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South African Jewish Report

www.sajr.co.za

Naming of school hall a fitting tribute



Photo: Ian Ossendryver

Jews have always placed a high premium on education and it was therefore fitting that the beloved Barney Meyers, principal of King David Victory Park Primary School from 1966 to 1990 - who passed away in May of this year, just short of his 90th birthday - had the school hall named for him. This will be a living legacy of this iconic figure. Barney was a former vice-headmaster of King David Primary School Linksfield and later, headmaster at Victory Park. Two other Jewish educational icons Jeffrey Wolf (pictured left) and his twin brother Elliot (right), who had close ties to Barney over many years, paid tribute to their former colleague and attended the naming event. Elliot was principal at King David Linksfield High School from 1974 to 2001 and Jeffrey occupied the same position at King David Victory Park from 1975 to 1998. In a tribute to Barney at the time of his death, Jeffrey said: "To speak of Barney in a few words is a daunting challenge as he epitomised so many outstanding qualities. Orphaned when he was only six and growing up in Arcadia Children's home, Barney never allowed adversity to be an excuse. It is said that he never forgot a face and called every child in his care by their name." See page 4.

Historic Garden Synagogue still plays vital Jewish role

The Gardens Shul which adjoins the famous Company Gardens, is celebrating its 110th anniversary this year. This magnificent ornate structure has long served as the *de facto* headquarters for Cape Jewry.

2

Most communal leaders wary of Iran nuclear deal

The recent nuclear deal with Iran has been a controversial issue throughout the world. We asked prominent members of the SA Jewish community for their views. Most are against it. Only Mr Justice Dennis Davis described the deal as "splendid".

3

Jewish lawmakers shut out noise as they consider Iran nuclear deal

Turn off the ads, read, listen and consult. That's what five key Jewish American lawmakers plan for the five to seven weeks they have to contemplate their vote on the Iran nuclear deal. There are 28 Jews in Congress, but seven are undecided.

6

Raising flags in South Africa for different scenarios

South Africa is still in the "premier league" in terms of the future, says scenario planner Clem Sunter. The other two scenarios - or "flags" - are South Africa as a "failed state" or "playing in the second division" - a "gentler meander downwards".

7



Don't let BDS set the agenda, says Freeman

The SA Jewish media gives too much attention and publicity to the BDS movement which has urged the imposition of sanctions on Israel. "We let them set the agenda. I don't like talking on this topic because I really believe we are giving fuel to BDS," the Israeli deputy ambassador says.

8

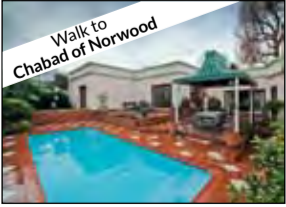
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Historic Gardens Synagogue still plays vital Jewish role

DAVID SAKS

Visitors to Cape Town’s classy Mount Nelson Hotel may have come across a plaque recording that a little over 160 years ago the first formal Jewish religious services took place in that part of the complex. Back then, the site was occupied by Helmsley Place, the home of 1820 Settler and entrepreneur Benjamin Norden Esq.

On September 26, 1841, Norden and 16 other adult men gathered there on Erev Yom Kippur to form the first recorded minyan in southern Africa. Thus was born Tikvath Yisrael - The Hope of Israel - later to be known as the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation. The “Mother Congregation” of South African Jewry, it continues to play a significant role in Cape Town Jewish life to this day.

Cape Town’s first synagogue was built in 1849, next to what are today the Parliament Buildings. That year also saw the appointment, short-lived though it proved to be, of the country’s first Jewish clergyman, the Rev Isaac Pulver (dismayed by the still low standards of observance, he departed for Australia two years later and was replaced by the Rev Joel Rabinowitz.) In 1863, the congregation moved into a larger building in Government Avenue, just a few hundred metres away. Today, this forms part of the South African Jewish Museum complex.

The congregation moved into its third and final home, conveniently located right next to the old building, in 1905. Previously referred to as the Great Synagogue, but now more commonly called the Gardens Shul (since it adjoins the famous Company Gardens), the synagogue is celebrating its 110th anniversary this year.

Like its counterpart in Wolmarans Street in Johannesburg, Cape Town’s Great Synagogue, itself



A photograph taken at the memorial service for Yitzhak Rabin in the Gardens Shul in Cape Town, November 1995.

a magnificent, ornate structure, served as the de facto headquarters for Cape Jewry. It was the seat of the Chief Rabbi of the Jewish congregations of the then Cape Province, as well as of South West Africa and the Sephardi Congregation of Rhodesia (only since 1986 has South Africa had one Chief Rabbi for the whole country).

Like Wolmarans Street, it also took the lead in fostering Jewish religious education, and it was there that the community at large has gathered for such important prayer meetings as the Day of Mourning for victims of Nazism (1942) and, more recently, the memorial service for Yitzhak Rabin following his assassination in 1995.

The membership of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation progressively declined with the

move of most of the Jewish population from the City Bowl area to suburbia. However, it gained a new lease of life through becoming incorporated within a new and vibrant Jewish campus from the late 1990s onwards. That campus today includes the SA Jewish Museum, the Cape Town Holocaust Centre, the Jacob Gitlin Library, function and conference centres and a restaurant and book shop.

As a result, the membership of the congregation picked up steadily. Today numbering some 800 souls under the current spiritual leadership of Rabbi Osher Feldman, it once again has a full complement of clergy, as well as world-class choir, and important public prayer gatherings continue to be held at its historic premises.

World News in Brief

US said to release Jewish spy Jonathan Pollard

NEW YORK - The United States is planning to release jailed Jewish spy Jonathan Pollard, who has been incarcerated for three decades over a conviction for giving Israel classified information on America, the Wall Street Journal reported last week Friday. The report cited “US officials, some of whom hope the move will smooth relations with Israel in the wake of the Iran nuclear deal”.

Pollard is the only person in US history to receive a life sentence for spying for an American ally. Advocates for his release have argued that he should be freed because his time in prison has been disproportionately long. Additionally, in recent years, the 60-year-old Pollard’s failing health has been widely cited as an argument for his release on humanitarian grounds.

According to the Wall Street Journal report, some US officials are pushing for Pollard’s release within the next few weeks, while other officials say he will wait until he is up for parole on November 21, which would mark exactly 30 years since his arrest.

Alistair Baskey, a spokesman for the National Security Council, later said: “Mr Pollard’s status will be determined by the United States Parole Commission according to standard procedures. There is absolutely zero linkage between Mr Pollard’s status and foreign policy considerations.” (JNS.org)

Parsha

The responsibility of looking after our health



Parshat Va’etchanan

Rabbi Alex Carlebach

Chabad of Lyndhurst

Among the beautiful teachings that our parsha contains is a lengthy account of how the Ten Commandments was revealed to each and every one of our entire nation by G-d A-mighty Himself.

This is the basis of our belief in Torah - a fact that no other religion has been able to copy. In addition, the more we study, the more we discover how Torah is timeless and addresses every aspect of humanity from the most esoteric and spiritual to the most basic and physical. One example is the Command to look after our health, including how and what we eat, our need to exercise and the like.

One of the verses found in this week’s parsha

(chapter 4 verse 29) contains the words: “Vinishmartem meod linafshosaychem - Be greatly beware for your souls”, although the context of these words refers to being reminded not to serve idols.

Our holy sages apply this verse to mean that one must act very carefully when it comes to their physical and spiritual health. There may be some who argue that as G-d A-mighty runs the world and every individual in it, as G-d decides all, it follows, in their view, that G-d will decide how long a person lives, as well as how good a quality of life they will have, regardless of the individual’s input.

Therefore, they argue that in terms of the cliché that “if a bullet has my name on it, then I will go and if not I will survive”, the length of my life is being decided by G-d regardless of how I behave.

The above-mentioned verse tells us that this supposition is not so. Rather it is the responsibility of each and every one of us to safeguard

and look after our health and that in fact true faith in G-d states that Hashem has placed the responsibility of looking after our physical health on each person. Know that your very life may depend on it

The famous Rambam, Maimonides, writes halachically that we must have a regimen that ensures our physical health. He includes careful eating habits, stating that more people pass away from bad eating than from other diseases.

He tells us that our bodies need to be active, which certainly includes exercise. Many rabbis tell us that smoking, which medicine maintains is injurious to our health, is contravening this dictate of the Torah. This applies equally to any other activity which medical science discovers is harmful to our wellbeing.

We are not only talking about quantity of life, but perhaps more importantly the quality of life during the years that Hashem grants all of us.

This week is also called Shabbat Nachamu - the time of consolation. I pray we can all

appreciate the beauty and wisdom of the great Torah that Hashem has bestowed upon us. It has wealth in every field of life and the means to better our lives in every avenue of life, be it physical or spiritual.

Let us cherish it, love it, observe it, study it. Kee hu chayainu - it is our very life. Thereby may we be privileged to lead long healthy lives in which we will witness both redemption and consolation.

Shabbat Times

Parshat Va’etchanan
July 31 / 15 Av
Aug 1 / 16 Av

Begins	Ends	
17:23	18:14	Johannesburg
17:48	18:42	Cape Town
17:05	17:57	Durban
17:25	18:17	Bloemfontein
17:19	18:13	Port Elizabeth
17:12	18:05	East London

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South African
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Most communal leaders wary of Iran nuke deal

SUZANNE BELLING

The recent deal between the P5 +1 (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council - the US, Britain, France, Russia and China plus Germany) and Iran with regard to Iran’s nuclear programme has been a controversial issue throughout the world. We asked prominent members of the South African Jewish community for their views.



Photo: Moira Schneider

Mr Justice Dennis Davis describes the deal as “splendid. Look at the alternative. Otherwise Iran will go ahead in an uncontrollable way. This way we have a chance of holding Iran accountable. It is best to build in some safeguard - either you seek to bomb (Iran) or you carry on with sanctions.”

Davis says that by drawing Iran into the 21st century, there is more hope of bringing about social change. “I think it would be of interest to have a poll canvassing opinions as to whether it was a good idea to have gone into Iraq (too). “The people of Israel are

concerned and, rightly so, but the real question is either pre-emptive bombing of Iran or to increase the safeguard.”

He thinks the nuclear deal will bring about a reconsideration of (US President Barack) Obama’s presidency - “the deal will gain him a monumental place in history.

“I think there is a lot of racism in criticism of Obama - if he had been a white man, I don’t think this would have happened.”

Davis is concerned about the people of Israel, but he considers (Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu’s government the most rightwing ever - “beating the war drum like PW Botha when he was president of South Africa”.



Jonathan Silke, honorary life president of the South African Zionist Federation, says the nuclear deal between Iran and the Western powers will prove to be a historic error rather than a historic achievement “as it failed to build into its provisions the strongest disapproval of Iran’s calls for the destruction of Israel, its encouragement of anti-Semitism

within Iran and its continued funding of terrorist organisations such as Hamas and Hezbollah who threaten the lives of innocent Israelis and Arabs.

“On the contrary, the deal legitimises that regime and bolsters it financially and Israel has every right to defend itself and prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.”



Photo: Grant Rogerson

Dr Harold Serebro, renowned Holocaust author, who has carried out a great deal of research for his newly-launched book “The Canopy - Warriors for Justice, Facing the Ticking Time Bomb”, feels the Iranian deal is “very bad for Israel. It is going to cause all the Arab countries in the Middle East to want to become nuclear powers and purchase weapons.”

The Saudis, who are Sunni Muslims, are particularly vulnerable. “Iran is clearly the new regional power of the Middle East. Because it is allowed to continue its nuclear research, none of the centrifuges are removed which are required to manufacture and enrich uranium.”

In addition, although inspections of the nuclear facilities are allowed after a request is received from the International Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC), 14 to 24 days can elapse before the Iranians allow inspectors to enter the facilities. “During that time, they can hide anything.”

When the severe sanctions are removed, immediately, hundreds of millions of dollars in cash will be released, “and the Iranians have said they will continue to support their allies – Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas and Fatah”.

Serebro is of the opinion there is a long-term danger from Iran and the satellite countries and organisations it supports. “I think that in these prolonged negotiations, the Iranians have outsmarted the Americans

and that members of the US Congress and Senate clearly will oppose this deal. It is not a good deal and, in the long term, may cause turmoil in the Middle East for Western civilisation.”



Li Boiskin, Cape Town communal leader, speaking in her personal capacity, says the deal struck with Iran shows that the UN Security Council’s “world view” is a farce. “It awarded \$150 billion to fund terror groups and agreed to the lifting of sanc-

tions against Iran without Iran having to guarantee compliance with its obligations.”

“Has the world not learned from the North Korea deal?” Boiskin asks. “I watched in horror and with a deepening sense of doom as the TV portrayed hundreds of thousands of Iranians supporting the Ayatollah in a frenzied call for death to America and death to Israel - and this, the day after the deal was accepted.”

This was a clear indication that the Iranian leadership has not in any way changed its “hate-filled murderous ideology, nor hidden its intentions”.

Israel, America, the Middle East and the world powers need to be strategically vigilant and alert - “very alert”, Boiskin warns.

SAZF Cape Council speaks out strongly against Iran deal

ROWAN POLOVIN FOR SAZF CAPE COUNCIL

The South African Zionist Federation stands firmly against the Iran nuclear deal. We believe that this deal is a threat not only to Israel, but to the United States, Europe and the world.

It is not a historic achievement by world powers in containing the fundamentalist and murderous regime of Iran. It is rather a historic mistake that legitimises that regime, bolsters it financially and aids its vast network of terror in the Middle East, Africa and around the world.

In theory, the purpose of the deal is to monitor and prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. In practice, the deal only temporarily delays Iran from acquiring nuclear bombs, and legitimises their speedy acquisition after a decade.

While the agreement allows for inspections of known nuclear facilities in Iran, these inspections have to be declared 24 days in advance. This effectively allows Iran to continue its nuclear research and development unimpeded through

a game of deception that it has perfected over many years.

While there will be limits to the number of centrifuges with which Iran can enrich uranium to weapon-grade standard, it does not have to dismantle a single centrifuge. On top of that, Iran will get rewarded with hundreds of billions of dollars in sanctions relief, allowing it to continue its vast network of terror funding around the world.

Iran has repeatedly called for the destruction of Israel. It burns Israeli and American flags on a regular basis and instils a culture of anti-Semitism throughout its population, going as far as holding cartoon contests denying the Holocaust.

It funds the terrorist organisations of Hamas and Hezbollah that live right on Israel’s borders and continues daily invectives against the Jewish State.

We ask fellow South Africans to stand with us in firm and resolute opposition to this historic blunder. We support Israel’s right to defend itself and its right to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

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Barney Meyers Hall perpetuates legacy of a great man



MELISSA ELION

The outstanding contribution to Jewish education by the late Barney Meyers, principal of King David Victory Park Primary School from 1966 to 1990, was acknowledged at his memorial, held on Monday, when the school hall was named in his honour: The Barney Meyers Hall.

Past pupils, colleagues, family and friends attended the evening which celebrated his life, achievements, and the legacies which he passed on to all who knew him through his professionalism, dedication, commitment and positivism.

Tributes were paid to him by Jeffrey Wolf, who worked alongside him as principal of King David Victory Park High School for many years and Dr Zummy Isenberg, life-long friend. Many past learners and colleagues sent video clips of memories and anecdotes about Barney Meyers’ wonderful qualities such as his ability to make each pupil feel important and special, his ability to remember each

and every learner by name and details of his or her family, long after they had left the school, his varied interests and hobbies, his boundless energy and his belief in the maxim of “a healthy mind in a healthy body”.

Reminiscing about his life and achievements was a positive and affirming experience for all who attended the evening, as he certainly had a profound impact on his pupils and staff.

His daughters and their families who live in Hong Kong and Israel respectively, were present and spoke at the memorial. His grandchildren put together an audiovisual presentation of his life, with photographs and commentary, highlighting his achievements and interests.

A Facebook page, “Memories of Barney Meyers”, has been set up for past pupils and friends to post and share memories and stories.

The evening ended with the unveiling of the new hall name.

Rediscovered Irma Stern painting an expensive notice board

ANT KATZ

A painting by acclaimed Jewish South African artist Irma Stern titled “Arab in Black” valued at as much as R20 million, was discovered hanging in the kitchen of an English collector and was being used as a notice board, UK auction house Bonhams said last week.

The painting will be offered for sale on September 9 during the second “South African Sale” of 2015 at Bonhams’ New Bond Street premises in London. “Arab in Black” is expected to fetch between R14 million and R20 million.

The painting, which has wonderful “Struggle credentials”, had been almost lost to the world, said Bonhams. The painting had been linked to Nelson Mandela, they said.

Bonhams has advertised the artwork as the painting that helped save Nelson Mandela’s life, because Stern had donated the painting to raise money for Madiba’s legal defence at the Treason Trial. Mandela, who was eventually found not guilty, had been arrested in 1955 on a charge of high treason which carried the death penalty.

The painting then went to Britain in the 1970s when the original buyer emigrated to the UK and it was subsequently bequeathed to the current owner, who has chosen to remain anonymous.

The original owner was art collector Betty Suzman, whose father, Max Sonnenberg, founded Woolworths. Betty was the sister-in-law of anti-apartheid activist and politician Helen Suzman and Betty’s daughter is acclaimed actor and director Janet Suzman.

Hannah O’Leary, Bonhams’ head of South African art, found the painting in London when she went to a client’s apartment to appraise their art collection. “I was undertaking a routine valuation when I spotted this masterpiece

hanging in the kitchen, covered in letters, postcards and bills,” O’Leary said in a statement. “It was a hugely exciting find even before I learned of its political significance.”

“Arab in Black” signed and dated 1939 on the upper left corner, bears the inscription: “Arab in black to stretcher and frame (verso) oil on canvas 61 x 51cm (24 x 20 1/16in) within an original Zanzibar frame.”

Stern was an expressionist, born in 1894 in Schweizer Reneke in the then Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek, later the Transvaal province. She achieved national and international recognition in her lifetime and her art fetches some of the highest prices for a South African artist. Stern died in Cape Town

on August 23, 1966.

Earlier this year, Stern’s “Still Life with African Woman” fetched R17,6 million at Bonhams’ first biannual South African sale of 2015 in London. The sale had been dominated by Stern’s work with nine of her paintings on sale. “African Woman”, in a replica Zanzibari frame, fetched the top price of almost R19 million.

In March 2011, Bonhams achieved a then-record auction price overseas for any South African work of art when Stern’s “Arab Priest” (1945) fetched R17,2 million.

Her “Two Arabs” sold for R21,1 million at a South African auction held by Strauss & Co, also in 2011, making it the highest price ever fetched by a South African painting.

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Why is Israel so happy if things are so bad?



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

With the constant stream of ugly headlines about Israel, threats from the ICC about possible war crimes investigations, and BDS’ worldwide success in fostering boycotts against it, one could easily conclude that Israelis must be unhappy and pessimistic. Any peace deal with the Palestinians seems impossible in the foreseeable future, and arch-enemy Iran is about to re-enter the international stage following its deal with world powers on its nuclear programme – without ever having renounced its vow to “wipe Israel off the map”.

Yet while political realities look gloomy, surveys show Israel ranks as one of the happiest, most optimistic nations in the world in other respects. Israelis feel better than most Europeans, according to the European Social Survey poll published recently by City University London and other academic institutions. The poll examined satisfaction levels in 29 mostly European countries, including Israel, measuring the sense of wellbeing, and community and emotional support among residents.

Israelis scored higher than the majority of European countries - eighth place - in feelings of well-being. This was identical to Germany and higher than Britain, France and Italy. Denmark came first, and Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, Finland, Holland and Sweden ranked higher than Israel. These results are remarkable – though they were probably affected by the fact that Europe was embroiled in a debt crisis at the time of the initial survey, based on 2012 data.

Israel scored lower in the other categories, but still came out looking relatively healthy. In the sense of belonging to communities, it ranked eleventh, but still above France, Italy, Poland and Bulgaria. In the emotional support category it ranked thirteenth, with Germany coming third, near the Scandinavian countries. The lowest scoring countries were Portugal, Italy and Hungary. Russia received dismal scores in all categories.

A more current survey focusing on finance, confirmed the outlook of Israel as an advanced, optimistic society. In the Pew Research Centre’s annual poll of economic conditions in 40 countries released last week, Israelis score high in optimism. Most significantly, they expressed confidence in their children’s financial future. The survey categorised countries as ‘advanced’, ‘emerging’ and ‘developing’. Israel was classified as advanced, as were most of Western Europe, the US, Canada, and Australia. Emerging

countries included China, Vietnam, and India. Developing countries, mostly in Africa, also included the Palestinian Authority.

The poll measured the perception among residents of the economy’s performance. Forty-nine per cent of Israelis said their economy was ‘good’. But it’s for their children that Israelis have the most hope. Some 51 per cent believed their children will be financially better off than they are – the highest percentage of any country in the developed world, nearly twice the average in Western Europe and North America. In the US, only 32 per cent felt the next generation would be better off, while the least optimistic was Japan (18 per cent), Italy

(15 per cent), and France (14 per cent).

Developing and emerging countries showed even more optimism about the future than Israelis, however, such as the Vietnamese, Chinese, Nigerians, Indians, Chileans, Ethiopians, Senegalese, and residents of Burkina Faso. Two thirds of the residents of those countries expected their children to do better than they. Palestinians were the least optimistic in the developing world – but more optimistic than Lebanese, Malaysians, and Jordanians, and less optimistic than Poles and Venezuelans.

Of course, statistics are only rough measures of reality. They can change very quickly, and

can easily paint an erroneous picture. Mark Twain is well-known to have popularised the phrase in the United States to describe the persuasive power of numbers, particularly the use of statistics to bolster arguments which may be in doubt : “There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.”

But still, given the perception of deteriorating political realities for Israel in the Middle East and parts of the world at large, and the worrying rise of anti-Semitism across the globe – which affects Israel in many ways – it is remarkable that that country ranks statistically today among the most buoyant and optimistic nations.

Inspiration|



MINDFULNESS: MAKING EVERY MOMENT MATTER

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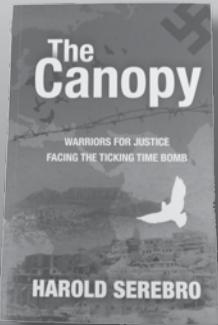
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South African Jewish Report

A community newspaper in the face of scandal

I have been at the helm of the Jewish Report for a mere seven months and have already faced the dilemma that editors of many community publications face - the arrival of a few potentially scandalous or explosive issues and the dilemma of how to or even whether to cover them.

If we were an ordinary newspaper like the Washington Post, our reporters would cover instances of abuse, infighting, theft, philandering, or corruption with the fervour of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein writing about the Watergate scandal.

That is endemic to the true spirit of journalistic integrity. My professor at journalism school in Chicago often implored us to be brave and said that one was only a good journalist when one had really ruffled the feathers of the public figures that were covered in the news.

But a community paper like the SA Jewish Report requires a complete paradigm shift. We are not writing about a world out there that we are exposing for behaving badly; by virtue of our involvement and connection to community members and leaders, we are a part of the community system.

This means we sometimes have a vested interest in protecting our structures from appearing scandalous to the outside world whether our community’s actions justify exposure or not. And sometimes, we have an interest in protecting Jewish individuals from being exposed to the rest of South African Jewry.

My esteemed predecessor, Geoff Sifrin, says that in the many years he was editor, he was, on some occasions, harassed with abusive phone calls and threats to shut down the paper.

Sometimes, he was accused of being part of the conspiracy of silence and at other times, he was told the paper was nothing more than a sensationalist, anti-Jewish tabloid. Sifrin says it was for him a very delicate balancing act where one had to make a judgement call in each case of whether to expose controversial or scandalous material.

Jewish newspapers like New York City’s The Forward which covers a Jewish community of some six million across a huge country, can cover scandals like the “mikveh peeping rabbi” in Washington, DC with a cool, calm distance.

For us, amid a tiny community of some 75 000, when trouble lurks, we are often asked by interested parties to be cautious and consider all the consequences and ramifications and all people affected, before exposing the issue.

This is not always a bad thing. In one particular institution where abuse of a sort occurred a long time ago, we were recently asked to hold off until the organisation has done their own investigations so that no-one is harmfully exposed on incorrect information or before the wronged victims have decided how they want to proceed.

This is where our dual role of being gatekeepers of information as well as caretakers with a sense of responsibility to the community has to be weighed against the pure and important goal of reporting the truth.

Our aim is not to just serve up juicy bits of impropriety for headlines, but instead to consider whether it is in the community’s best interests to know. But this does not mean we will be complicit in hiding facts when they should be exposed! That weighing up is by its nature a very subjective process and all I can promise is we will sometimes get it wrong.

My belief is that we make our decisions based on the assumption that the community has a right to know about misconduct within communal organisations and institutions, and about the misbehaviour of high profile community members when it affects others. But they don’t have a right to know about every spat within communal structures, nor about the misfortunes or improprieties of individuals. Sometimes it’s best to leave that to their lawyers.

Ultimately, a community paper has a vital role in fostering discussion and debate when issues should be raised and dealt with to create an evermore mindful and conscientious community. We hope that we play that part with both verve and integrity.

– Vanessa Valkin, Editor



Sen Charles Schumer participating in a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on Capitol Hill on July 8. Schumer, a New York Democrat, is seen as a key vote on the Iran deal.



Rep Steve Israel answering questions after a meeting of the House Democratic Caucus in Washington, DC, on May 9, 2014. He fought for the 60-day review period.

Jewish lawmakers shut out noise as they consider Iran nuclear deal

RON KAMPEAS WASHINGTON

Turn off the ads, turn down the noise and read, listen and consult. That’s what five key Jewish lawmakers say they are planning for the five to seven weeks they have to contemplate their vote on the Iran nuclear deal.

There are 28 Jews in Congress, but seven are undecided and in positions of influence as lawmakers consider an agreement that grants Iran sanctions relief in exchange for nuclear restrictions on its nuclear programme.

Republicans are mostly against the deal, so the focus is on Democrats who would be key to garnering the two-thirds majorities in the House of Representatives and the Senate to override President Barack Obama’s promised veto of any resolution of disapproval of a deal.

Democrats traditionally take their cues from members considered closest to a particular issue. In this case, Jewish Democrats, and their leadership on pro-Israel advocacy, make them among the most watched.

A number of groups opposing the deal are running ads in states with large numbers of Jewish Democratic voters, including Florida, New York and California. Senator Charles Schumer, Democrat New York, likely to become party leader in the Senate when Senator Harry Reid, Democrat Nevada, retires next year, has been targeted in particular by the ads.

Joseph Lieberman, a former senator who is lobbying against the deal, told a New York-area conservative talk radio show that Schumer was “key” and that his nay would open “the way for a lot of other Democrats to oppose it as well”.

Obama spent face time toward the end of last week with a number of leading Jewish lawmakers urging them to back the deal.

For all the pressure, Jewish lawmakers in interviews shared one adamant claim: They will not be rushed, and they will not let the noise get to them.

“I was one of those members who fought vigorously for a 60-day review period,” said Representative Steve Israel, Democrat New York, noting that Congress has that amount of time to approve or disapprove the deal. “If you’re going to fight for that, the responsible and nonpartisan thing to do is to take that time.”

Israel led his party’s congressional re-election campaign during the last two cycles and chafed at the rush among Republicans to denounce the deal.

Representative Eliot Engel of New York, the senior Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said he was looking forward to quiet time alone with his staff in the Sensitive Compartmentalised Information facility where government officials with clearance may review classified materials.

“I don’t like finger pointing and rhetoric,” Engel said. “I look at the agreement and try to make decisions there.”

Representative Adam Schiff of California, the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said he was “really trying to tune out the emotional appeals and figure out what makes the most sense”.

Schiff noted Republican presidential candidate Mike Huckabee’s likening of the deal to the Holocaust, saying the comments “were singularly unhelpful and made me feel a bit ill”.

JTA spoke with five of the leading Jewish undecideds: Schumer did not return our requests. Representative Nita Lowey, Democrat New York, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, indicated interest in an interview but was unable to make time during the past five days.

The other undecideds who spoke to JTA are Senator Ben Cardin of Maryland, the senior Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Representative Ted Deutch of Florida, the senior Democrat on the Foreign Affairs Committee’s Middle East sub-committee.

Three Jewish Democrats in leadership have come out in favour of the deal: Representative Jan Schakowsky of Illinois, the chief deputy whip in the House; Representative Sander Levin of Michigan, the longest-serving Jewish congressman and the ranking member on the Ways and Means Committee; and Senator Dianne Feinstein of California, the ranking member of the Senate Intelligence Committee. Senator Barbara Boxer, Democrat California, a longtime leader on pro-Israel issues who is retiring, has also indicated she would back the deal.

Israel, whose background is in Jewish organisational activism, said he was relying on his experience.

“What I mostly do is in my DNA,” said the congressman, who was arrested in the 1980s for Soviet Jewry activism.

More tangibly, many of the lawmakers, particularly those with large Jewish constituencies, will be hosting town hall meetings during the August break.

“We’ve got at least four big town halls that we’re planning for soon after we get back” to South Florida in August, said Deutch. “I also know we’ve been setting up meetings with different constituents and different groups who want to come discuss the deal.”

Deutch, who told JTA he was sceptical of the deal, said he could announce his leaning by the end of this week.

Administration officials insist that if Congress rejects a deal, European partners who would be key to reconstituting sanction, would not co-operate. But Deutch isn’t sure that’s the case.

“I don’t want to rely on what we’re told by American officials,” he said. “I want to speak directly with our European friends, and I’ve been doing that.”

Deutch also said lawmakers were consulting one another.

“I want my colleagues to understand how important it is to get past the talking points and to dig into the details,” he said.

Congress members are paying attention to calls from constituents. Schiff said his were running half and half, Deutch and Engel said callers tended to share their concerns about the deal, and Israel said last week Friday that calls were running 550 for the deal and 300 against.

Cardin did not have a tally, but said the calls were influential. Feedback from constituents, he said, was “one of the factors that go into the political process and it certainly has an impact”.

Like others, the Maryland Democrat said he was also paying close attention to the open hearings, such as the contentious ones that Secretary of State John Kerry and other Cabinet ministers have endured in recent days in the House and Senate, as well as classified briefings.

“I want to fully understand this agreement, whether we are better off with this agreement, of having Iran becoming a nuclear weapons state, and if we walk away what the consequences will be,” he said.

The lawmakers are taking meetings with organisations that oppose the deal, chief among them the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, and those who support it.

Schiff said television advertising run by groups backing and opposing the deal would not influence him.

“When the ad campaigns begin, I’m going to try and tune those out as well,” the California Democrat said. “I don’t think this is something going to be decided by a 30-second ad.” (JTA)

Raising flags in SA for different scenarios



MICHAEL BELLING

South Africa is still in the “premier league” in terms of the future, scenario planner Clem Sunter told a breakfast hosted by Afrika Tikkun at a Rosebank hotel last week.

The other two possible scenarios, or flags, as he calls them, are South Africa as a failed state, or “playing in the second division - a gentler meander downwards”, he said. The probability of this is as great as remaining in the premier league.

Sunter, a former director of Anglo American who was known for his high road-low road scenarios for South Africa before the end of apartheid, said the country is at an economic crossroad and that we need to do things differently to prosper in the future. We need to watch the “rising flags”, particularly relating to the economy, he noted.

The point of flags is to try to see things differently.

The country needs a conversation on boosting the economy and creating greater economic freedom and encouragement for entrepreneurship, he said. The political revolution has occurred and now economic change is required, for example, with young people creating jobs, rather than simply finding jobs. The world of work has changed.

On the road again

MEYER BENJAMIN

One of life’s greatest pleasures is surely exploring the open road - especially here in South Africa where our scenery is quite unrivalled. There is something very meditative about the open road and sometimes, with just the tyres singing on the tarmac and a muted engine note for company, one can feel very close indeed to Hashem.

I have been lucky enough to explore most areas of this great country by road, and one of my favourite destinations remains Clarens - a town (or really a village) that quite rightly has been nicknamed “the Jewel of the Free State”. It’s named after the town in Switzerland where Paul Kruger, exiled president of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek, died, and is a drawcard for artists with art galleries aplenty scattered around.

It’s also an absolute magnet for visitors from the city. And besides its compact, clean appeal, one of Clarens’ biggest lures is the setting, easily one of the prettiest in all of South Africa, which is saying quite something given the competition it faces from the rest of the country.

If you have ever visited the place you’ll know it’s dominated by jaw-droppingly beautiful, slightly haunting sandstone mountains, with the Golden Gate Highlands National Park just a few minutes’ drive away. In fact, the Rooiberge is the range that surrounds the village, and a lot of the homes in the area use sandstone in their construction.

Great little restaurants abound, and when it comes to accommodation, you are spoilt for choice with a range of bed-and-breakfasts, guest houses

Five rising flags should be noted in this country:

- Corruption and crime - corruption is “changing the game”;
- The declining quality of infrastructure, particularly electricity and water;
- Leadership, particularly inclusive leadership. “South Africa is probably more divided now as a nation than at any time since 1994,” he said;
- Pockets of excellence that exist in many places, “a green flag”;
- The “entrepreneurial spark flag” - that is what changed nations more than anything else.

“We must change our mantra for 2020 from creating five million jobs to creating one million entrepreneurs,” he said.

“I would like to see some kind of economic Codesa to turn things round.”

On the international front, a number of flags indicate threats on several levels. The first is the religious flag, a growing confrontation between the major religions. “The Arab Spring has turned into the Arab nightmare,” which also includes Sunni versus Shia.

“The world is more dangerous now than in 1990,” he said. This is a “cloudy flag”, as we do not know where it is going to lead to.

The second flag is an existential threat to

the West, illustrated by Russian President Vladimir Putin’s annexation of the Crimea. This has resulted in concerns in Western Europe about Russian ambitions.

The third flag is a “clockwork flag”, a grey flag ticking away - the ageing of the population in the West and China - but not in Africa.

Middle-class anger at the super rich is another flag. The level of inequality in Europe and the US “is back to where it was in the 1880s” and it was the middle class that produced revolutionaries.

The last flag, another “clockwork flag”, includes threats such as international terrorism and climate change, including changing weather patterns and rising sea levels.

In his introduction, Afrika Tikkun CEO Marc Lubner said his organisation has a business model designed to assist beneficiaries “from cradle to career”, to give them the skills to be employed after finishing school - not just getting them into jobs, but into jobs for which they were well-suited and trained.

This is also done on a professional basis that brings in income for Afrika Tikkun, as opposed to it being only a charity.

Afrika Tikkun has over 20 000 beneficiaries, he said.

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A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

SAUJS - Our future is in good hands

On Monday evening, the SA Union of Jewish Students held a special SAUJS alumni dinner, attended by present and former SAUJS leaders and members going back well into the last century.

National Director Wendy Kahn, who represented the Board, reported that it was an enthralling evening, during which past national chairmen of SAUJS shared their memories of what it was like to be a Jewish university student in years gone by and the kind of challenges that confronted them as Jewish student leaders in their day.

Many of those SAUJS veterans have since gone on to hold important leadership positions in Jewish communal affairs, both in a lay and professional capacity.

SAUJS is today one of the organisations with which the SAJBD has a particularly close working relationship. It has been a constant source of inspiration to witness the dedication of these young Jewish leaders, who are at the coalface of so many of our own struggles on behalf of our community.

Operating in an environment that is always challenging and not infrequently hostile and unpleasant, SAUJS continues to take a firm, principled stand on behalf of Jewish rights on campus, whether this relates to combating anti-Semitism, assisting religious students whose exams have been set on Shabbat or Yomtov, or ensuring that there are opportunities for Israel’s case to be heard.

At the same time, it promotes Jewish-related cultural, religious and social activities, builds bridges with other faith and ethnic communities and finds innovative ways to involve Jewish youth in issues of wider importance in the wider society.



Above Board
Mary Kluk
National Chairman

I commend SAUJS for all they have done and are doing, and can truly say that if they represent the future of our community, then we are in excellent hands.

Limmud - respect for diversity
This year’s long-awaited Limmud festival of Jewish learning and culture kicks off in Johannesburg on Friday. From there, it will move to Cape Town before concluding in Durban on Monday, August 10.

Board members, both professional staff and lay leaders, feature on the programmes at all three centres. I myself will be speaking on a panel on Holocaust education in Durban, and as always

look forward to being part of this rich, diverse and rewarding initiative.

Limmud, while broadly supported by the community at large, remains controversial in some circles. From my perspective, while I believe strongly in promoting as much learning as possible, it is with the important proviso that this does not involve making negative judgements about people’s religious choices.

By all means, express and explain your point of view, but do so in a way that does not denigrate the deeply-held beliefs of others. Discussion around all issues, but particularly with regard to religious practices and beliefs, need to be managed sensitively and respectfully.

So long as Limmud-SA continues in that vein, I will remain one of its most whole-hearted supporters.

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

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

Don’t let BDS set the agenda, says Michael Freeman

STEVEN GRUZD

The South African Jewish media gives too much attention and publicity to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS-SA) movement which has urged the imposition of sanctions on Israel, said Israel Deputy Ambassador to South Africa Michael Freeman.

“We let them set the agenda”, said Freeman, speaking at the WIZO Monthly Forum on Tuesday at Beyachad, on “Unlocking the Boycott: Is Israel on the Road to Isolation?”

“I don’t like talking on this topic,” Freeman said, “because I really believe we are giving fuel to BDS.”

He noted that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas recently said he did not support BDS and that Israel was the PA’s partner. “In that case, who is BDS speaking for?” Freeman asked. And if BDS was so concerned about Palestinian rights, why had it not uttered a word about the 20 000 Palestinians murdered in Syria?

He also outlined BDS’ inherent anti-Semitism, including the notorious singing of “Shoot the Jew”, their contention that anti-Semitism was “overstated and not a major issue”, and the call for expulsion of all Jews from the Durban University of Technology (and retraction the next day, saying they meant “all Zionists”).

He pointed out that Zionism and a love for Israel is a fundamental tenet of Judaism, found in prayer, festivals and in religious rituals from weddings to bensching.

Freeman pointed to the backlash over the 16 black South African student leaders who recently visited Israel, and how BDS tried to

pay them R40 000 each not to fly to Israel (a claim BDS denies).

“Their biggest nightmare is that activists would want to go to Israel and see for themselves,” he said. “They saw how BDS had been lying to them. Calling Israel an apartheid state is an insult to the real anti-apartheid struggle.”

He also strongly denied any cultural boycott of Israel by South Africa. On the contrary, the Israeli Embassy can barely cope with all the requests for Israeli artists, authors and entertainers to appear at the many South African festivals, including Opikoppi and Joy of Jazz, he said.

Israel-South Africa trade grew seven per cent last year to over a billion dollars and tourism figures are up. “Although they are great at PR and the media, and have a huge budget, BDS is just not having a significant effect on the ground. We are not seeing any serious impact,” Freeman said.

“BDS thrives on publicity, and we keep giving it to them, especially in the Jewish media! Why give them the space?” he asked. “I am not saying ignore them, but put them on the back foot.

“Yes, they stopped a small recital by pianist Yossi Reshef, but Wits then promoted a concert by the Daniel Zamir Quartet that filled the Great Hall! Who’s really winning?

“My message is: Don’t let BDS set the agenda - they don’t get to decide who we are. We have so many great stories to tell about Israel and its creativity. The more we set the agenda, the more they get alienated, and are exposed as radical, anti-Semitic extremists.”

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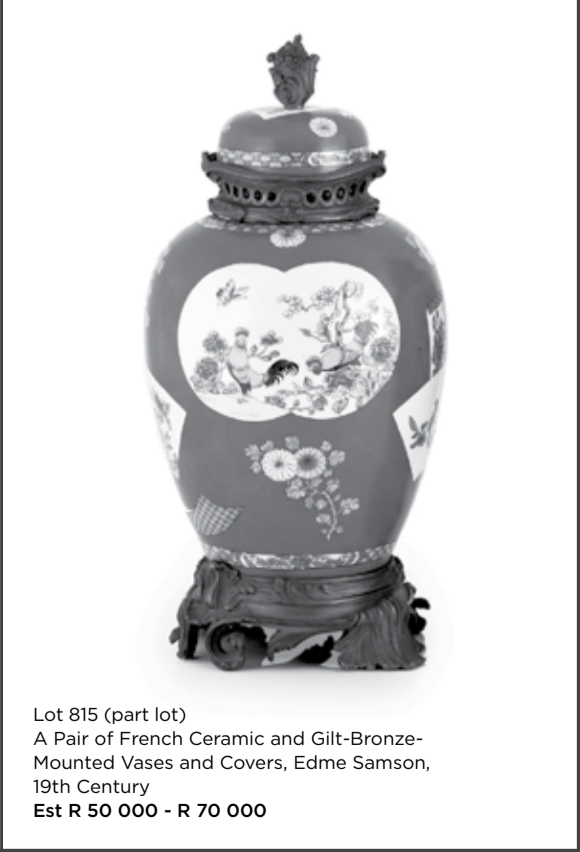
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There’s room in public schools for Jewish learners, says Blumenthal



DR IVOR BLUMENTHAL

A decade and a half ago, as a board member of a Jewish institution, I found myself embroiled in a spat with a leading rabbinical figure over his insistence that Jewish children should only be in Jewish day schools.

In his model for schooling our youth, there was no place for a Jewish child anywhere other than in a schooling institution reflective of our community, our value system, our religious ethos and our practices.

The implication was that he wanted to see Jewish children pulled out of the public schooling system, and that cheder and other services offered at those schools, be discontinued.

My contrary view was that there’s a place in society for Jewish children to be schooled in the public sector and in the secular environment.

Not all Jewish learners should automatically have to find themselves in Jewish day schools and sometimes children from our community thrive in a more varied, less religious, secular environment where there is more of a different balance of sporting, academic and cultural matters.

I always considered this argument to have been more about numbers and money and far less about the interests of the community and the future of these children and their families.

My opinion remains that to continue as viable businesses, many of our Jewish day schools need a critical mass of full fee-paying learners. We have so many of these schools operating in Johannesburg that there is no way that they are economically sustainable.

So, instead of recognising the financial plight many Jewish families find themselves in, those families were given little option: Withdraw the support services to non-Jewish schools; starve those children of Jewish community, identity and religious and social insight and activities unless in Jewish day schools and parents would have no choice but to look to those schools for the education of their children. They would find the money, even if the pursuit took them into unmanageable debt.

I have found these attempts at social engineering interesting in that while these schools have opened their registrations up to full fee-paying families, little has been done to effect the integration of children from these families into these Jewish day schools.

Instead, especially in those, which are extremely religious, parents and their children are tolerated for their fees. However, these parents who are really outsiders, cannot expect to have a say in the running of the school and certainly cannot expect their child to be welcomed socially into the inner sanctum of these community networks.

Today, some 15 years later, where that rabbi seemingly managed to have his way and where very few Jewish children are enrolled outside of our ghetto, I honestly cannot believe that we are any better off as a community than when decades ago there was a fairer and more equitable distribution of Jewish children between the public and private schooling sector, let alone between the Jewish day schools versus the “others”.

I believe in fact that due to this insular strategy adopted by a handful of outspoken but very narrow-minded leaders, we are worse off today as a Jewish community.

Our children are, I believe, less integrated. They understand the greater community less. They are naïve to anything other than those values which we represent as the Jewish community.

For their part, the secular community understands, appreciates and respects far less these people called “Jews”, than it ever has before. There is basically far less contact between Jews and people from other religions.

Stereotypes and fundamental misconceptions abound more today than in the last half century. The world has moved away in South Africa from the Jewish community. They are disinterested in our assertion of our Jewish identity. They are far more open to the advocacy of anti-Jew and anti-Israel protagonists, spearheaded by the BDS movement in this country and around the world, than they are in the Zionist cause. This reality has been brought about partially by ourselves and our insular strategy which has backfired.

What makes matters worse, however, is far more serious in my opinion. The motives, noble as they possibly may have been, in protesting for Jewish children to be moved exclusively into the Jewish schooling system, were exceptionally misdirected.

The hope that through this action, Jewish observance would be strengthened among the traditionally secular and irreverent Jew, has proved unfulfilled. The hope that through this action assimilation would be curbed, proved unfounded in that social and even familial assimilation is on the increase in this country and not on the decrease.

Our Jewish day schools suffer in part from what appears to be group dependence on the lowest common denominator, very often at a level of representing very little of meaning and impact to anyone.

There is very little that is aspirational towards Jewish religious observance or practices. It may be argued that there appears at times to be diffused responsibility in the pursuit of excellence, often even in religious learning, a higher secular content academically than ever before and far less sustained Zionist zeal than is conducive to a proud and vibrant community such as ours.

What this strategy has in fact done in the active, strong and generally excellent Jewish day schools, is dumb-down the pro-Jewish culture and sometimes even the averages and transform those schools into institutions trying to be everything to everyone and in so doing, standing for nothing - not even Jewish identity.

What solutions are available to us as a community? Firstly, I believe we need to rationalise the number of shtetl schools which are popping up and proliferating within our suburbs. This is simply unaffordable. It is a strategy which leads to donor fatigue, splits our society and achieves very little except to stroke egos.

Secondly, we need to work as a community with that handful of public schools which are receptive to partnerships that allow for the reintroduction of cheders and activities facilitated by Jewish youth organisations and are prepared to respect our Jewish calendar.

Then we need to advocate to families in our community that they have a choice, which includes these public schools. We need to actively convince parents that we embrace diversity and do not seek automatant conformity. This requires a massive culture shift.

To do any of this takes political courage. We need, as the Jewish community, to ask ourselves whether we have such courage in what has become a personality-driven autocracy.

Dr Blumenthal is the former CEO of Services Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) and is currently a business consultant, and radio host on Radio Today.

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Annika’s journey from secularism to Jewish observance

SUZANNE BELLING

Annika Hernroth-Rothstein (pictured), internationally-known political adviser and writer who is addressing sessions of this year’s Limmud programme, has travelled the journey from secularism to Jewish observance in her native Stockholm.

She is a world-renowned fighter against anti-Semitism, going so far as applying for asylum in her own country on the basis of religious persecution in an attempt to gain protection from her government!

“I took the step after Sweden gave asylum to Syrian refugees and considered the 10 points in the terms required to gain asylum - two of them were if you are suffering from religious persecution or if you cannot trust your government to protect you.”

Hernroth-Rothstein went through a lot of red tape; her cause was publicised worldwide, including on Fox News and the BBC; but her request was denied as she was told she was free to go to any country in the European Union.

“Seventy years ago, it was said ‘Never Again’ and this is not just a catch phrase,”

said Hernroth-Rothstein, who went through her metamorphosis of identity with her people after she was harassed by her non-Jewish peers at school.

“Before that I did not reflect on my Jewishness - it took several steps to change that.”

It was around 1994 when neo-Nazis were part of the mainstream learners in her school. “They were wearing uniforms of the Hitler Jugend, having attended a conference of members and sat next to me in an obtrusive way, harassing me at every turn.”

Her mother encouraged her not to look Jewish - “I had this mop of unruly hair, a trademark of many Jewish girls, so I shaved my head when I was 15 and did all the superficial things my mother advised.”

Hernroth-Rothstein, intermarried and had two sons, now aged 12 and seven. When she became religious, it was contemplated that her husband would convert, but that turned out not to be feasible.

After they divorced, she maintained a totally Jewish lifestyle, with her former husband agreeing not to serve the boys pork or shellfish. She keeps a kosher home, but has



to import meat from Belgium as shechting meat is forbidden in Sweden.

“There is one Jewish school in Stockholm and one camp, but it is up to me, as a parent, to give my children a Jewish education. I attend the Adat Yeshurun Synagogue in Stockholm and send my sons to camp in Israel, which I visit about five times a year.”

She would love to make aliyah, but having the children’s father in Sweden is a problem. “I was in Israel during the last war in 2014 and felt much safer there than living in Europe.

“Our shul has 350 members and is a young, modern-Orthodox congregation. There are currently 15 000 Jews in Sweden, but only about 5 000 are [Jewishly] active in some way.”

On her last trip to Israel, where she spent her summer, she travelled via Holland and discreetly stuck the Israel flag on her case for easy identification. Unfortunately, anti-Semites vandalised the case. “They poured Coke over everything, ruined my clothes,

but worst of all desecrated my siddur.”

Hernroth-Rothstein’s pro-Jewish lobby intensified when she was on a train with her son, then aged five, wearing a yarmulke. “A Muslim man was sitting in our pre-booked seat and when I showed him our tickets, he yelled: ‘You people always take what you want’. “The rest of the people sitting in the compartment did nothing - one tenth of the population of Sweden – 900 000 - is Muslim.”

Only after her second son was born did she pursue her studies and earned two degrees - one in Middle Eastern studies and one in communications. She started her journalistic career by writing a blog and her own website. This proved so popular that she now writes five columns a month for Israel Hayom and she also writes for Commentary, The Tower (Israel Projects), The Jerusalem Post and Mosaic.

Her topics for Limmud are: “Jews and the Temple”, “Jihadi Tourism”, “Anti-Semitism in Europe” and “Rediscovering Jewish Identity”.

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What’s on the web

The 16 rebels’ tour dominates

Six of the top-eight most read stories on SAJR Online over the past week have been on the 16 young ANC-aligned student and business leaders who have been castigated by, and in some cases suspended from, their organisations and the ANC - but notably not by the government - after they went on a fact-finding mission to Israel and Palestine earlier this month, hosted by privately-funded SA Jewish organisation SAIF (SA-Israel Forum).

Jewish Report Online has been reporting this unfolding news every step of the way and this story - which is still getting almost daily coverage in the mainstream media - often quotes Jewish Report as their source.

Anti-Israel organisation BDS has led the attack on the 16, who have in turn been blasting BDS which, they say, originally offered them R40 000 each to pay for cancellation waivers not to go (which BDS denied this week). The 16 have not changed their stance on the visit.

Other new related stories this week are: “Meet the defiant sixteen”. We were the first to publish the names of the travellers - with their consent - to show that the group repre-

sents the crème de la crème of ANC and affiliated intellectuals from around the country.

Then there is “Who is calling the shots on SA’s Mideast policy?” which is a question Jewish communal organisations and Israel herself have been wondering about for some time.

BDS made use of Jewish Report Online’s liberal freedom of speech comments section to post under our story: “What Madiba actually said & the BDS misquote” a link to a carefully edited and propagandised video trying to make it appear as if Madiba supported their cause.

Follow the back-story of news and opinion on Jewish Report Online:

Also on the web are stories about how Benjamin Netanyahu got to see the newly-unveiled cherry of the Dead Sea Scrolls last Sunday; how SA Jewish artist Irma Stern’s R20 million painting was being used as a kitchen notice-board; and why Diaspora Jewry are not pleased with Israel.

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SAUJS alumni reminisce and debate over dinner

OWN CORRESPONDENT

On Monday evening the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) hosted a first-of-its-kind alumni dinner at the HOD in Johannesburg. Over 100 alumni, dating back to the late 1950s, attended. The event was organised by Cayla Urdang, Benji Shulman and Howard Sackstein.

SAUJS has existed in various forms and organisations for the last 102 years. The aim of this week's dinner was to engage in conversation with the older generations of SAUJS members. The audience was addressed by current chairman, Natan Pollack.

In addition to this, a panel discussion consisting of Brenda Stern, David Bilchitz and Mark Pozniak took place. The interesting discussion was led by Israel's Deputy Ambassador to South Africa Michael Freeman, who himself was involved in student activism in the United Kingdom.

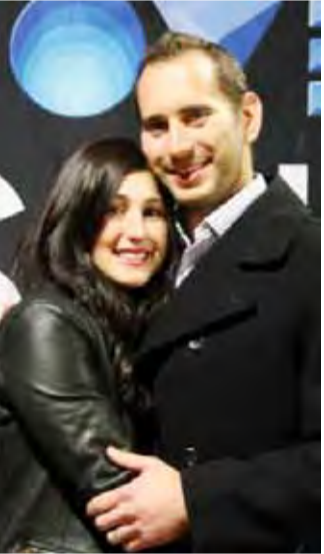
The evening was a huge success.



Rayna, David and Michael Esra.



Tarryn Bortz, Chavah Barit, Jonathan Levi, and Yakira Amoils.



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Rachel Falkson, CAP marketing and communications; CAP Tactical Officer Ryan Rudy; and four-year-old Ariel Katzeff who won R5 000 for Torah Academy Nursery School.

Ariel Katzeff wins big for his nursery school

RACHEL FALKSON

CAP (Community Active Programme) recently held a colour-in competition for 25 nursery schools across CAP areas in Johannesburg to inform children and families about CAP’s new emergency number - 0861 227 227 (0861 CAP CAP).

Ariel Katzeff (age 4) of Torah Academy Nursery School won the competition, winning R5 000 for his school.

CAP’s marketing team had a difficult time choosing three finalists from the many mini-masterpieces they received. Ethan Dlamini from Glenhazel Primary, Aviel Vaknin from Maharsha Primary and Ariel Katzeff from Torah Academy Nursery were the three candidates along with their schools who found themselves in the top three.

The public were invited to vote for their favourite on CAP’s Facebook page. Ariel’s piece received well over 400 votes, making him the winner.

On Friday July 24, at Torah Academy, Ariel received a “big cheque” on behalf of his school; CAP also gave a short presentation on safety to over 160 Torah Academy Nursery School children.

Dov Landau tells of surviving the death camps

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Yeshiva College was privileged to recently welcome Dov Landau, a Holocaust survivor who now lives in Israel, to speak at the Boys’ and Girls’ High Schools, relating his incredible story of survival during the Holocaust.

Holocaust survivor Dov Landau, showing the boys his identification number on his arm, a reminder of his horrifying experiences at the hands of the Nazis.



‘Future Blues’ rugby clinic: great things set to come



JODI STARKOWITZ

During the first week of the July school holidays, King David High School Linksfield’s sport department launched its “Future Blues” sport programme, aimed at familiarising KD primary school learners with some of the new sports they will encounter in the high school system.

The first event was an introduction to rugby for grade 6 and 7 boys. The high school director of sport and also the coach for this programme, Greg Hurvitz, was pleased at the turnout as well as the approach from all the budding young prospects.

Said Hurvitz: “We started with rugby as we have been promoted to the Pirates Challenge A section and with the physical and technical nature of this sport, we need to maximise the quality coaching time we get with our incoming learners.

“We only had 14 boys here this time round, but with this being the July break, I am really happy we at least got to spend time with the 14; I know they had a superb experience and will definitely get their friends involved.”

The boys spent from 10:00 to 12:30 for three days, going through a real introduction to the game, focusing on technical and value system development.

The programme continues now on Sundays for grade 6 and 7 boys in preparation for their high school careers and there is also an Open Rugby event from 09:30 to 13:00 on Monday August 10.

Budding young soccer players enriched by two-day clinic

ANNA MOROSS AND EMMA STEIN



Doron Goldsmith; Gadiel Shepherd; Alexander Monty; Benjamin Melamdowitz; Jared Joselowitz; and Gabriel Milne enjoyed the soccer clinic.

The coaches from Black Aces soccer team recently joined King David Victory Park for a two-day soccer clinic for grades 8 to 11, for both boys and girls.

The clinic was two hours long on both days and it gave the young soccer players the opportunity to develop their skills and fitness for the new season. Boys and girls also participated in fun activities to get to know their fellow team mates. The teams were joined by Greenside High, whose players were also able to take much from the clinic.

The coaches benefited by learning new and exciting drills to use with the teams. It was a good way to start the new season.

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Disclaimer

The letters page is intended to provide an opportunity for a range of views on any given topic to be expressed. Opinions articulated in the letters are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, staff or directors of the Jewish Report.

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

Guidelines for letters

Letters of up to 400 words get preference. Provide your full name, place of residence, and daytime phone number. We do not publish letters under noms de plume. Letters should preferably be e-mailed. Letters may be edited or shortened.

ALL ABOUT 'RACE-WALKING' AND 'LEAPFROGGING'

Although the people of Gauteng have the pleasure of reading the Jewish Report on Friday of each week, we on the coast - Durban, PE and Cape Town - have to wait a while before getting their papers. Then those of us in the outlying districts, and I make mention here of Umhlanga Rocks which is not an immediate recipient of the Jewish Report, have to wait another day before a commuter brings the paper to us.

So, although your paper was issued on July 17, we have only sat down to read it in Izinga on the 21st.

In your column headed "Around the Jewish

World" you have told about Jemima Montag who is a "top-ranked female race-walker". Further, she recorded a sizzling 22 minute 4,29 second effort at the Australian youth team's camp.

But, you say, she leapfrogged her way to this amazing speed. I am not a racist, knowing nothing about racing at all, but I would suggest that she was supposed to "walk" in this race and by leapfrogging she has obviously cheated.

Colin Plen
Umhlanga Rocks

SOWETAN MISREPORTING ON MAIMANE CAN HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES

The individual replies of MPs Michael Bagraim and Darren Bergman and Jack Bloom, Gauteng MPL, in answer to my letter of July 13 (about a purported remark critical of a two-state solution for the Mideast made by DA leader Mmusi Maimane at Bloom's book launch) refer. My letter was not intended as an election issue, if that is how Bergman understood it.

My objection to Maimane's remark, as printed in The Sowetan, was not to the DA as a proponent of a two-state solution to the Israel/Palestine problem, as indicated by my "general consensus". I mentioned the fact to put his second remark in context. My objection was to Maimane's imputed (Mr Bagraim's

"absolutely incorrect") statement that the Jewish community's position is "narrow and fundamentalist".

Such a derogatory pronouncement can only worsen the perception of Jews in the eyes of The Sowetan's readers. This is deeply regrettable, as we have enough enemies in the broader community, to say nothing of individual Jews, and is not merely "a storm in a teacup" as Jack Bloom thinks. The reporter should be told of the serious implication of his error, in the hopes that he will be more careful in future.

Dr Bryna Lewis
Port Elizabeth

SA JEWISH DELEGATION TO ISRAEL, A GRAVY TRAIN TRIP

Will the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, the SA Zionist Federation and the IUA/UCF please explain to the country's Jewish community why it was necessary for all of them to go at the same time to Israel. Surely one or two communal leaders would have been sufficient to discuss our problems with the Israeli government?

It was stated in the article that one of the reasons this group went, was to see the "creation and maintenance of good relations with Israeli government officials". That's very rich, especially after the SAJBD and the SAZF recently, in a joint statement, criticised the Israeli government for refusing the Jew/Israel-hater Blade Nzimande a visa to pass through Israel on his way to his

friends, the Palestinian Authority.

This trip must have cost a fortune. Will the relevant organisations please tell us who went, why it was necessary for them to go and what this whole affair cost. I will not hold my breath for an answer as I'm pretty sure there will be some fancy footwork around that request.

This is the gravy train at its worst. While many in our community struggle and go without necessities and many of our institutions battle to make ends meet, I for one am disgusted by this wanton waste of the community's financial resources.

Sonny Myerson
Cape Town

IT'S TO ANC'S ADVANTAGE TO KEEP YOUTH IN THE DARK

The 16 young ANC-affiliated students and business leaders should be commended for their bravery in going on a recent fact-finding trip to Israel. They are brave, not only because they knew the anti-Israel sentiment that many ANC leaders and (all) BDS supporters hold and that they would be chastised for their trip.

But they are also brave to challenge their own beliefs about Israel that these two organisations had no doubt previously influenced.

Of course the ANC-"aligned structures" and BDS don't want South Africans to travel to Israel. Seeing is believing and if they were to actually observe Israeli society, they would see that the apartheid analogy is a myth.

Now that these youths are back, the forces at work are trying to intimidate and bully them. They cannot be changed now. They know the truth! They have seen and experienced Israel and know that the BDS has been "hiding the truth from them" and many others.

Perhaps this will be another catalyst that will take votes away from the ANC. The DA has at its helm a new leader - its first black leader, Mmusi Maimane. He said he left the ANC after coming to believe that its driving goal was to preserve its members' interests.

This clash over a mere 16 young South Africans visiting Israel falls right into the same category of these organisations looking after their own interests and keeping the public in the dark (literally these days!). But true leadership requires that one look inward and acknowledge that one has responsibilities to others, and in that truthful acknowledgment, one can explore and admit to being mistaken and to changing one's rhetoric.

Michele Engelberg
Johannesburg

'Wrong caption' to Great Park Synagogue photo

Community stalwart Isaac Reznik points out that we used the wrong caption for the photograph on page 4 of last week's paper - David Saks' article on the Great Park Synagogue. Reznik says the photograph accompanying the article is of the Aron Hakodesh at the original Great Synagogue, Wolmarans Street, Johannesburg.

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Looking for...

David Lewin of the Search & Unite Team in London who is facilitating “restoration of Nazi-era looted art in Austria and Germany and property claims in the Czech Republic and Israel”, is again appealing to Jewish Report readers for help. He is looking for information on the Isaacson (or Izacson) family.
He is focusing on 1: Chaim Isaacson who married Chaya Kot (born 1902, Valkininkai, Lithuania, died October 22, 1990 in Cape Town) and Jacob Siskind Isaacson (born about 1937 in South Africa), or (siblings) Haviva and Rena Isaacson.

“I have some photographs of the family mounted on the search page at <http://remember.org/unite/isaacson.htm>”.

Lewin may be contacted on +44 208 446 0404; davidlewin@btinternet.com

Today, Friday (July 31)

- Young Jewish Professionals Tu B’Av Shabbos Nachamu service and brocha. Venue: Shul in Sandton Central. Time: 18:00. Information: 079-434-1293 or rak@chabad.org.za
- UZLC hosts Shirley Zar on “The Diversity of Jewish Life in America: A Personal Experience”. Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 - 14:00. Information: Gloria, 072-127-9421 or (011) 485 4851.

- 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 and card games and of course bridge. Speaker today is John Rosen who will be speaking on reflexology and sacro-craniology. Information: Esther, (011) 485-5619 Monday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday mornings.

Sunday (August 2)

- Big Band Music Appreciation Society meets at St John’s College Auditorium, Houghton. Time: 14:15 sharp. A DVD will be shown on a short selection of “Big Band Performances” followed by an audiovisual presentation. Jack Mink presents a programme from his “Big Band Collection”. A video, “At The Jazz Band Ball (1925 - 1933)” will be shown. Information: Marilyn, 072-243-7436 or Jack, 082-450-7622.

- Dor Yeshorim screening for Ashkenazi genetic diseases takes place at Hatzolah House, 29 Durham Street, Raedene. Time: 14:00 - 17:00. Cost: R2 350. Information: 083-794-1178.

- RCHCC re-screens the first part of a two-part documentary on the Israeli-Arab conflict, “The Fifty years (of) War: Israel and the Arabs,

1948 - 1998” featuring interviews with all the major players. The second part will be screened on Wednesday, August 5 at the same time-slot. Venue: Clive M Beck Auditorium. Time: 19:30. 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

Monday (August 3)

- UJW Adult Education Division hosts Mr Justice Robert Nugent, former justice of the Supreme Court of Appeal, on “Courts, Constitutions and Cabin Boys: Making the Law in the Modern Constitution”. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 09:30. Donation: R35. Contact: UJW Office (011) 648-1053.

Tuesday (August 4)

- Morris Rutstein-SAZF second semester of the “Evening Hebrew Ulpan Course” starts today and terminates on Tuesday, November 24. Venue: Yeshiva College, Glenhazel (in the classrooms). Secure parking. Times: Every Tuesday evening from 19:00 to 21:15. Registration: Monday August 3, at 18:30. Enquiries: SAZF, (011) 645-2531 (office hours).

Wednesday (August 5)

- Chev Social Services / CAJE’s “Enrich Your Life” series presents a special marriage week panel with Rabbi Ari Shishler; Steven Crouse; Leonard Carr; Etta Goldman; and Dr Woolf Solomon. Venue: Sydenham Shul Hall. Time: 19:45. Cost: R40 (incl light refreshments) Bookings: Sharon (011) 532-9616 or sharonp@jhbchev.co.za

- “Toward a Meaningful Life” course at Chabad Benmore-Riverclub. Time: 19:15. Information: www.JLI.org.za or (011) 440-6600.

News

Importance of inculcating strong morals in our children

ELIANA CLINE

Parents should not rely too much on their children’s schools to instil values in them, implored Dr Laibl Wolf (pictured) at a parenting lecture at Sydenham-Highlands North Shul last week. Wolf, a lawyer and an educational psychologist, is an acclaimed international speaker and parenting expert.

His lecture addressed the pressing concerns of the modern parent and offered practical and profound advice for parents looking to raise happy and moral children.

One of the challenges facing parents is ensuring one’s child grows up with intact self-esteem, he said. The answer to this is to promote an “assertive humility” within a child which is a means to be confident of one’s capabilities, while simultaneously acknowledging that they are G-d given.

If parents believe that each child is entrusted by G-d to the parent and a parent’s role is to allow their uniqueness to go out to the world, this will in turn inculcate confidence in the child that he/she has something valuable to offer the world.

The Jewish morning prayer “Modeh Ani” offers a powerful affirmation in this regard. The prayer acknowledges that it is G-d who created and runs the world, and that He has given life. By saying this prayer every morning, one connects to G-d and his/her inherent worthiness.

A second challenge facing parents is the myriad eternal influences a child encounters. Peer groups, media and societal norms all impact one’s child.

Parents often fear that their ability to influence their child is non-existent. However, children yearn to know right from wrong; children will always follow their parents’ values, says Wolf. The imperative is thus on parents to have a strong moral value system and to believe fully in that system. Despite the poor morality of the society we live in, with the strength of the parents’ convictions, the moral revolution can begin at home.



How does one impart a value system to one’s children?

The first is by modelling moral behaviour in one’s personal interactions. A parent who learns how to stay connected to his/her child in times of provocation displays a real-life example of moral behaviour. It will also enable a parent to maintain their emotional connection to the child which is the child’s deepest desire.

Anger is never positive and always creates disconnection, Wolf emphasised. Thus a parent needs to learn how to maintain their inner calm, no matter what. Wolf recommends using meditation techniques to achieve this.

The second way to impart values is to constantly talk about one’s beliefs. The Shabbat table is an excellent place to start. It is around the table that children get to know their parents, and know what is important to them, says Wolf. He encourages parents to use this forum as a way to share values, viewpoints and experiences with one’s children, even from a young age.

Wolf also emphasised the crucial role of grandparents in today’s world. Do not underestimate one’s role as a grandparent, said Wolf, addressing the grandparents. A grandparent can be a safe place where a child can share his innermost feelings and trust in the love and support a grandparent offers.

- RCHCC re-screens the second of a two-part documentary, on the Israeli-Arab conflict, “The Fifty years (of) War: Israel and the Arabs, 1948 - 1998” featuring interviews with all the major players. Venue: Clive M Beck Auditorium. Time: 19:30. 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 “The Prodigal Summer” - a novel by Barbara Kingsolver. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 09:30. Donation: R35. Contact: UJW Office (011) 648-1053.

- WIZO Aviv presents “Eat... Love... Laugh...” with Joel Harris: Live your life in “peace”... not in “pieces” and Tanya Sachs on “The Art of True Style... Tips and Tricks”. Venue: Ohr Somayach, Savoy. Time: 19:15. Cost: R250 (incl dinner). Contact: Nadine (011) 645-2515 or wizojhb@beyachad.co.za or Shereen 082-683-1554 or shemarks_77@yahoo.com

Thursday (August 6)

- JH&GC and the Embassy of Switzerland in SA host a screening of the documentary “Carl Lutz: The Forgotten Hero”. Venue: Hogan Lovells, 22 Fredman Drive, Sandton. Time: 19:00. Admission free. RSVP: shirley@jhbholocaust.co.za or (011) 640-3100/2148.

- RCHCC in association with the SAJBD hosts a book launch, “Robert Sobukwe: How Can Man Die Better?” by Benjamin Pogrand. He’ll talk about Sobukwe and other heroes. 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

Sarah seems to have found her Jewish mojo

JACK MILNER

What does Maccabi Germany have that Maccabi South Africa doesn't? The obvious answer to this question is "money", and in terms of looking at this issue, that might be the one I was looking for, although I am not so sure... The European Maccabi Games began in Berlin on Monday night with the official opening ceremony staged on Tuesday evening at the Olympic Stadium in Berlin, the same stadium where Adolf Hitler and his Nazi cohorts staged the 1936 Olympic Games. As would happen in any country, Maccabi Germany has focused on their Jewish athletes but I was astounded to discover that one of

the faces at this event is former South African swimmer Sarah Poewe. Sarah has a non-Jewish German father and a Jewish mother but certainly while in South Africa, she never displayed any signs of Yiddishkeit or an affinity for anything Jewish. She attended the German School in Cape Town and was brought up as a Protestant, the religion of her father. Shortly after I became sports editor of the Jewish Report I decided to interview Sarah and called on a colleague of mine to ask if this would be possible. She politely declined, saying that she did not consider herself to be Jewish and an article in the Jewish Report would be sending the wrong message.



Former SA swimmer Sarah Poewe at a meeting with the organisers of the European Maccabi Games in Berlin.

She was honest, and I respected that. Later, predominantly to further her swimming career, she went to live in Germany and swam for that country. Now 32, she has had a reasonably successful swimming career, winning a bronze medal at the Athens Olympics in 2004 in the women's 4x100m medley. Over her career she has won two gold and two bronze medals at the World Championships and Short Course World Championships; she is a three-time European record holder, nine-time German record holder and 17-time German Champion between 2002 and 2012 (long and short courses). Throughout this period I never saw a word about her Jewish background - until now. In an article that appeared in a German-language newspaper a few days ago, they point out that the public did not take note at the 2004 Olympics "when the German breast-stroke swimmer, Sarah Poewe, made history. She won a bronze medal in the medley relay which was the first Olympic medal since before 1936 won by a Jewish German". They add: "In the European Maccabi Games, which will be opened today in Berlin by German President Joachim Gauck, Sarah Poewe is the patron of the swimming competition." They then quote Poewe: "It's a historic event when so many Jewish athletes in Berlin come together," she says. "We can only be deeply grateful for the resurgent Jewish life

in Germany." In the Maccabi programme, Poewe adds she is honoured to be chosen as the German Swimming Patron for the Games. "During the 20 years of my swimming career, I have followed the Maccabi Games with great interest. Prominent swimming athletes, such as Mark Spitz, Lenny Krayzelburg and Jason Lezak initially brought the Games to my attention. "In the past I had been invited to take part at the Games, but unfortunately due to my studies and training schedules I was unable to take part. Now that I have retired from professional swimming and have set up my own personal swim coaching business (Poewe Swim Coaching), I have time to invest and promote my role as an ambassador for the European Maccabi Games. "Having the European Maccabi Games in Berlin for the first time on German soil, makes me excited and very emotional. Knowing the historical background of Berlin, highlights this event. "I am so very much looking forward to supporting and working with the German Maccabi team." So I come back to the first question. What does Maccabi Germany have that Maccabi SA does not? Money? Could it be that Poewe is now out of the limelight and will need as much support as possible in her new business venture? Or is it really a change of heart?

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