - who heads up a programme called “The Israel Collective”.

On her last day, she went to the United Nations to meet with the staff of the Israeli Mission before flying back home on the weekend - all in all, a busy and very successful trip.

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Bellavista School takes part in Generation Sinai

ROMY ANCER

There was an electric atmosphere in the hall as Jewish parents, children, bob-bas and zeidas came together for the first time ever at Bellavista School in Birdhaven, Johannesburg, last week Friday, to participate in Generation Sinai to connect with their Jewish roots.

Jewish children at the school in the past had to either join siblings at Jewish day schools or not participate at all. Now, in a parent-driven initiative, Generation Sinai has been brought to Bellavista.



Sam, Justine and Robert Rubin learning at Generation Sinai at Bellavista School in Birdhaven, Johannesburg.

Moshe on the mountain illustrated through ice cream

OWN CORRESPONDENT

The children at Minnie Bersohn Nursery School last week Friday celebrated Shavuot and Generation Sinai by inviting the parents to listen to the story of Moshe on the mountain, using ice cream to illustrate the story.

The kids then had a bikkurim parade and Jody Emberlin from Yad Aharon came to collect the items donated.

Pictured are Jody Emberlin with the senior and grade R children.



Photo: Michelle Vinokur

YC Sefer Torah project dedicated to Marion Falk



Nikki and Naftali Mandelburg, and Doron and Michelle Falk, with all Marion's grandchildren.

OWN CORRESPONDENT

The Yeshiva College campus was alive with parents and children last week Friday morning, all coming together to learn Torah together, for Generation Sinai.

A special part of this year's Yeshiva College Generation Sinai, was the launch of a Sefer Torah project which will be dedicated to the school in memory of Marion Falk z"l, who was a beloved

principal of the Nursery School, leader and teacher at Yeshiva College for 34 years.

Falk's passion, dedication, warmth and care for all those she interacted with, contributed immensely to the Yeshiva College Schools and campus.

She always held Yeshiva College very close to her heart and left her indelible mark on so many of the learners and alumni. This Sefer Torah is a fitting tribute to a lady who educated and nurtured so many children.

Generation Sinai embraced with warmth at Torah Academy

OWN CORRESPONDENT

"The most important thing is to enjoy learning," Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein told learners at Torah Academy, when he addressed the Primary School's Generation Sinai learning programme, last week Thursday.

Rabbi Goldstein also visited the Boys' and Girls' High Schools on the same day.

Grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts and siblings joined the pupils in the learning programme which was shared by children around the world who participate in this annual project, designed to take them back to where it all started - Hashem's giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai .



Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein with Adir Lurie and Alon Benjamin (grade 3).

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Generation Sinai at KD Victory Park High a huge success



Photo: Yael Gordon

RABBI MENDEL RABINOWITZ

Last week Friday, learners at King David High School Victory Park participated in Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein's Generation Sinai learning programme. The theme for this year was the Jewish people's link to Mount Sinai.

A variety of texts were studied relating to the giving of the Torah at Har Sinai. Learners were divided up into smaller groups and the entire school spent the first part of the day engaging with members of the Division of Informal Jewish Education (DIJE), made up of Jewish educators.

In addition to the learners' study programme, Rabbi Mendel Rabinowitz held a session for parents who had come to spend time learning Torah with their children. Parents and children studied material prepared by the Chief Rabbi's Office, which was followed by a shiur and breakfast.

Pictured are father and son, Ari and Zach Buntman.

Hatzolah makes firm friends at Sydenham Pre-Primary



STORY AND PHOTOGRAPH BY SUE BENJAMIN

Elah Zaslansky of Sydenham Pre-Primary School, last week learnt - with the help of medical rescue organisation Hatzolah - that sirens aren't so scary after all.

The aim of the Hatzolah visit to the school was to make the children more aware of the significant role the organisation plays in saving lives.

Through this hands-on experience, the children learned that an ambulance is an emergency vehicle which is why it has a loud, sometimes scary siren and flashing lights.

"When we hear the siren, we need to make way so the ambulance can pass," the kids were told.

Community Columns

A column of the Chevrah Kadisha

Above and beyond

One of the qualities we are most proud of at the Chev is the organisation's global uniqueness. There is no other Chevrah Kadisha anywhere else in the world that takes care of the living as well as the departed. No other burial society that spends 80 per cent of its efforts and resources on Jewish welfare.

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When it comes to funerals, sad as it may be, there are sometimes people who are alone in the world, who have no family, no real friends and whose funerals are attended... by no-one. No-one, that is, except the Chevrah Kadisha.

As expected, we arrange for the collection of the body; our staff and volunteers carry out the Tahara (preparation for



ChevrahKadisha
AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITY WELFARE
Partners in Chesed
Michael Sieff
Group CEO

burial) and we conduct the funeral service.

A resident in one of our aged homes passed away under such circumstances recently. The Chev's Religious Services is headed by Group Rabbi Jonathan Fox who provides spiritual support to residents in all our facilities and to people in the community who are unaffiliated and in need of guidance.

The rabbi arranged for a minyan to be present and for kaddish to be said at the graveside. He also saw to it that prayers were held at the home in memory of the deceased person and appointed a gentleman in our employ to say kaddish every day for the full period of mourning, 11 months.

It is, most certainly, above and beyond the call of our duty. But it's well within the parameters of the Chev's essential culture and values.

And that's what makes me so privileged to be part of this remarkable organisation and the remarkable community that supports it.

May our partnership continue to thrive.
feedback@thechev.org.za

This column is paid for by the Chevrah Kadisha

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Can anyone shed light on ‘Sabenza’ photograph?

Abe Katz is in possession of this photograph, which he believes is of a family with the surname of Sabenza.

He writes that he is not sure “whether they’re from Latvia, or Lithuania. It would be great if I could hand the photo over to some family member of theirs.”

Katz may be contacted on (011) 882-8354, cell 082-668-3483 or mailto:abekatz@polka.co.za



What's On

Today, 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.

UZLC hosts David Saks from the Jewish Board of Deputies on “South African Jewry and World War 2”. Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 – 14:00. Contact: Gloria, (011) 485-4851 or 072-127-9421.

Sunday (May 31)

RCHC in partnership with JH&GC hosts a presentation by Professor Henry Green of the University of Miami (Florida) on “Charlie Hebdo and the New Face of Anti-Semitism”. 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 or www.greatpark.co.za

Monday (June 1)

UJW adult education division hosts Prof David Zeffertt, emeritus professor of law, Wits, on “Compromise”. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 09:30. Donation: R35. Contact: UJW Office (011) 648-1053.

Tuesday (June 2)

JWBS hosts “The Sonia Bernstein Book Fair/Mini Market/Milk Deli”. Venue: Jabula Recreation Centre, Sandringham. Time: From 08:30 to 12:30. Information: (011) 485-5232.

Jewish Genealogical Society of SA hosts Harold Nackan on “My 40-Year Voyage of Discovery of the Ancestry of the Nakan/Nackan Family Tree” Venue: HOD. Time: 19:00 Cost: R20 (incl tea & refreshments). RSVP: Hannah (011) 485-2188.

UJW adult education division hosts Estelle Sher, musicologist and JPO lecturer, on “A Programme of Music and Discussion Based on the Current JPO Programme”. Venue: Home of Stella Beder: 104 Pembury Lodge, 1 Kernick Avenue, Melrose North. Time: 10:00. Donation: R35. Contact: UJW office (011) 648-1053.

Wednesday (June 3)

Emanah Movement is holding a morning of “Laughter, Song and Snacks”. Venue: Glenhazel Shul Hall. Time: 09:30 for 10:00. Donation: R150. All proceeds to Achusat Sara Children's Home, Bnei Brak, Israel. Contact: Ethne 083-400-5312.

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 (June 4)

WIZO every Thursday hosts a “Lunch & Learn” shiur with Rabbi Michael Katz. Venue: Beyachad. Time: 13:00. Information: WIZO office, (011) 645-2515.

Friday (June 5)

UZLC hosts arts writer Robyn Sassen on “These are a Few of my Favourite Reads”, talk about books. Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 - 14:00. Contact: is Gloria (011) 485-4851 or 072-127-9421.

News

Natalie Portman is back with a vengeance

ANT KATZ AND SUZANNE BELLING

Award-winning actress Natalie Portman, 33 (pictured), recently made it back into the public eye after a four-year respite during which she married Benjamin Millepied, had a child and moved to Paris.

After winning the Academy Award for Best Actress in 2011 for her role in “Black Swan”, Natalie kept a low profile, acting in two “Thor” movies and a romantic comedy with Ashton Kutcher.

But now she is back with a vengeance. She stars in two films to be released this year, both directed by Terrence Malick, one of the most critically acclaimed filmmakers of all time. She will also star as two of the 20th century’s most famous women - Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis - in two separate

films to be made this year.

And, as if that wasn’t enough, Natalie will also act in a promising Western “Jane Got a Gun”, which she co-produced, alongside Ewan McGregor and Joel Edgerton.

The New York Times wrote recently that her face “is everywhere” at the Cannes Film Festival, where she premiered her directorial debut - “A Tale of Love and Darkness”, an adaptation of the famed Israeli author Amos Oz’s memoir.

The film, in which Portman also stars and for which she wrote the screenplay, garnered a standing ovation at its Cannes premiere. (Her dress received mostly positive reviews as well.)

How is that for a prodigious comeback? It’s like she is making up for lost time.

In “A Tale of Love and Darkness”, wrote Andrew Pulver in the Guardian,



“Portman herself plays [Oz’s mother]: it’s a controlled, queenly performance, her intense glamour remaining entirely intact.”

“A Tale of Love and Darkness” has been translated into many languages and brilliant a writer as Oz may be, this is by far his most unforgettable

book. The characters of his family are as alive as if they were in your living room portraying the life of Israel before statehood and the period thereafter.

Natalie recently opened up to the Hollywood Reporter about such Jewish topics as Israel, being Jewish

in Paris and being Alan Dershowitz’s research assistant as an undergraduate student at Harvard, where she majored in psychology.

She is not a fan of Benjamin Netanyahu and said she was “very upset” after he was re-elected as prime minister of Israel. “I find his racist comments horrific,” Portman said.

The actress was born Natalie Hershlag and is the only child of Avner Hershlag, an Israeli-born doctor, and Shelley Stevens, an American-born artist from Cincinnati, Ohio, who also acts as her agent.

After her family moved to New York, Natalie graduated high school with honours and attended Harvard University.

She was discovered by an agent in a pizza parlour at the tender age of 11. She was encouraged to take up modelling but chose an acting career instead.

Nervous wait for Israel ahead of Fifa congress

JACK MILNER

As the time ticks away towards this weekend’s Fifa congress, it looks as if it could come down to the wire as to whether Israel is able to survive a vote brought by Palestine for the country to be expelled from football’s world governing body. “Negotiations are still going on but they are very complicated,” a top Fifa official told AFP. “There may not be a solution until the final hours.” Fifa President Sepp Blatter, who at the age of 79 is seeking re-election to his position, is clearly feeling threatened by this action as his

opponent for the job is Jordanian Prince Ali bin al Hussein who is gaining support in Europe, especially since Uefa President Michel Platini has come out in support of the Jordanian. Uefa is the controlling body of European football. Platini has accused Blatter of lying to him about seeking a new term. “In 2011 he asked us face-to-face to support him for what would be his last mandate,” Platini told French sports newspaper L’Equipe in an interview. “I have the unpleasant feeling of having given my support on the basis of a lie.” he added. Platini said Blatter had made good decisions in his 40-year career, but that he could just not

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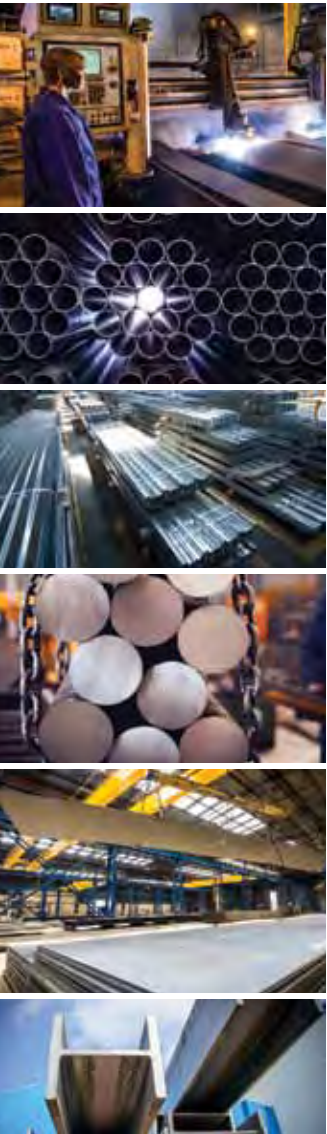


Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with Fifa President Sepp Blatter after their meeting last Monday in Tel Aviv.

let go of power. “He is not staying on because he has a job to complete or because he still has some big projects to carry out for Fifa. No, he simply is scared of what the future holds for him having consecrated his life to Fifa to the point that he identifies himself totally with it.” Platini believes it is the right time for new blood to be brought in and that Prince Ali, 39, would make a “great president” of Fifa. Another broadside to Blatter came from Argentine football legend Diego Maradona who told the Daily Telegraph that a fifth term for Blatter would be “an absurdity”. “Under Sepp Blatter, Fifa has become a disgrace and a painful embarrassment to those of us who care about football deeply,” the 1986 World Cup winner said. A defeat for Blatter over the proposed Israeli expulsion, could have further ramifications as far as his bid for the presidency is concerned. The first prize for Blatter is for the call for the vote to be withdrawn from the agenda, but only Palestine can do that. However, Palestinian Football Association President Jibril Rajoub has so far refused to withdraw the motion, which will require the backing of three-quarters of the 209 member federations to pass. He declared the situation in the West Bank far worse than apartheid that existed in South Africa, because right-wingers and extremists in

Israel wanted to “delete Palestine”. In the 1960s, Fifa suspended South Africa for decades after it failed to comply with the association’s non-discrimination policies. South Africa was also expelled from Fifa a month after the Soweto Youth Uprising of 1976. “I am not asking for the suspension of the Israeli association; I am asking to end the suffering of the Palestinian footballers,” Rajoub said. “I am asking to end the grievances, the humiliation we are facing.” Ramallah, which has been a Fifa member since 1998, wants to bar Israel from international competition over what it calls the restrictions on the movement of Palestinian players. Ramallah also opposes the participation in the Israeli championship league of five clubs located in Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank. Blatter flew off to the Middle East last week Monday to have talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and PA President Mahmoud Abbas, but did not report whether any deal had been struck when he met with the Fifa board. Blatter’s main talks have been with Rajoub and Israel Football Association President Ofer Eini, who says restrictions on Palestinian players are a security question and not in the domain of the sports body.

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