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Chanukah – Festival of Lights



Photo: Ilan Osendryver

The story of Chanukah which offers a message of hope and freedom for all, is depicted in the candles of the eight-branched menorah. The shamash, the “attendant”, is used to kindle each flame for the duration of the festival. The candles are symbolic of the miracle of the victory of the Jews over the Syrian Greeks 2 100 years ago when the Greeks tried to enforce their religion on ancient Israel. On recapturing the Temple, the Jews found only one jar of undefiled oil but, instead of the oil burning for the one day, it lasted miraculously for eight days. Chanukah begins on Sunday evening and more and more communities across South Africa are participating in this joyous festival in both traditional and novel ways. See pages 8, 22, 24.

We wish our readers and advertisers a Chag Chanukah Sameach.



Press ombudsman investigates complaints against IMG titles

The Independent Media Group has been reported to the Press Ombudsman by the SAJBD, SAZF and individuals in the Jewish community for its reporting on a purported 'Interpol warrant of arrest' of four Israeli generals.

3

Farewell to Maurice Ostroff, a fearless giant of a man

Maurice Ostroff passed away in Israel on Monday at the age of 90. He was known for his fiercely Zionist sentiments, which he could express in an erudite way. He died figuratively 'with his boots on', having been active until the time of his death.

17

Erik Kinstler looks back on a life well lived

In the company of his family and Israel's Ambassador to SA Arthur Lenk, Erik Kinstler walked to the podium unaided to deliver a speech in Hebrew while celebrating his 100th birthday party at the HOD Centre in Johannesburg recently.

20

Russia - from harsh persecution to freedom of religion

There has been 'an amazing turnaround in the Russian Jewish community's fortunes' since severe restrictions on the practice of religion began to be lifted, Rabbi Berel Lazar, chief rabbi of Russia, told a meeting in Cape Town recently.

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Happy Chanukah

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Seeking serenity



Parshat Vayeishev
Rabbi Eli Spinner
Chabad of Glenhazel

This week’s parsha begins Vayeishev Yaakov - And Yaakov settled. To settle connotes peace, rest and tranquility. We all seek peace and a respite from everything life throws our way, be it tumultuous family issues, financial upheavals, health concerns, a bad day at work, the current drought, worry about the situation in Israel, Telkom, the list goes on.

Who can say they had a week that was truly tranquil and worry free?

The Torah tells us that Yaakov also sought this

elusive blessing of peace and serenity, though for a very different reason. Yaakov spent years working for his cheat of a father-in-law, slaving day and night tending to Lavan’s sheep.

He finally returned to Israel and prepared to meet his brother Esav who harboured intense hatred toward him and wanted to kill him.

Miraculously, he survived the encounter. Then all he wanted to do was settle down with his family and continue the legacy started by his grandfather Avraham, to teach his children the ways of Hashem and study Torah, without any external disturbing forces. This was why Yaakov desired peace.

As Maimonides teaches, the sages all yearned for the messianic era not for the abundant wealth and riches that would prevail, rather for

the peace of mind that comes with the freedom from persecution, allowing them to completely devote themselves to the study of Torah and the knowledge of G-d.

Unfortunately, Yaakov’s request for peace was not fulfilled until the last 17 years of his life. First having to endure the suffering of being separated from his favourite son, until finally being reunited with him in Egypt, where he was at last able to truly enjoy the comfort of being surrounded by his family all following the path he set for them, and study Torah with peace of mind.

As we think back to our own quest for rest and relaxation, with vacation season fast approaching, with many anticipating time on the coast, an oasis in a fast-paced year, when we are

free to spend time with our family, absolved of our usual obligations, let us reflect on our true objectives.

To put it in perspective from a soul level, what gives us meaningful enjoyment. Perhaps to spend some time learning, or devote extra time to daven, that an otherwise busy schedule may not allow for.

Or even as King Solomon wrote: “Know Him in all your ways.”

Wherever we find ourselves, and whatever seemingly mundane activity we engage in, can be utilised for a higher purpose. A sunset walk on the beach can remind one of Hashem’s amazing creation. So, for the meanwhile let us utilise this opportunity to its full potential, and let us truly await the time of ultimate peace very soon.

Community

World News in Brief

Pretoria Shul: small in numbers, big in Yiddishkeit

MICHAEL BELLING

The Pretoria Shul is not just a shul in a community, but the core from which everything branches out, Rabbi Gidon Fox, spiritual leader of the Pretoria Hebrew Congregation, told the SA Jewish Report.

“It’s not like Johannesburg, with lots of shuls,” he says. “The shul really connects the community; we are the heart of the community.”

Rabbi Fox last month celebrated 10 years of service in Pretoria, with the beautiful new shul in Groenkloof as his base.

The main communal organisations are intertwined with the shul, he says. WIZO, the IUA-UCF and the Pretoria Jewish Chronicle all operate from the shul campus. In addition, the Pretoria rabbinical college, the Yeshiva L’Rabbanut, operates from the shul premises.

The new shul was built around the turn of the century to house a Jewish community that has shrunk substantially over the years and in an area of the city in which most Jews now live, not far from Jaffa, the magnificent Jewish retirement home in Pretoria.

The Pretoria Jewish community is “a family of friends”, Rabbi Fox says.

The first shul in Pretoria dates back almost 120 years, when building commenced in Paul Kruger Street, just north of the centre of town, close to where the homes of the majority of the Jewish population were at the time.

The shul served the community for over 50 years, but by that time most Jews had moved eastwards. New shul premises were purchased in Pretorius Street, Arcadia, and a substantial domed building was erected in the early 1950s to house the congregation, with communal offices in a large house on the same property.

At the time the Pretoria Jewish community numbered over 3 500, with the overwhelming majority being members of the new shul.

Two smaller synagogues catered for the re-



The first shul built in Pretoria some 120 years ago is now dilapidated and unused. It was closed in the early 1950s and served as the venue for the notorious Treason Trial a few years later.

mainder of Pretoria’s Jews, the Adass Israel, a small Orthodox congregation, which no longer exists, and a Progressive congregation.

When the Pretorius Street Shul was completed, the building in Paul Kruger Street was sold, but it still stands. The premises gained notoriety as the venue for the Treason Trial in the late 1950s, as no court was large enough to house all the defendants and the legal teams.

The final acquittal of all the defendants (including Nelson Mandela) was the last significant event to take place on the premises, which are now neglected.

The Pretorius Street Shul closed over 20 years ago. The community was by then already much smaller and most of the Jews had moved further east. The building was sold - it now serves as part of the Pretoria premises of Boston City Campus and Business College and Boston Media House.

In the 1990s the congregation used the Carmel School hall for its services, until the current premises were purchased and a modern, smaller shul was erected 15 years ago.

Rabbi Fox says the Pretoria community - numbered at around 1 000 - is stable, but as part of its forward thinking, six three-bedroom simplex houses are being built in which young couples can live, essentially rent-free for up to five years.

This is a way to attract young people to come and experience Pretoria and for the community to bring in new young people. The houses are due to be completed by the end of the year.

“We are the vision for the future. The Pretoria Hebrew Congregation sees our responsibility as catering for the future of the entire community,” he said.

Rabbi Fox is optimistic. “The dynamism of the community is not going to wane.”

Woman at centre of Jewish divorce impasse remarries without ‘get’

WASHINGTON - A former Maryland woman who was a central figure in the ongoing efforts to reform how the Orthodox Jewish community deals with recalcitrant husbands on Jewish divorces, has remarried.

Tamar Epstein married Adam Paul Fleischer on September 24 in Memphis, Tennessee, the Washington Jewish Week first reported last week. Rabbi Nota Greenblatt, an eminent posek, or decisor of Jewish law, officiated at the wedding.

The process by which Epstein was allowed to remarry has come under scrutiny, according to several sources. At issue is whether her 2006 marriage to Aharon Friedman of Silver Spring was satisfactorily annulled. The couple received a civil divorce in 2010, but Friedman still has not given her a religious divorce, or “get”. The couple has a daughter, who was born in 2007.

According to the sources, Epstein was told she was a free woman by a Philadelphia rabbi who declared that Friedman had severe mental issues that existed prior to the marriage, including paranoia and obsessive compulsive disorder, and that had Epstein known of these conditions, she would not have married Friedman. Therefore, according to halachah, or Jewish law, she could move on with her life, the rabbi declared.

Among those who still consider Epstein and Friedman to be married are Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, vice president of the Rabbinical Court in Israel, the Washington Jewish Week reported. (JTA)

Shabbat Times		
Parshat Vayeishev		
December 4 / 22 Kislev		
December 5 / 23 Kislev		
Starts	Ends	
18:15	19:23	Johannesburg
18:15	20:24	Cape Town
18:15	19:21	Durban
18:15	19:39	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:43	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:08	East London

CHAG SAMEACH
AND A VERY HAPPY CHANUKAH

Press Ombudsman investigates complaints against IMG titles

ANT KATZ

The Independent Media Group (IMG) has come under fire from South African Jewish groups for an “anti-Israel bias” in their editorial coverage in recent weeks. At least four separate complaints have been lodged against The Cape Times and The Star with the Press Council by SA Jewry.

The complaints are associated with the veracity of their reporting of a supposed South African Police Service arrest warrant [on behest of Interpol] for four Israeli Defence Forces commanders involved in the Mavi Marmara flotilla incident in 2010, as well as over the policy of the Cape Times with regard to its letters to the editor.

“Not for the first time, local anti-Israel activists have been caught in a lie,” was the headline of a joint letter to the Jewish community last week from the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and the SA Zionist Federation.

This week, Jeff Katz, newly-elected national chairman of the SAJBD, joined SAIPAC’s David Hersch and Sydney Kaye in raising complaints, confirmed by the public advocate for the Press Council and Press Ombudsman, Latiefa Mobara, to Jewish Report. More complaints are expected.

Mobara said that an investigation had now been initiated.

IMG has also launched its own internal inquiry. Dr Iqbal Survé, who heads up IMG and its parent, Sekunjalo Investments Holdings, was overseas last week. “I have been contacted by various members of the Jewish community about this article,” Survé told Jewish Report last week. He has asked his chief of staff at IMG, Zenariah Barends, to do a review of the coverage and to check for accuracy in the reporting and if there has been bias.

“A story has to be balanced and provide all points of view,” Barends told Jewish Report. On Survé’s return this week, there was to be a report compiled for him with her findings.

The brouhaha on the Mavi Marmara episode started when IMG’s group foreign editor, Shannon Ebrahim, wrote a front page story in the Cape Times and other IMG dailies, as well as on their IOL.co.za website.

Ebrahim has written that Independent had had sight of the Interpol warrants. This annoyed the communications department of the SA Police Service (SAPS) and its elite Hawks unit for two weeks who said the arrest warrants were “malicious gossip” as they were sent scurrying for documents that now appear not to have existed.

The Board and Fed concluded in their joint statement that the “written proof” about the arrest warrants does not exist. “This became quite clear at a press conference, convened by the Media Review Network and Palestine Solidarity Alliance,” they said.

The IMG stories had quoted the anti-Israel

lobbyists as promising that this documentation would be made public at this event, said the joint statement, “but nothing whatever was produced in the end”.

The joint statement concluded that, once again, “local anti-Israel extremists have been shown to have deliberately misrepresented the facts in order to push their obsessive agenda against the Jewish State... This shows not only a flagrant lack of integrity on their part, but a contemptuous disregard for the South African public as a whole.”

Mobara of the Press Council explained the process: The complaints are sent to the media group who is required to respond within seven days. The replies are then forwarded to the complainants who can, if still unhappy, refer the matter to the Press Ombud for adjudication.

The Ombud can, in turn, either issue a ruling on the evidence, or call a hearing which will issue a ruling.

Should the Ombud rule in favour of the complainants, an instruction will be issued to the newspapers regarding remedial action they

must take. If the complainants are not happy with the outcome, there remains as a last resort an appeal to the Appeals Panel headed by a retired justice.

On the issue of the complaint about the Cape Times’ apparent policy regarding letters to the editor, Mobara confirmed that she had assisted Pam Koonin of Cape Town who sent a letter to the editor of the Cape Times for publication on Sunday September 27 (which was never published).

Koonin did, however, receive an e-mail response to her letter the following day from anti-Israel lobbyist Terry Crawford-Browne.

“I was very annoyed about it,” Koonin told Jewish Report. She contacted the Ombudsman and received a call from Mobara who explained that she could do nothing about it as it [the letter] had never appeared in print.

Mobara did, however, recommend that Koonin contact Abigail Oliver (internal legal counsel and company secretary at Sekunjalo). Oliver wrote an apologetic letter to Koonin this week and assured her that she would pass the complaint on to relevant IMG staff for further investigation.

Jewish Report also contacted Crawford-Browne on Tuesday to ask if it was normal policy of the Cape Times’ letters editor to forward readers’ letters on to him. His response: “When there is any discussion on Zionism, the Zionist lobby demands reciprocity. So, why shouldn’t we?”

Jewish Report explained to him that reciprocity usually meant a right-of-reply in the following edition of a publication and pressed him on the question of whether it was normal for such a letter to be sent to him prior to - or even if never was - published. Crawford-Browne refused to comment further.

BDS noisy at Woolies AGM - but where were the Zionists?

ANT KATZ

Anti-Israel lobbyists representing a range of organisations who had each bought a single share in the South African and Australian retail giant Woolworths to be allowed access to the company’s annual general meeting (AGM) in Cape Town on Monday, did their best to disrupt the proceedings.

The activist groups, all affiliated to the National Coalition for Palestine (NC4P) which supports the #BoycottWoolworths campaign, were mostly from the South African arm of the US-based NGO, Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (Israel) movement.

BDS-SA, who has been targeting Woolworths for some time because of the retailer sourcing some foodstuffs from Israel - as it does from countries all over the world - arrived at the AGM with a list of 35 questions.

Woolworths’ directors were bombarded with the questions, all aimed at getting the company to sever trade ties with Israel. The activists also had the backing of some long-standing Woolworths Holdings Limited shareholders who had given them their proxies prior to the meeting, with a mandate to support the anti-Israel campaign.

“The nature of the BDS ‘disruption’ was largely in the form of repetitive questioning,” said a spokesman for Woolworths.

Cape Town attorney Aubrey Katzeff, who attended the meeting as a Woolworths shareholder, told Jewish Report he was upset with both the professional Jewish organisations and private Jewish shareholders.

“I certainly knew what to expect as I had been there last year and watched the BDS supporters attempt to derail the meeting,” said Katzeff.

“The IOL media group reported that Woolworths Chairman Simon Susman had refused to give the group time for questions - but this is patently untrue,” said Katzeff. Susman had allowed BDS “a large amount of leeway to ask questions and to take points of order”, he said.

While the BDS contingent had set out to harass Susman, says Katzeff, the chairman had “kept cool and retained control of the meeting. He gave them so much leeway and time that the meeting ran very late.”

On the other hand, says Katzeff, BDS’ “anti-Israel vote garnered just a few per cent of the votes cast”.

Anti-Israel activist Terry Crawford Brown had “displayed his usual arrogance and reeled off lots of incorrect facts about Israel”, says Katzeff, adding that all the Woolworths directors had shown great “restraint in the face of what were defamatory and incorrect allegations about the company’s trade with Israel”.

What particularly got Katzeff’s goat was that, besides himself, there was only - as far as he could gather - one other Zionist there. “Both of us were there last year. With Woolworths refusing to bow to the BDS demands, you would think that the Zionist organisations would give the directors some support and attend the meeting.

“One must wonder whether the organised community is really as serious in tackling BDS as they claim to be doing,” said a critical Katzeff.

While BDS was creating a ruckus inside the meeting, outside there was little activity. “BDS had received permission for a demonstration of 500 people outside the building, but there were only two protesters on the day,” the Woolworths spokesman said.

Only on the web this week

These stories are only to be found on our website - which gets updated daily, even during the December holi-days (but not on Shabbos or chagim): Rabbi-on-the-run Eliezer Berland wants to put roots down in SA; Shuvu Bonim Breslov Chassidic sect raising money for school; Russian jet also violates Israeli airspace; Israel recreates November 29, 1947; Liron Mazor has a heart of gold; dozens of user-posts and comments and much more.

Bigger on the web this week

These stories are covered in our print

edition, but in shorter form: Philanthropist Kirsh honoured by ORT UK; Farewell to a giant, Maurice Ostroff; Deisi brings DIY support through “IsRaction” to SA for Chanukah, and lots more.

Liron has a heart of gold

Reader Liron Mazor won Jewish Report’s R22 000 “Personalised Family Fitness Package” competition last week, and he gave half of the prizes to Barbara Garnitz.

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Philanthropist Natie Kirsh is honoured by ORT UK

ANT KATZ

A photograph of two men in tuxedos standing at a podium. The man on the left is older, with white hair, and is smiling while holding a yellow envelope. The man on the right is younger, with dark hair, and is also smiling. He has his arm around the older man's shoulder. They are both looking towards the camera. The background is a light blue wall with some text partially visible.

The more than 300 guests at the event had helped to raise over R11-million towards the ORT network of schools in Israel.

Mandela said: “Even if the PLO have been our friends until now, the only way we can help them is to encourage them and the Israelis to talk to each other, to find each other, and systematically go along until we settle the problems.”



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#ISRATIONS

Through talking, Jews and government can find common ground

STEVEN GRUZD

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies used the visit of Ambassador Ronald Lauder, president of the World Jewish Congress, to arrange five meetings with senior government and ANC leaders. Zev Kregel, immediate past president of the SAJBD, spoke to the Jewish Report about what went on behind closed doors.

Lauder was in Johannesburg to speak at the Board’s biennial national conference at Gold Reef City on November 22, where President Jacob Zuma delivered the keynote address.

The meetings kicked off with talks about football with former minister Tokyo Sexwale, who is a candidate to replace suspended Fifa President Sepp Blatter. Discussions revolved around Sexwale’s role in mediating tensions between the Palestinian and Israeli football associations, including a campaign - unsuccessful, so far - to ban the latter from Fifa.

Kregel said the meeting was “to thank him for his efforts. As South Africans, we like to resolve conflicts around the table.”

Next up was the chairman of the African Union Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, also attended by WJC CEO Robert Singer and Ann Harris, chairman of the African Jewish Congress. “This meeting reaffirmed the commitment of the Jewish world to the African continent, and explored how we can play a more meaningful role in Africa’s development and realising its potential,” said Kregel.

Then there was a more overtly political encounter. ANC Secretary-General Gwede Mantashe and head of the ANC’s International Relations Committee and Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, sat down with the Board’s senior leadership. The red carpet treatment that Hamas received on its visit to South Africa was squarely on the agenda.

“We explained why this hurt the community,” Kregel said. “The secretary-general noted this, and said that he felt Hamas would recognise Israel and do some deal based on the 1967 borders.

“When Ambassador Lauder asked if Hamas was a true peace partner, Mantashe said ‘yes’ and asked Lauder whether [Israeli Prime Minister] Benjamin Netanyahu was one, to which Lauder also said ‘yes’.”

It became clear that both were sceptical of the other and Kregel added: “We agreed to disagree.”

After a courtesy meeting with Minister in the Presidency Jeff Radebe, the leadership met with Zuma himself. “He heard us loud and clear on the Hamas visit. He reiterated his personal commitment and that of the ANC and the government to genuine peace and a two-state solution for Israel/Palestine,” said Kregel, who emphasised the importance of these encounters, to overcome “misinformation and misinterpretation”.

When reminded that some community members only see futility in speaking to an increasingly anti-Israel and anti-Jewish ruling alliance, Kregel emphasised the ANC’s zero tolerance for anti-Semitism.

“We can’t try influencing them if we don’t talk to them, and we can’t understand if we don’t listen,” said Kregel. Without the SAJBD constantly engaging, he said, Jewish voices would not be heard.

While some slammed Zuma’s conference speech as uninspiring and predictable, Kregel said it was important that those brave Jews who actively fought apartheid, must be remembered and acknowledged. However, Kregel had to explain to Zuma the crowd’s audible objections to the president’s call for East Jerusalem to be the capital of Palestine.

Kregel was extremely encouraged at how the senior figures were prepared to give up their Sunday to meet Jewish leaders. He felt the SAJBD had good relationships with


both future presidential front runners, Cyril Ramaphosa and Dlamini-Zuma, “or anyone the ANC elects”.

He emphasised the need to maintain strong relationships with the country’s democratically elected leadership, with mutual trust and respect. “It was important for ANC leaders to hear the perspectives of local and international Jewry, and vice versa. Too often, issues are fought in the media without face-to-face dialogue.”

Ronald Lauder; Ann Harris; Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma; Zev Kregel and Robert Singer.



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Agents of change

I was privileged to sit on a panel with some fascinating women at the WIZO South Africa 35th Triennial Conference in Cape Town last Sunday.

We were asked to consider and relate how, we as women, have been able to affect change and empower others through our work.

I wondered if in my newish role as editor of the SA Jewish Report I really was an agent of change. And, if this was to be our topic, did it mean that the feminist battle which was long ago fought and won in North America, was not nearly far enough along in South Africa?

But some very positive answers came as I reflected and wrote my own speech and also from what I heard on the day from the other speakers. Not only were the women able catalysts for positive change, but each one had a very different though effective way of doing so. And each gave humorous and poignant insights of their experiences being successful women in a – let’s face it – still male dominated world.

Our moderator, Lara Rosmarin, CEO of the start-up incubator Seed Academy had the audience chuckling when she recalled how

during one fundraising project she urgently needed two vans sponsored. The businessman who came to her rescue turned out to be a well-known strip club owner (I surmised it was the late Lolly Jackson of Teasers fame but I could be wrong).

Lara was summoned to the club to “discuss the donation” with him and as she arrived, she was sure that she “would have to take one for the team” and would be forced to wrap herself around a pole to vibrating music in order to get the vans. He actually just wanted to discuss whether he could place a slightly lewd advert for the clubs along one side of the vehicles which she knew she could not allow and so that was the end of that.

Dr Einat Wilf, former member of the Israeli Knesset, author, and international speaker, said that she knew she had finally “arrived” in a man’s world when at meetings she took control of the air-conditioner remote. As only women who sit in long board meetings with men know – a woman begins to freeze at least an hour before the men even start to cool down.

A most powerful message came from the fiery Rhoda Kadalie, executive director of Impumelelo Social Innovations Centre, who among other roles, taught at UWC for almost 20 years and set up a gender equity unit there.

She said that although women have greater political representation in parliament than ever, the equality has not filtered through to the most vulnerable (rural) women whose lives have not changed at all. She suggested a revolution of sorts where women occupy the space of power for themselves and don’t wait for it to be given to them.

As for myself? I quipped that now, with some relief, I have moved away from a fundraising role at the Herzlia Schools Foundation where people would rush to avoid me in the school parking lot for fear that I might ask them for money, to a situation as editor of this newspaper, where people are in fact looking for me to give exposure to their views, their charities, their books, their agendas, and their children.

Although I had the opportunity to help change lives by raising funds for disadvantaged learners to attend Herzlia in my previous role, I said that I now realise that I have the power to create change through the printed word.

As Einat Wilf noted in her opening address of this WIZO conference: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict – and the fight against Israel’s global notoriety – would not be won by force; progress would only come through the right words and messaging.

Indeed, as an editor, I have the ability to change minds and empower others through words – not through forcefully plugging one viewpoint – but rather by challenging perceptions and changing stereotypes.

In my editorial some months ago, when the community was divided on whether Israel was correct to refuse a visa to Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande to go through Israel on his way to Ramallah, I tried to explain the motivations of both sides. I like to think it opened peoples’ minds to why certain decisions were taken and made people less partisan about the issue.

Women are often powerful in the workplace because by nature we place greater value on connections, relationships and building consensus, whereas men tend to focus on being the alpha-male which does not lend itself to compromise.

I like to think that I look for solutions that consider both sides when it comes to issues that occur within the work environment and in the community. It is not always about who is right and who is wrong. Don’t they say that if women ruled the world, there would be no war? I am joking – but not really...

– Vanessa Valkin, Editor

Strained Israeli-EU relations make Netanyahu look to Asia

**BEN SALES
JERUSALEM**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Indian counterpart, Narendra Modi, sat kiddy-corner in armchairs at this week’s international climate summit near Paris, talking and laughing.

“We have the best of relations, and they can be made even better,” Netanyahu told Modi at the meeting. To which Modi responded: “I am happy that often we can talk easily on telephone, we can discuss everything.”

A brief encounter between Netanyahu and European Union foreign policy envoy Federica Mogherini was far frostier. Mogherini approached Netanyahu in the hallway and they shared little more than a handshake.

The contrast reflects an Israeli warming to the East, just as its relations with Europe have cooled amid disagreements over the peace process and Iran’s nuclear programme. In recent years, trade between Israel and Asia has shot up, while Israel and Asian powers have made diplomatic overtures toward each other.

And even as Israel’s strongest diplomatic ties remain with the West, there are signs of a pivot eastward.

Israel is considering “an eastern option if things don’t go the right way with Europe and the United States”, Alon Liel, a former director-general of Israel’s Foreign Ministry, told JTA. “In the last year and a half, there wasn’t a peace process, and in Europe there was disappointment that there wasn’t a peace process.”

Israel has long had amicable relations with Europe, ranging from defence co-operation to economics. Today, the European Union collectively is Israel’s biggest export destination, and Israel competes in European athletic and cultural competitions

such as soccer tournaments and the Eurovision musical competition.

The ties are also historical. Israel was founded on the European model of a democratic nation-state. Many of Israel’s citizens are of European descent.

Recently, those ties have deteriorated. Israel almost withdrew from the EU’s Horizon 2020 programme, which funds scientific research and innovation, due to a disagreement about funding projects in West Bank settlements. And it bristled at a French proposal this year to have the United Nations Security Council oversee Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

European-Israeli relations are at a low point now over recently released EU guidelines to label goods produced in Israeli settlements. Israel has lambasted the guidelines as approaching a boycott. In response, Israel’s foreign ministry has cut off all co-ordination with EU institutions on issues related to the peace process.

“We regret that the EU has chosen, for political reasons, to take such an exceptional and discriminatory step, inspired by the boycott movement,” read a foreign ministry statement on the labelling guidelines. “This recent step raises questions regarding the role that the EU aspires to play.”

Israeli relations with Asia, meanwhile, have been on the upswing. Israeli exports to Asian countries tripled between 2004 and 2014, totalling \$16,7 billion last year – one-fifth of Israel’s total exports. Last year, Asia surpassed the United States as Israel’s second-biggest export destination behind Europe.

Meanwhile, Japan didn’t sell its cars in Israel until the 1990s in order to avoid a boycott in the Arab world. But last year, trade between Japan and Israel rose nearly 10 per cent, to \$1,75 billion. Israel also in-

creased government grants for joint Israeli-Japanese research by 50 per cent this year. Netanyahu also met with Japanese Premier Shinzo Abe in Paris this week.

Israel and China, which established formal relations only in 1992, are working on a free trade agreement, and Netanyahu created an Israel-China task force within his office this year. Last year, Israel had a so-called “China Week,” when a variety of Chinese government officials and business leaders visited Israel.

India’s Modi has said he plans to visit as well. Meanwhile, Indian President Pranab Mukherjee travelled to Jerusalem in October, becoming the highest-ranking Indian official ever to come to Israel.

“We are very deeply part of the West in many, many ways, but we look to the East,” Netanyahu said at the state dinner during Mukherjee’s visit. “We appreciate Europe, but we admire Asia.”

In 2013, then-Economy Minister Naftali Bennett said during a visit to China that increased trade could open an avenue for “economic diplomacy” with the world’s most populous country. As opposed to Europe, Bennett said, Chinese companies don’t let the Israeli-Arab conflict get in the way of business.

“They never once asked us about the Arabs, or the Palestinians, or the occupation, or the shmoccupation, or anything else,” he said in a video statement. “The only thing that interests them is Israeli hi-tech and Israeli innovation.”

India abstained from endorsing the UN report on last year’s war in Gaza, which accused Israel of possible war crimes. All European countries on the UN Human Rights Council, meanwhile, endorsed the report.

But analysts caution that Israel



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meeting with President Xi Jinping of China at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing in this file photo, on May 9, 2013.

should not view India and China as alternatives diplomatically to Europe and the United States. Before Modi took office last year, India had historically been pro-Palestinian, supporting Palestinian causes in the United Nations, and Asian nations have generally taken less of an interest than Europe and the United States in Israeli foreign affairs.

While the US has a longstanding policy of vetoing anti-Israel resolutions at the UN Security Council, China typically votes against Israel. Given the size of China’s economy,

analysts say a few more billion dollars in Israeli trade likely won’t mean a Chinese veto.

“Economic relations are driven by the business sector, not because the government wants to give priority,” said Oded Eran, the former director of Tel Aviv University’s Institute for National Security Studies.

“We need to remember that China and India are very pragmatic, but they haven’t changed – and I doubt if they will change their vote in the UN because of improved economic relations.” (JTA)

De Klerk-type leadership needed to prevent Israel apartheid



Many Jews will reject the warning a week ago by the last white South African president, FW de Klerk, that Israel is heading towards apartheid, that unless it urgently begins implementing the two-state solution, it will plunge into the “abyss” South Africa experienced.

Interviewed by a journalist in Tel Aviv while attending an anti-racism conference at the Berl Katznelson Foundation, he said Israel was not today an apartheid state.

“But,” he said, “if the two-state solution is not implemented, and if, in such a situation, the Jews have special rights while the Palestinians live as second-class citizens, Israel will become an apartheid state... As an outsider, it seems to me that the window of opportunity for the two-state solution is about to close. You might miss this chance.”

Who better than De Klerk would recognise apartheid? He was the last Afrikaner president of apartheid South Africa, who stunned the world in 1990 by announcing freedom fighter Nelson Mandela’s release after 27 years in jail, unbanning of African liberation movements, and dismantling of the racist system. He won a Nobel Peace Prize.

A common response to the “apartheid-Israel” argument is that comparing Israel and South Africa is wrong. The latter had only itself to worry about. It never faced terrorism, hostile enemies and religious conflict endemic to Israel’s situation in the volatile Middle East.

There was no ISIS, no external enemies poised to destroy it. Furthermore, several genuine attempts by Israel to create a Palestinian state all ended disastrously, including the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and repeated rejections by the Palestinians.

The “knife intifada” currently raging in Israel will increase enactment of more rules separating Palestinians from Israelis and removing more of their rights. How can Israel prevent a Palestinian state from becoming another jihadist entity right in its heart?

Is De Klerk naïve about Israel’s situation? South African solutions are not automatically transferrable.

Global politics have also changed since De Klerk and Mandela led South Africa into democracy through their sheer power of great leadership.

But therein lies the rub: It is ultimately

about great leadership. Watershed moments in human history are defined more by great leaders who rose to the occasion than the circumstances ordinary people saw as insurmountable. When he was elected South African president, De Klerk represented the right wing in a right-wing white party, yet he led the party to the agreement with the ANC.

“They voted for me because they thought I was the most conservative of all candidates. They were wrong about me. A leader’s job is not to follow opinion polls. Leadership requires taking an initiative, a vision, a true aspiration to improve the situation, and the ability to convince your voters that the change in the status quo will benefit them in the long run.

“That’s what I did on the white side, and that’s what Mandela did on the black side. We both did it while facing harsh criticism from our camps.”

Israel has had great leaders, as have Arab countries. For example, a few years after the traumatic 1973 Yom Kippur War, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin joined with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat - who had sent Egypt’s army into battle, believing it would destroy Israel - to establish peace between their countries, which has lasted nearly four decades.

Sadly, the Palestinians haven’t produced a leader with the willingness and power to meet the challenge. PLO leader Yasser Arafat was not the man, nor is PA President Mahmoud Abbas.

Is Netanyahu made of that “right stuff”? He officially favours two states, although his actions often point elsewhere. If a suitable Palestinian leader arose, could he meet the challenge as De Klerk did with Mandela and forge a historic new path?

Some believe popular Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti, a leader of the first and second intifadas who is serving jail time in Israel, might be the one. Could he, like Mandela, make decisions from prison no one else dares make on the outside?

“The lesson we learned many years ago, before we freed Mandela,” said De Klerk, “was that you have to negotiate with whoever has the support of the majority.”

Imagine the scene: Netanyahu and Barghouti shaking hands to thunderous applause as they receive the Nobel Peace Prize, watched by billions of people, for achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace. Is it naïve, wishful thinking?

• *Geoff Sifrin is former editor of the SAJR. His blog address in which his regular Taking Issue column appears is <https://sifrintakingissue.wordpress.com>*

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Chanukah set to light up the scene

SUZANNE BELLING

It seems as if everyone is climbing on to the “Chanukah bandwagon” with more and more events cramming the festive calendar.

Even the remarkable DL Link - which looks after and arranges events for people in the community who are ill - went to town last Sunday with a menorah mosaicing event at the Art Shebeen in Linksfield.

The Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre is holding a concert entitled “I raise my eyes” which features two of South Africa’s well-known Jewish artists - Mark Samowitz and Johnny Sklar - on Thursday, December 10 and Sunday, December 13 at 20:00.

As always, Chabad will be illuminating South Africa with public menorah lightings throughout the country. In the Johannesburg area, multiple giant menorahs will be erected at Sandton City, Chabad CBD, KosherWorld, Norwood Mall and other locations.

Ushering in the festival on Sunday, a community-wide celebration for the first night of Chanukah, will take place outside the Rivonia Road entrance to Sandton City including a car menorah parade and many surprises. On the subsequent nights, menorah lightings will take place at each of the other locations with festive activities.

The Sandton Central menorah lighting at Chabad’s Goodness & Kindness Centre will feature a fire truck to help kindle the lights.

Chabad Seniors Club also hosts a Chanukah party for the “young at heart” on Wednesday, December 9 from 10:30 at Chabad House.

In Pretoria a grand menorah car parade and public menorah lighting take place on Sunday. The parade will begin at 18:30 and will leave from the Pretoria Hebrew Congregation, arriving at Wingate Park Country Club at about 19:30 where the community will continue its public menorah lighting and fun programme including hot latkes, doughnuts, delicious milchik food, music, loads of prizes and kids’ programme.

Waverley Shul in Johannesburg is arranging a novel Chanukah evening “Waverley’s Got Talent”, a talent contest, magician show and candle-making - for adults and children - from 17:30 on December 7.

The Durban United Hebrew Congregation (Great Synagogue) will be holding Chanukah celebrations at the synagogue on December 13 and at the Izinga Jewish Centre on Wednesday 9 at 18:00.

Chanukah 5776 will be commemorated by the Claremont Wynberg Hebrew Congregation in a different way. Calling themselves “modern day Maccabees”, Joel Merris and Larry Sherman will share their story of returning to the stadium in Berlin to participate in the Olympic Games 80 years after Hitler systematically eliminated Jewish athletes from participating.

Marais Road Shul in Sea Point will be having a “magical” Chanukah evening for seniors with Cantor Ivor Joffe and Erez Shaked on December 10, while the shul will join Chabad on Sunday at Herzlia Weizmann Primary School from 17:30 with food stalls, rides and live entertainment.

The Northcliff Shul in Johannesburg will start its celebrations at 18:00 on Sunday. Says the shul’s spiritual leader, Rabbi Pesach Fishman: “This will include the lighting of our giant menorah, a braai, talk by former

actor Adam Michels “From Hollywood to Israel” - on his journey from Tinseltown to the Holy Land. There will also be a children’s programme.

Rabbi Yehuda Stern, of the Sydenham/Highlands North Hebrew Congregation, draws the community’s attention to a novel “Lights and Strikes” Chanukah bash for young Jewish Johannesburgers, with free ten-pin bowling, pool tables, arcade games, a DJ, kosher shwarma and chips - and, of course Chanukah lighting.

Rabbi Kievman recounts the Chanukah story to underscore the importance of the celebration:

“Chanukah recalls the victory, more than 2 100 years ago, of a militarily weak but spiritually strong Jewish people who defeated the Syrian Greeks who had overrun ancient Israel and sought to impose restrictions on religious freedom, forcing the Jews to accept a foreign religion.

“During the occupation of Jerusalem and the Temple, the Syrian Greeks desecrated the oils prepared for the lighting of the menorah, which was part of the daily service in the Temple. Upon recapturing the Temple from the Syrian Greeks, the Jewish people found only one jar of undefiled oil, enough to burn only one day, but it lasted miraculously for eight days until new, pure olive oil was produced.

“In honour of this miracle, the Jewish people celebrate Chanukah for eight days by lighting the eight-branched candelabra known as a menorah. It is usually placed in a highly visible location to publicise the miracle, with its message of hope and religious freedom to all.”



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A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies



Above Board
Jeff Katz
National Chairman

SA Jewry’s interface with government

The recent SAJBD national conference, combined with the visit of Ronald Lauder, one of the world’s most important Jewish leaders, provided an ideal opportunity for a series of political meetings between the Board leadership and senior government and ruling party representatives.

Four of the meetings that I was personally involved in were with Minister in the Presidency Jeff Radebe, former President Kgalema Motlanthe, ANC

Secretary-General Gwede Mantashe and the president of the ANC Youth League, Collen Maine. Zev Krengel, who now holds the position of national vice-president on the SAJBD executive, met privately with President Jacob Zuma, Tokyo Sexwale and African Union Chairperson Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma.

Being the interface between the Jewish community and government is a core part of the SAJBD’s mandate. While official letters, press statements and memoranda have their place, it is ultimately through face-to-face meetings that we are really able to convey what our community is feeling, what its needs are and, just as importantly, how it can assist in meeting the challenges that face our young democracy.

Our meeting with former President Motlanthe, for example, dwelt at some length on the subject of job creation. When addressing the Board’s 2011 national conference, President Motlanthe emphasised the contribution that Jews could make in this vital area.

This in turn inspired the Board’s so-called “Jubuntu” project, in which various Jewish-headed initiatives aimed at empowerment through skills and entrepre-

neurship training were identified and from which lessons were distilled on how those projects could be adopted on a broader basis.

As one would expect, the Middle East always looms large in our discussions. Here there is broad agreement over the need for a peaceful, negotiated settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and what in general terms such a settlement could look like.

Where we often have to agree to disagree, concerns were where the blame lies when that process fails to make progress; but at least by meeting and discussing the issues, it is possible to close the gaps between ourselves and find common ground.

President Zuma has been steadfast in his support for a negotiated two-state solution to the conflict and to South Africa’s playing whatever positive role it can to bring this about. We in turn have urged government to continue engaging in the region and pledged our support and assistance to that end.

CSO prepares for holiday period

While December provides for most of us a much-needed break from our respective work routines, for the CSO, it is one of the busier periods of the year. It is at this time that provision must be made for securing the various end-of-year youth camps around the country, a major operation involving a significant proportion of the CSO’s professional staff and volunteer base.

I urge our community to please support the CSO as much as possible, ideally by becoming part of the organisation in a volunteer capacity, as well as by complying at all times with its guidelines in order to ensure the existence of effective security at all our communal installations and events.

• 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

‘THE JEWS HAVE BECOME THE NAZIS’

LONDON - A former Cambridge academic who told a 13-year-old Israeli girl she would answer her questions about horses when there is peace in Palestine, has claimed that “the Jews have become the Nazis”.

Marsha Levine, an expert on horses with more than 40 years’ experience, said she couldn’t help the girl because she came from a country whose prime minister “wanted ethnic cleansing”.

Dr Levine, a supporter of the Jews for Justice for Palestinians activist group, said she was not embarrassed by her response to the girl and had believed it was “fair” not to help her.

She said Jews had “turned themselves into monsters” in their treatment of Palestinians in Gaza. - Jewish Chronicle

HUNDREDS OF UK ACADEMICS COMMIT TO BOYCOTTING ISRAEL

LONDON - Hundreds of British academics have committed to boycotting Israel, according to the Jewish Chronicle. A letter signed by 343 university lecturers is due to appear as a full page advert in the Guardian newspaper this week.

The signatories, who come from 72 institutions including Oxford University and Cambridge University, said they would refuse to work with Israeli universities, describing them as “deeply complicit” with alleged Israeli violations of international law.

The boycott was launched after a pro-Israel initiative was backed by 150 writers, artists and musicians, including Harry Potter author JK Rowling last

week. They had signed a statement that opposed the boycott of Israel.

Signatories of the anti-Israel Academic Commitment have vowed to not accept invitations to Israeli institutions, saying they would not co-operate with or refer people to Israeli academic institutions. - Jewish Chronicle

SEAN PENN LAUDS ISRA-AID

TEL AVIV - During his first-ever visit to Israel, two-time Academy Award winner Sean Penn attended the “Can Haiti Grow?” conference in Tel Aviv presented by IsraAID and the Pratt Foundation, to speak on his NGO’s humanitarian relief work. Penn (whose father is Jewish) is the founder of the J/P Haitian Relief Organisation, which was launched in 2010 in response to the January 12, 2010 earthquake in Haiti. “Our mission was to spend a few weeks in Haiti as a 24/7 delivery service for drugs for the hospitals that needed them,” Penn, the event’s keynote speaker, told attendees, detailing his initial visit to Haiti following the earthquake that left between 230 000 to 316 000 dead.

The J/P Haitian Relief Organisation quickly became a key provider of long-term relief to victims in the area. During its work, the NGO collaborated with Israeli humanitarian aid agency IsraAID, including on a child education centre in a Port-au-Prince refugee camp. IsraAID was reportedly in Haiti some four days after the catastrophe occurred.

During the Tel Aviv conference, Penn lauded IsraAID for its “inspiration” and humanitarian efforts. - Canadian Jewish News

WIZO Conference with a lot of SA sparkle



In November, WIZO South Africa’s 35th Triennial Conference was held in Cape Town attended by delegates from Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Port Elizabeth, as well as Jewish and Christian supporters of WIZO and Israel.

Dr Einat Wilf, keynote speaker at the official opening, shared reflections on issues that impact Israel, the region and the Jewish people.

Tamar Lazarus, popular outgoing president of WIZO SA, delivered her President’s report emphasising the importance of WIZO as an

international organisation and as an integral part of the fabric of Israeli society.

Lara Rosmarin moderated an excellent panel discussion on “Women Agents of Change”. The illustrious panelists, Dr Einat Wilf, Rhoda Kadalie, Kayli Levitan, Vanessa Valkin and Beverley May, concluded that every woman in a position of leadership, is an “agent of change”.

The participants of the second panel, moderated by Laurienne Baitz were Cassandra Mayekiso, Natalie Altman, Lee Lobel, Liat Bienart and

Jonathan Levi, who discussed where their attachment to Israel stemmed from, and how Zionism impacts their lives today.

Positive reports on treasury matters, membership and WIZO SA projects in Israel, left delegates proud and enthusiastic to continue their good work.

The conference ended with welcoming the new president, Monyeen Castle from Cape Town.



L to R WIZO SA Vice Presidents: Barbara Flax & Helen Maisels Trisk, newly elected President Monyeen Castle, Vice President Yvonne Jawitz & Immediate Past President Tamar Lazarus.



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2015 WIZO SA Council members

Expat Steve Felder meets Pope Francis in Nairobi



Expat South African Steve Felder, who lives in Nairobi, meeting Pope Francis on the pope's visit to Kenya.

SUZANNE BELLING

Former South African Steve Felder, who has lived in Kenya since 2012, has been all over the world meeting celebrities. But the invitation he received from the President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya to attend a State Reception in honour of the Holy Father, His Holiness Pope Francis at State House grounds, Nairobi, on November 25, he regarded as a singular honour.

Moreover, he was invited the following morning to a “closed door” interreligious dialogue, with 25 religious leaders, at Nairobi’s Apostolic Nunciature. Felder is the Kenyan representative on the African Jewish Congress, and a council member of the Nairobi Hebrew Congregation.

“The Pope said to me ‘Bless you’ and ‘shalom’ and presented me with a medallion to commemorate his visit,” Felder told the SA Jewish Report.

“In an increasingly interdependent world,” Pope Francis told the religious leaders, “we see ever more clearly the need for interreligious understanding, friendship and collaboration in defending the G-d-given dignity of individuals and peoples and their right to live in freedom and happiness.

“By upholding respect for that dignity and those rights, the religions play an essential role in forming consciences, instilling in the young the profound spiritual values of our respective traditions and training good citizens, capable of infusing civil society with honesty, integrity and a world view which values the human person over power and material gain. Here I think of the importance of our common conviction that the G-d whom we seek to serve, is a G-d of peace.

“His holy name must never be used to justify hatred and violence. I know that the barbarous attacks on Westgate Mall, Garissa University College and Mandera are fresh in your minds. All too often, young people are being radicalised

in the name of religion to sow discord and fear, and to tear at the very fabric of our societies.

“How important it is that we be seen as prophets of peace, peacemakers who invite others to live in peace, harmony and mutual respect! May the A-mighty touch the hearts of those who engage in this violence, and grant his peace to our families and communities.”

Felder described the Pope as “incredibly humble and a uniting figure”.

Felder is an executive committee member of the Young Presidents Organisation and serves on numerous boards. He was a finalist in the SA Jewish Report’s Jewish Achiever Awards this year and next month is due to receive an award from the president of Lithuania, having been very active in forging ties between Lithuania and South Africans of Lithuanian descent.

This year he delivered a presentation at the fifth annual “Aid for Trade” conference at the World Trade Organisation in Geneva in June.

Felder, who is married to Devorah (a lawyer and former Johannesburg), has three children Seth (5), Eden (4) and Dale (six months), and was educated at Herzlia School in Cape Town, UCT, and has an MBA from Unisa Graduate School of Business (Midrand), and attended the INSEAD Business School, Fontainebleau, France. In business since 1995, he has worked in management positions and directorships in South Africa, Canada and the US.

He has been with Maersk Line - the world’s largest container shipping company - since May 2004, as regional manager for Johannesburg and Botswana; as sales director for sub-Saharan Africa; as managing director of Israel and the Palestinian Authority (Israel-based) and is now managing director for Eastern Africa.

“Kenya has around 1 000 Jews, a mix of locals and expats/diplomats,” he said.

Regarding the recent terror strikes in Kenya by Al Shabaab, Felder said he was not afraid: “You cannot let it rule your life.”

World News in Brief

Netanyahu and Abbas shake hands at UN climate summit in Paris

PARIS - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas shook hands at the United Nations climate change conference near Paris.

The two leaders met and spoke after the group photo of the some 150 world leaders in attendance at the conference, which is being held at Le Bourget Airport just outside the French capital. Abbas and Netanyahu had been standing in the same row, with only one person between them.

It was the first time the leaders have come face to face with each other since September 2010. Netanyahu also met on the sidelines of the summit with President Barack Obama for about 10 minutes. They were joined at the end by US Secretary of State John Kerry, according to reports.

Netanyahu is scheduled to have official meetings with French President Francois Hollande and Russian President Vladimir Putin, as well as the prime ministers of Canada, Poland, Japan, Australia, India and the Netherlands, according to The Jerusalem Post.

He reportedly also spoke on the sidelines of the conference with Hollande, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, British Prime Minister David Cameron and Britain’s Prince Charles, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi and, according to some reports, European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini. (JTA)

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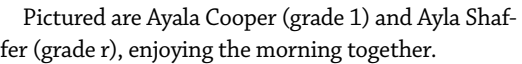
An initiative of the South African Jewish Museum (SAJM).



Yeshiva College kids revel in their night at the theatre

Ashlin Rangasamy, a grade 2 teacher, addressed the children and volunteers saying: “I have seen the fruit of the work from the Link. We have seen a major improvement in our children.”

During the interval the children were treated to snacks and were able to engage with the play, discussing characters and events happening in the production. They had a wonderful, entertaining and educational day.





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RKHNS says goodbye to its grade R graduates

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPH BY LATASHA SLAVIN

Wow, what a night! What a celebration as Rosabelle Klein Hebrew Nursery School emotional parents, grandparents and families bade farewell to the grade Rs at their graduation concert. The children sang, danced and recited their words beautifully and the audience was blown away by the performance and by how much the youngsters have learnt during the year. The school wished its RKNS graduates good luck.



Community

Selwyn Segal residents enjoy their Mitzvah Day



Volunteers assisting on international Mitzvah Day at Selwyn Segal. Front: Vanessa Weltzman; Candy Goldblatt; Jade Weiner; Amy Stein; Yvette Joselowsky; Cindy Kree; Jessica MacGregor (peeping through); and Ester Levy. Back: Nadine Hurwitz; Bev Cohen and Kylie MacGregor. Far back: Valerie Dozetas.

CINDY KREE AND BEV GOLDMAN

The Union of Jewish Women Johannesburg last Sunday hosted a Mitzvah Day project ‘with a difference’ at the Selwyn Segal Centre. With the assistance of a team of ever-willing volunteers, the residents were treated to a morning of activities and a delicious tea.

The UJW said that in order to continue “with this excellent work”, it needs to increase its membership base. It therefore appealed to members of the community to join the UJW.



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The Power to Surprise

Farewell to Maurice Ostroff, a fearless giant of a man



While most residents at retirement homes may feel they have earned the right to take it easy, this was not the case with Maurice Ostroff, who was always revving up to launch into a new career.

DAVID E KAPLAN

Metaphorically speaking, Maurice “Morrie” Ostroff left us with his boots on - his Mahal boots! The sad passing of Maurice on Monday at the age of 90, in Israel, brought to an end the tenacious spirit of a warrior who fought passionately to his last breath for the right of the Jewish people to be free in their ancestral homeland.

When once asked why he volunteered in 1948 to fight in Israel’s War of Independence, this former South African from Johannesburg said: “I had a strong desire to identify myself with the struggle of the Jews in Israel and with the displaced persons fighting for the right to enter Palestine. I had served in the Second World War and felt I could help.”

Operating from “my ops room” on the fifth floor of Beth Protea - the Southern African Retirement Home in Herzlia - he tracked the movements of Israel’s enemies with his overworked computer, challenging the lies and distortions of journalists, jurists, academics and politicians around the world.

Maurice was unafraid to take on the mighty. His well-researched epistles appeared in newspapers and blogs around the globe. Always respectful, never personal, but always hitting his target with pin-point verbal accuracy, he had the knack to marshal the English language and send it forth into battle on behalf of the Jewish State.

Maurice was not one to compromise his integrity in this quest; his mission was always “to reveal the truth” and “to set the record straight”.

This was poignantly articulated in an op-ed in The Jerusalem Post when taking on Justice Richard Goldstone for his faulty report on Operation Cast Lead: “It is disappointing to observe the disproportionate amount of conjecture about, and attacks on, Goldstone the man, compared with the paucity of discussion about the actual content of the report and the faulty methodology used in preparing it.”

The exchange of the open correspondence between Maurice and Goldstone led to a close relationship and, finally, Goldstone retracting key findings in the infamous report.

Three years ago, we co-founded with others, TbT (Truth be Told), a “Rapid Response Team” that tracked untruths about Israel in the world media and quickly researched the facts and responded within hours.

Because of the stature of this giant and the respect he engendered, our reports were published widely and we earned the respect of friends and foes alike.

Maurice was also a founder member of the international Coalition of Hasbara Volunteers, better known by its acronym CoHaV, (star in Hebrew), a worldwide umbrella organisation of volunteers active in combating anti-Israel media and political bias.

Maurice’s background lay in the sciences; he constructed the radar station he commanded. His versatility knew no bounds.

Educated at the University of Witwatersrand, Maurice held a masters degree in industrial engineering, a BSc degree in mathematics and physics and a BSc degree in electrical engineering. He was elected a Fellow of the Institute of Administration and Commerce of South Africa where he was the Group Administrative Director of Morlite Holdings Ltd.

He was a former chairman of the SA Technion Society and of the SA Stainless Steel Sanitaryware Manufacturers Association, as well as president of the Federation of Sanitaryware and Hardware Merchants Associations of SA, which elected him honorary life vice-president.

Upon making aliyah in 1980, he became MD of Orbit Medicenters Ltd, the company that initiated and brought to fruition, the Herzliya Medical Centre.

He was also a member of the team that inspired and created Beth Protea and served as a member of its “chevrah”.

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JVJP’S INNUENDO THAT ALL ISRAELIS ARE RACIST, COMPLETELY FALSE

That the CSO are alleged to have roughed up some members of Jews for a Just Peace (JVJP) is indeed disturbing, more so, given that the CSO was the recipient of an award at the SAJBD conference where these allegations were made. If this in fact substantiated, those members of the CSO and whoever ordered them to act in this manner, need to be censured.

One, however, needs to address JVJP’s allegations about racism and “especially Israeli Jews” where they quote two ministers and one former minister for making disparaging remarks.

Remarks selectively quoted may or may not, have been taken out of context; there are racists in Israel as there are in many countries including SA.

Reading the letter in last week’s Jewish Report, one gets the impression that the entire [Israeli] nation are racists. Nothing could be further from the truth and those intelligent members of this organisation know this full well but paint a vastly different picture for nefarious reasons.

Notwithstanding diverging views, JVJP tries to discredit those who are not fully supportive of their narrative and taint our entire community

with a right-wing bigoted brush, where in fact thousands of local Jews who support Israel do not agree with that government’s policy and are highly critical of many things there. Are these people racists?

JVJP will never miss an opportunity to malign the Zionist enterprise with accusations of stealing Palestinian land.

Was the Alsace not stolen from France by Germany and then re-stolen by the French from Germany? Was half of Poland not stolen by the Russians? Was the creation of Lebanon, Syria

and Jordan not stolen at the expense of other peoples?

One can quote any number of “stolen” land issues throughout history but we can’t turn the clock back and decisions made by well-meaning powers at the time were just that: well-meaning - and history will prove that in the establishment of the Jewish state it was not only well-meaning but justified and legitimate.

In a JVJP handout they pose some questions together with their answers.

A question: “Do you think that Jews need their own homeland, especially after the Holocaust?”

Answer: “We acknowledge the tremendous fear resulting from being a minority, particularly one that has a long history of persecution. Democratic practice is the most sustainable defence of any Jewish community. Jews and the continuation of Jewish culture are best safeguarded by a democratic constitution and environment”.

Yes, indeed, in a perfect world “Jewish culture would be best safeguarded by a democratic constitution and environment”. Please JVJP, direct us to that perfect world!

Another question: What is JVJP’s position on a one-state solution in Israel/Palestine?

Answer: JVJP holds no position on this. We are open to discussing the value of all nonviolent options for resolving the crisis.

Perhaps JVJP will give us their opinion on a two-state solution?

Allan Wolman
Rosebank, Johannesburg

MIDEAST PEACE: NEVER LEAVE OUT PALESTINIAN RELUCTANCE

I have been reading with interest the criticisms about the JVJP. I find that a very important point is always omitted. Most people say that Israel should be pressurised to make peace, but no-one ever mentions that the Palestinians should be pressurised to commit to making peace.

After all, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has publicly stated at the UN that he is prepared to meet PA President Mahmoud Abbas anywhere at any time to discuss making peace and solving the problem of a two-state solution.

It would be good if the powers-that-be that are so keen to see the dispute resolved, would pressure both sides to sit down together with both making concessions. I think then there would be a genuine chance of solving the problem.

The writer of the JVJP letter in last week’s Jewish Report makes the point that Israel is “illegally occupying and stealing land belonging to people who they control under military occupation”. It is time to realise the truth that this land, namely Judea and Samaria, was in 1948 stolen from Israel as it was part of the land allocated to Israel by the UN partition plan, among other international agreements. Five Arab armies attacked the newly-proclaimed State of Israel.

The partition allocated the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea to the Jews for a Jewish state and the rest of the British Mandated land west of the Jordan to the Arabs. It became Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.

I would suggest that the people who think that Israel is occupying land illegally, should study the facts from the historical documents.

I would also suggest that Netanyahu put it to Abbas that he has two choices: peace or war. He has to choose which he wants for the “Palestinians”. If he chooses peace, then they should sit down and talk to each other; if he chooses war, Israel does not have to assist its enemy in any way and should stop supplying water, electricity and money to the Palestinians.

Dennis Kahlberg
Glenhazel, Johannesburg

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MAVI MARMARA: FROM A LEGAL POINT, THINGS ARE FISHY

The anti-Israel lobby groups in South Africa, assisted by certain media and in particular, the Independent Newspaper Group, disseminated news that warrants for the arrest of four Israeli generals have been issued and that, should they set foot in South Africa, they would be arrested .

Gadija Davids, a South African journalist was on board the Mavi Marmara in 2010 when it attempted to enter Gaza, which was blockaded by the IDF. As Israeli naval commandos boarded the vessel, they were attacked by the passengers, of whom 10 were killed.

The International Criminal Court was requested to investigate the Mavi Marmara incident and on November 6 last year, a report was issued from the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court which inter alia states that Turkey and Israel were afforded an opportunity to provide information, but “no information was forthcoming”.

An interesting feature of the ICC report is the conclusion which states: “The prosecutor has concluded that the information available does not provide a reasonable basis to proceed with an investigation.”

The ICC also dealt with jurisdiction, and stated that under article 12(2) (a), it would have jurisdiction over crimes committed on board the vessel.

The prosecutor noted that “protected civilian status does not preclude the possibility for the lawful use of force in individual self-defence against civilians who have resorted to violence”.

From videos showing passengers on the Mavi Marmara attacking the Israeli commandos, it is clear that the soldiers had a right to defend themselves, which they did. How Davids and her lawyer attempted to obtain a warrant of arrest in Turkey, is unknown, however absurd.

Turkey has no jurisdiction in any alleged crime committed, because the vessel was not in Turkish waters, nor was the vessel registered in Turkey (but in the Comoros). Davids is also not a Turkish resident or citizen.

Moreover, she may well be implicated in the assaults that took place against the commandos, even if she didn’t personally take part. The doctrine of common purpose is a universally well-known (and used) doctrine to implicate bystanders who identify with perpetrators of crimes.

Meanwhile, here in South Africa, Brigadier Hangwani Malaudzi, of the SAPS, was also taken by surprise and said that the matter had been referred to Interpol to establish the “veracity and validity of the document”.

This begs the question: Why was Interpol not approached in the first instance? No international warrant for arrest and detention is valid unless Interpol has issued a Red Notice or the ICC has asked a signatory to execute a warrant.

Something smells fishy with Independent Media Group’s rush to publish a story which is either a fabrication or indeed a wishful figment of their imagination. Time will tell.

Until Interpol lends credence to the document, we may regard media reports on it as “lies and damned lies”.

Nathan Cheiman
Northcliff, Johannesburg

MISGUIDED JVJP IS HIDING BEHIND A NOBLE CAUSE

While Jewish Voices for a Just Peace pride themselves on their noble cause in pursuit of peace and justice, their ignorance never fails to amaze. In last week’s Jewish Report they openly and unashamedly refer to Israel’s crime of “stealing Palestinian land”. Oh really? Perhaps they should consider the following carefully:

Contrary to their misguided opinion, the establishment of the State of Israel could never have infringed on the rights of the Palestinian people. Proof of this can be found by careful analysis of the exact wording and construction of Resolution 181, which called for the partition of Palestine into two states.

The resolution clearly and specifically called for the establishment of “a Jewish state and an Arab state” - it did NOT call for the establishment of “a Jewish state and a Palestinian state”. This is hardly surprising and can easily be explained by examining the historical record.

While the existence of an Arab people in Palestine was never

EXCLUSIVITY: JEWS ARE THEIR OWN WORST ENEMIES

There are many religions in the world, but to the best of my knowledge, the Jewish religion is one of the very few, if not the only one, that doesn’t proselytise. Not only that, but we don’t try to convert as many people as possible to Judaism; we actually discourage them from doing so.

There are at least two consequences to this approach. The first is that contrary to the promise that we will become as numerous as the stars in the sky, we remain negligible in numbers, compared to other nations. The second consequence is that we became hated because we reject people who want to join us, which means that we are [seen as] a racist people.

It actually may be too late to change our attitude because there is an assimilation rate of about 90 per cent in the US and Latin America and I suspect that most of them don’t go through any conversion process. Similarly, in most other Jewish communities around the world, excluding Israel, the assimilation rate is about 50 per cent, which means that in less than 100 years there will be practically no more Jews left outside of Israel.

I suggest that all conversion processes should become “nominal” and automatic, with no conditions, just a suggestion to spend a year in Israel. David Ben-Gurion predicted that with the establishment of the State of Israel, the Jewish communities in the Diaspora will disappear.

Our religion has been and continues to be, the major factor behind anti-Semitism which in turn has brought upon our people the most terrible tragedies, including the Holocaust. It is too easy to blame everybody else while portraying ourselves as angels!

Yossi Bogacz, Johannesburg

questioned at the time of the Partition Plan in 1947, the concept of “the Palestinian” had not yet been created, implying therefore that the idea of a “Palestinian state” had not yet been invented.

The first time the concept of “the Palestinian” entered public debate was after the Six Day War in 1967, a full 20 years after Resolution 181. This is why the term “Palestinian” never found its way into the resolution; the resolution itself never recognised their existence! This basic fact of history therefore beggars a burning question: How could the establishment of the State of Israel have ever “usurped land” from a “people” who did not exist?

Yes, I’m the first to acknowledge that the acronym JVJP - Jewish Voices for a Just Peace - really does suggest a noble cause. But perhaps they should consider re-naming themselves, in order to reflect more accurately who they really are: Jewish Voices for a “Just” Propaganda!

Neville Kahn
Sandringham, Johannesburg



The partners and staff of Grant Thornton would like to wish all their Jewish clients a Happy Chanukah.

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Erik Kinstler looks back on a life well lived

SUZANNE AND MICHAEL BELLING

In the company of his whole family and of Israel's Ambassador to South Africa Arthur Lenk, Erik Kinstler walked to the podium unaided to deliver a speech in Hebrew while celebrating his 100th birthday at the HOD Centre in Johannesburg.

Kinstler was born in Krakow, Poland, on November 27, 1915, while his father was fighting in the Austro-Hungarian army during the First World War.

He started his studies in a German-speaking school, later moving to where he was taught in Polish.

From his youth he was active in the Akiva Zionist youth movement, where he rose to become a member of the executive and a madrich.

He qualified as an accountant, but never lost his

dedication to the Zionist movement and influenced many young people in Poland to pursue the dream of aliyah, one which he shared.

But the Second World War intervened. Erik managed to escape from Krakow, taking only his siddur, tefillin and a few personal possessions. He had many narrow escapes over the next two years, but still managed to help members of the youth movement to get away to Palestine, sometimes arranging forged documents to assist in their making the trip.

He managed to cross the Russian border, making his way to Moscow and then south to Odessa. With his own forged documents, he reached Turkey, from where he travelled to Palestine, only to be arrested and interned in a British detention camp.

He faced the possibility of being deported to Mauritius. Fortunately he remained in Palestine and was released a few months later.

He then joined a kibbutz established by the Akiva movement. Hearing of the atrocities being committed by the Germans and their followers, he joined the British army in 1942, serving in the Royal Engineering Corps in Egypt and later in Italy.

When the war ended, he learned that almost his entire family had died in the Holocaust, but one of his brothers, Chaim, had survived. Erik received special permission to travel to Poland to find his brother.

He travelled via Milan, where he met Sarah at a centre for Holocaust survivors. Three days later, he proposed to her.

He found his brother and returned via Milan to fetch Sarah and they all travelled to Naples, where Erik and Sarah were married in a British army ceremony, with four rifles supporting the chuppah. They were married for over 67 years, until she passed away in 2012.

After the wedding they all travelled to Palestine, Erik returning to the kibbutz with Sarah and Chaim moving to Tel Aviv.

The kibbutz later changed to a moshav called Bet Yehoshua, with Erik and Sarah as founder members.

Erik served in the Haganah and thereafter in the Israel Defence Forces, fighting in several of Israel's wars.

He joined the regional municipality in which the moshav was situated and served as treasurer and secretary for more than 50 years. He headed several non-profit organisations, such as the body caring for Israeli soldiers, the cancer society and Lev-Lalev (Heart-to-Heart). He worked until he was 92 and is an avid reader.

He now lives in Johannesburg, where his daughter Naomi Hadar is the executive director of the IUA-UCF. His son Rafi lives in Israel. He has six grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.



Erik Kinstler celebrating his 100th birthday, holding his youngest great-granddaughter Lior Barash on his lap, with his daughter, Naomi Hadar, and son, Rafi, behind him.

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Russia - from harsh persecution to freedom of religion



Photo: Moira Schneider

Rabbi Mendel Popack, head of Chabad Centre; Chief Rabbi of Russia Berel Lazar; and Rabbi Asher Deren.

MOIRA SCHNEIDER CAPE TOWN

The problem in Russia today is a lack of manpower to assist Jews who want to reclaim their heritage, said Rabbi Berel Lazar, chief rabbi of Russia, who shared his experiences of leading the Jewish community in Russia through the transition from Communism, at a Siyum HaRambam - marking the completion and beginning of the global cycle of daily study - and Yud-Tes Kislev celebration in Cape Town, during a short visit to South Africa.

Yud-Tes Kislev is remembered as the date the founder of Chabad Chassidim Rabbi Schneur Zalman was released from a czarist Russian prison and it is regarded as the birthday of the movement. It was for this reason that it was appropriate that the chief rabbi of Russia was present, Rabbi Mendel Popack, head of Chabad Centre, told the gathering.

Rabbi Popack also noted that it was the Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who had instituted the learning of the Rambam, which he believed was a prelude to the coming of Moshiach.

Rabbi Lazar spoke of an “amazing” turnaround in the community’s fortunes since the severe restrictions on the practice of religion began to be lifted.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe had always believed that things would improve for the Jews in the Soviet Union and some 30 years ago had sent a message to the locals to build a mikveh “in the shortest time possible”, Rabbi Lazar related. It was duly built - underground - but the KGB came a few days later and closed it.

When the people asked the Rebbe what they should do, he advised a policy of “quiet diplomacy”. So former President Mikhail Gorbachev was approached while attending an international meeting and asked how the mikveh could be closed when there was supposed to be freedom of religion in Russia.

Gorbachev later admitted that he had no idea what a mikveh was, but the upshot was that the KGB came back to the synagogue and gave permission to rebuild the mikveh. They were told, however: “We’ve built it once, you closed it, you rebuild it.”

“Until today, it is the only mikveh the KGB has built!” Rabbi Lazar said, to the audience’s amusement.

On the “miracles” that had taken place since, the chief rabbi said: “You have to see it to believe it. The government is giving back synagogues, it is opening Jewish schools. There is a state-of-the-art Jewish museum in Moscow with 2 000 visitors a day - it is (among) the top 10 museums in the world.

“How come such a strong regime against religion turned around completely and they’re really interested in Jewish children getting a Jewish education?” Rabbi Lazar asked. “There are different ways of getting freedom,” he ventured.

“Chassidus teaches us that if you want to change the world, do it in a peaceful way. It is amazing how they have embraced the Jewish community, embraced religion and how Jews feel comfortable in Russia. It is the only country where anti-Semitism is declining year by year.

“You can walk in the street dressed like a rabbi and people come up to you and say, ‘We support you, we support Israel.’”

No fewer than 6 500 britot milah had been performed, “sometimes on 60-, 40-, 30-year-olds” who had been unable to undergo them before. “People are coming back and they want to embrace Yiddishkeit,” he said, mentioning the “hundreds” of community centres, schools, mikvehs and synagogues that are being established.

Most rabbis serving the community today were locally born, having gone to Jewish schools, yeshivot and married local girls.

Read the South African Jewish Report online
www.sajr.co.za

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Latkes to die for, this Chanukah

SUZANNE BELLING

Alan Bender, master chef at Feigel’s for the past five years, and a fellow of the SA Chef Association, has brought a novel, modern way of cooking into the deli.

Brother and sister team Jos Zaslansky and Patsy Dakes entered Feigel’s, their mother’s family business in Rockey Street, Yeoville, 48 years ago. Jos and Patsy have moved to keep up with the changing demographics of the Jewish community and are now in Lyndhurst, with a satellite branch in Glenhazel.

“But I never cook at home,” says Alan. “My wife Gila does, because she cooks with love. I cook with passion.”

Alan has added spice and variety to his basic latke recipe “one of the few things my wife lets me make in her kitchen”.



Master Chef Alan Bender (centre) with Feigel's team Patsy Dakes and Jos Zaslansky.

Basic recipe:

6 large potatoes peeled and left in water
1 large onion peeled
4 eggs
1 tablespoon salt
½ cup sugar (more or less)
½ to 1 cup flour
1 heaped teaspoon baking powder
Oil for frying

Method

1: Fill a large pan one third of the way with oil, and heat to a medium temperature.

2: Grate the potatoes and onion into a bowl and add everything else. Fry a tablespoon of mixture to test and taste to see if there is enough sugar, salt and flour, then adjust accordingly. If the latke disintegrates, add a little more flour and if it’s an oily heavy lump, add a little more baking powder and raise the heat of the oil.

3: Be careful of the hot oil. Wear long sleeves, always place the latke mixture in carefully and turn the latkes over away from you when one side is golden. Have a tray lined with absorbent paper to suck up the surface oil ready to receive the cooked latkes.

Cooking tips

- When turning the latkes, use a slotted spoon; it reduces the splash and helps the oil drain.
- The potatoes will start to weep water the moment they are mixed. Don’t add more flour; just use your fingers or a slotted spoon to separate the potato mix from the liquid, discarding the liquid left over

Some variants on the latke

The classic American sour cream or apple sauce is great but we are South Africans, so try this on for size:

- 1: Slip some fried fish fingers into the latke mix just before frying and as it comes out of the oil, place a slice of cheese on top so it melts slightly.

2: Place a piece of cooked wors in the middle and top with chakalaka.

3: Mix some fine biltong powder with mayo and use that as a dip.

4: Smoked salmon and cream cheese make a classic topping.

5: Pulled (shredded) beef in a sticky sauce is delicious.

6: Just before you put the latke in the oil, sprinkle over some corn flakes for extra crunch.
- If you don’t feel like potatoes, replace with grated butternut, sweet potato, tinned corn (not sweet corn) or just about any vegetable as the flour and egg will turn it into a great latke.

Deisi brings DIY IsRaction to SA for Chanukah

ANT KATZ

SA Israeli lobbyists are joining hands with UK Jewry’s’ highly successful IsrAction Campaign, aimed at getting all supporters of the holy land to buy any Israeli or kosher product and drop them off or donate them directly to the less fortunate.

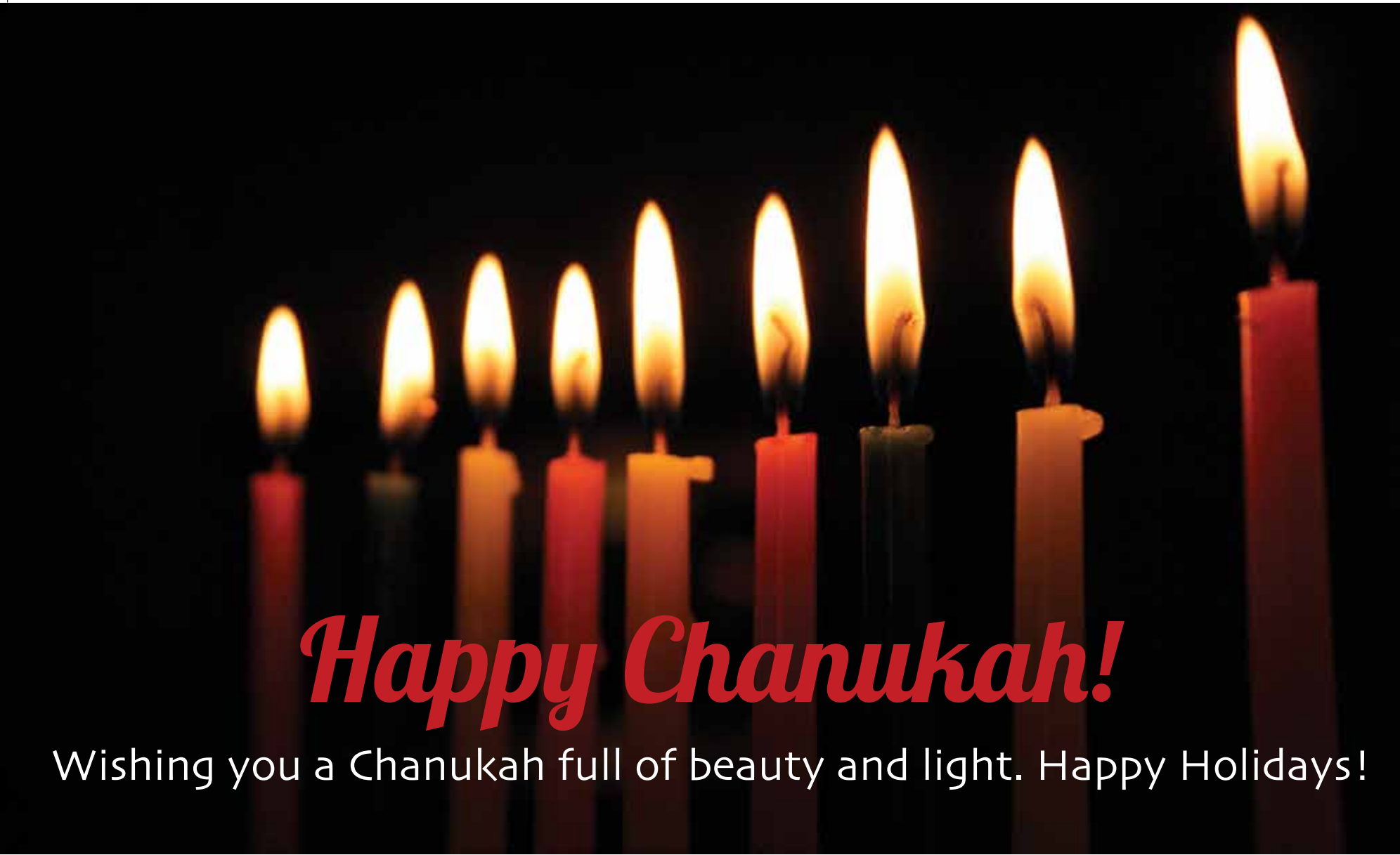
“Take light and life into the community this Chanuka with Defend Embrace Invest (in) Support Israel (DEISI) International” – is the message that the increasingly international SA Christian Zionist group, headed by Olga Meshoe, is putting out to the Jewish community this Chanuka.

DEISI International says that it “is proud to sponsor IsrAction Day, the world’s first do-it-yourself, Support-Israel, feed-the-hungry, beat-the-boycotts initiative that spreads the light of the Jewish festival of Chanukah at this festive time of year,” the organisation’s vice-chairman Mark Hyman told Jewish Report this week.

He says it is a simple, powerful and effective way to show you care about Israel: by building bridges, bolstering Israel’s economy and uniting Christian, Jewish and other communities everywhere in the principle of tikkun olam — repairing the world by helping those less fortunate than ourselves.

IsrAction Day was launched last year by Jewish and Christian activists in the United Kingdom which proved to be a great success. This year, South Africa is helping make IsrAction Day a global phenomenon.

DEISI are also appealing to participants to take photos and post them on the DEISI IsrAction Day Facebook page.



Good reads in a nutshell

OWN CORRESPONDENT



Milton Shain, A Perfect Storm - Anti-Semitism in South Africa 1930 - 1948, Jonathan Ball Publishers, R275
Prof Milton Shain, a leading scholar of Jewish history in South Africa, has written a study that is both erudite and readable of the years before the National Party (NP) came into power in 1948 and the rise of anti-Semitism in the 1930s.

He focuses not only on the NP which saw several of its anti-Semitic leaders of the time rising to high office after 1948, but also on Afrikaner mass movements, such as the Ossewa Brandwag and the Grey Shirts, all of whom were sympathetic to Nazi Germany. This is an important contribution to the study of the anti-Semitism so prevalent in this period.



Graff, Rizzoli New York, 2015, R1 350
This lavish coffee-table publication features the story of the House of Graff Diamonds, founded in London in 1960 by Laurence Graff, OBE, a self-taught gemmologist. After more than six decades, and with stores worldwide, the House of Graff is at the pinnacle of luxury

jewellery.
His work includes a 1970 advertisement of a model with a million dollars worth of gems woven throughout her elaborate hairdo, which was revisited in a 2013 update featuring 500 million dollars of gems to commemorate his 60 years in business. These are among the 193 photos in the book.
All Graff's proceeds from the sale of the book will be donated to its charitable foundation, FACET, which supports the education, health and wellbeing of the people of sub-Saharan Africa.



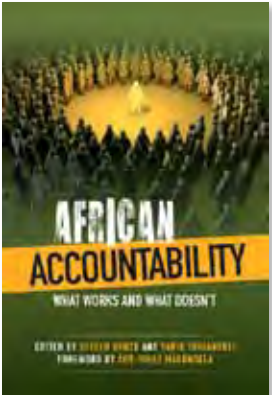
Solly Kaplinski, A World of Pains, A Redemptive Parable, Amazon, \$15
Solly Kaplinski, a former headmaster of Cape Town's Herzlia Middle School, has lived in Israel for several years.
A World of Pains, his third book, focuses on long repressed memories which suddenly surface for a highly successful lawyer who has to confront brutal crimes he committed in the Ponar forests during the Shoah. The book deals with personal accountability and the banality of evil.
Stephen D Smith, executive director of the University of

California Shoah Foundation in Los Angeles (who is associated with Steven Spielberg), has written a foreword.

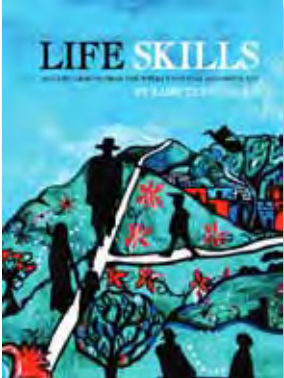


Tova Herzl, Madame Ambassador: Behind the Scenes with a Candid Israeli Diplomat, published in South Africa by Juta
Tova Herzl was Israeli ambassador to South Africa at the turn of the century, returning to Israel in 2003. Born in Israel but educated in this country - her Holocaust survivor parents from Hungary were Hebrew teachers here for several years - her diplomatic

postings included Riga in Latvia, Washington DC and Pretoria.
She has written a frank account of her life and experiences as a diplomat, which covered several scandals in Israel and the notorious 2001 anti-racism conference in Durban.
Herzl covers both the glamour of a diplomatic career and several distinctly unglamorous aspects of diplomacy.



African Accountability: What Works and What Doesn't, Steven Gruzd and Yarik Turianskyi eds, SA Institute of International Affairs and SDC, R200
African Accountability: What Works and What Doesn't is a survey of political accountability in Africa today. It focuses on political and social aspects to assess the current state of governance and accountability in Africa. The editors have tried to adopt a balanced, Afro-realistic view, giving credit where it is due, while also pointing out deficient areas that need improvement.
Public Protector Thuli Madonsela wrote the book's foreword.
The book was published by SAIIA in partnership with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).



Rabbi Tzedek (Siggy) Suchard, Life Skills and Lessons from the Weekly Portion and Festivals, available from Kollel and Chabad bookshops, R285
This guide to living life to the full is based on Rabbi Suchard's many years as a rabbi both in a congregation and as a dayan on the Beth Din.
The book contains a wealth of practical advice and examples from a Torah perspective, based on lessons from the weekly parsha and the Jewish festivals.
It offers advice on dealing with difficult situations and provides life skills for handling anger, health, parenting and faith issues.

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The triumph of Chanukah

JEFF JACOBY

Because Chanukah usually occurs in December, it is sometimes thought of as the “Jewish Xmas”. It isn’t, of course. And yet it is fair to say that the reason for Chanukah’s popularity - especially in America, where it is the most widely observed Jewish holiday after Passover and Yom Kippur - is precisely its proximity to Xmas.

Chanukah used to be regarded as a minor half-holiday, cheerful but low-key. It has become something bigger and brighter in response to Xmas, which transforms each December into a brilliant winter festival of parties, decorations, and music.

Attracted by the joy of the season, not wanting their children to feel left out of all the merriment and gift-giving, American Jews in the 20th century began to make much more of Chanukah than their grandparents ever had.

Today Chanukah is well-established as part of the annual “holiday season”, complete with parties, decorations, and music of its own. Its enhanced status is a tribute both to the assimilating tug of America’s majority culture and to the remarkable openness of that culture to Jewish customs and belief.

Ironically, Chanukah was established to commemorate the very opposite of cultural assimilation. It dates back nearly 22 centuries, to the successful Jewish revolt against Antiochus IV, one of the line of Syrian-Greek monarchs who ruled the northern branch of Alexander the Great’s collapsed empire.

Alexander had been respectful of the Jews’ monotheistic religion, but Antiochus was determined to impose Hellenism with its pagan gods and its cult of the body, throughout his domains. When he met resistance in Judea, he made Judaism illegal.

Sabbath observance, circumcision, and the study of Torah were banned on pain of death. A statue of Zeus was installed in the Temple in Jerusalem, and pigs were sacrificed before it.

Some Jews embraced the new order and willingly abandoned the G-d and faith of their ancestors. Those who wouldn’t were cruelly punished. Ancient writings tell the story of Hannah and her seven sons, who were captured by Antiochus’s troops and commanded to bow to an idol. One by one, each boy refused - and was tortured to death before his mother’s eyes.

The fight to reclaim Jewish religious autonomy began in 167 BCE. In the town of Modi’in, an elderly priest named Mattathias



refused a Syrian order to sacrifice to an idol. When an apostate Jew stepped forward to comply, Mattathias killed the man and tore down the altar. Then he and his five sons took to the hills and launched a guerrilla war against the armies of the empire.

When Mattathias died, his third son, Judah Maccabee, took command. He and his band of fighters were impossibly outnumbered, yet they won one miraculous victory after another. In 164 BC, they recaptured the Temple, which they cleansed and purified and rededicated to G-d.

On the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev, the menorah - the candelabra symbolising the Divine presence - was rekindled. For eight days, throngs of Jews celebrated the Temple’s restoration.

“All the people prostrated themselves,” records the book of Maccabees, “worshipping and praising Heaven that their cause had prospered.”

In truth, though, their cause hadn’t prospered - not yet. The fighting went on for years. It was not until 142 BCE that the Jews regained control of their land. Geopolitically, that was the moment of real triumph.

The Maccabees’ war against the Hellenists was ultimately a war against a worldview that elevated the physical above all, that venerated beauty, not holiness; the body, not the soul.

But Chanukah isn’t about political power. It isn’t about military victory. It isn’t even about freedom of worship, notwithstanding the fact that the revolt of the Maccabees marks the first time in history that a people rose up to fight religious persecution.

What Chanukah commemorates at heart is the Jewish yearning for G-d, for the concentrated holiness of the Temple and its service. The defeat of the Syrian-Greeks was a wonder, but the spiritual climax of the Maccabees’ rebellion occurred when the menorah was rekindled and G-d’s presence among his people could be felt once again.

Chanukah is the only Jewish holiday not found in the Tanach and the only one rooted in a military campaign. And yet its focus is almost entirely spiritual, not physical.

For example, there is no feast associated with Chanukah, the way there is with Passover and Purim, the two other Jewish festivals of deliverance. Its religious observance is concentrated on flame, nothing more. And the menorah’s lights may only be gazed at; it is forbidden to use them for any physical purpose - not even to read by.

The lack of a physical side to Chanukah is unusual but appropriate. For the Maccabees’ war against the Hellenists was ultimately a war against a worldview that elevated the physical above all, that venerated beauty, not holiness; the body, not the soul. The Jews fought to preserve a different view of the world - one with G-d, not man, at its centre.

Because they triumphed, the Jewish religion survived. More than 2 000 years later, the Hellenists and their pagan gods are buried in the dust of history. But the wisdom and insights of Judaism continue to enlighten the world.

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What's On
Today, Friday (December 4)

• Chabad offers a "Beginners Shabbos" at Chabad CBD. Information: rak@chabad.org.za (011) 440-6600, 079-434-1293.

• UZLC hosts David Batzofin, on "No Turkey for Chanukah". Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 - 14:00. Contact: Gloria (011) 485-4851 or 072-127-9421.

Sunday (December 6)

• RCHCC rescreens the documentary "The Thomashefskys" by Michael Tilson Thomas, "Memories of Life in the Yiddish Theatre". Venue: Clive M Beck Auditorium. Time: 19:30. Donation: R70 (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

• Chabad presents Light up the World, Car Menorah Parade, nightly Grand Menorah Lighting at 18:15 and more at Sandton City. Rivonia entrance. Time: 18:00 - 20:00. Information: rak@chabad.org.za, (011) 440-6600, 079-434-1293.

• Big Band Music Appreciation Society meets in the St John's College Auditorium. The programme is compiled by Harry Fidler. A video, "The Best of the Durban Jazz and Swing Society" will be shown. Also "All Things Glenn Miller". After interval a further video, "Night With the Stars" - John Wilson and his Orchestra. Time: 14:15 sharp. Enquiries: Marilyn 072-243-7436 or Jack 082-450-7622.

• Second Innings hosts Tony Bentel, Peet Wiese, Rene Blaauw and Stella Beder at its year-end function. Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres. Time: 09:30 (when tea will be served). Performance starts at 10:30. Cost: Members R60, visitors R80. Bookings: Ivy Grushkin or Betty Kowal (011) 532-9701.

Monday, (December 7)

• Chabad's Jewish Seniors Club takes place Monday-Friday, 09:45 - 12:00. It includes occupational therapy, interesting lectures, hot lunch, transport and more. Venue: Chabad House, Savoy. Information: Rabbi Ari Kievman (011) 440-6600. iPad training at 12:30.

• Chabad offers a "Businessmen's Minyan" in Sandton CBD. Shacharis Mon & Tues 06:30 with breakfast. Daily Mincha/Ma'ariv 17:45 with refreshments. Venue: Sandton (opp Gautrain) Information: 079-434-1293 or (011) 440-6600.

Wednesday (December 9)

• Chabad hosts a "Seniors Chanukah Party" with entertainment, lunch, fun games and more. Time: 10:30. Venue: Chabad House, Savoy. RSVP essential (011) 440-6600 or rak@chabad.org.za

Thursday (December 10)

• Cape Town Holocaust Centre, in partnership with the Kaplan Centre, UCT, presents Theatre and the Holocaust: Recently Rediscovered Scripts from the Theresienstadt Ghetto", an "Illustrated Lecture by Lisa Peschel, University of York, UK". Time: 18:00. Entrance is free, donations welcome. Light refreshments will be served. RSVP: (021) 462-5553 or admin@holocaust.org.za

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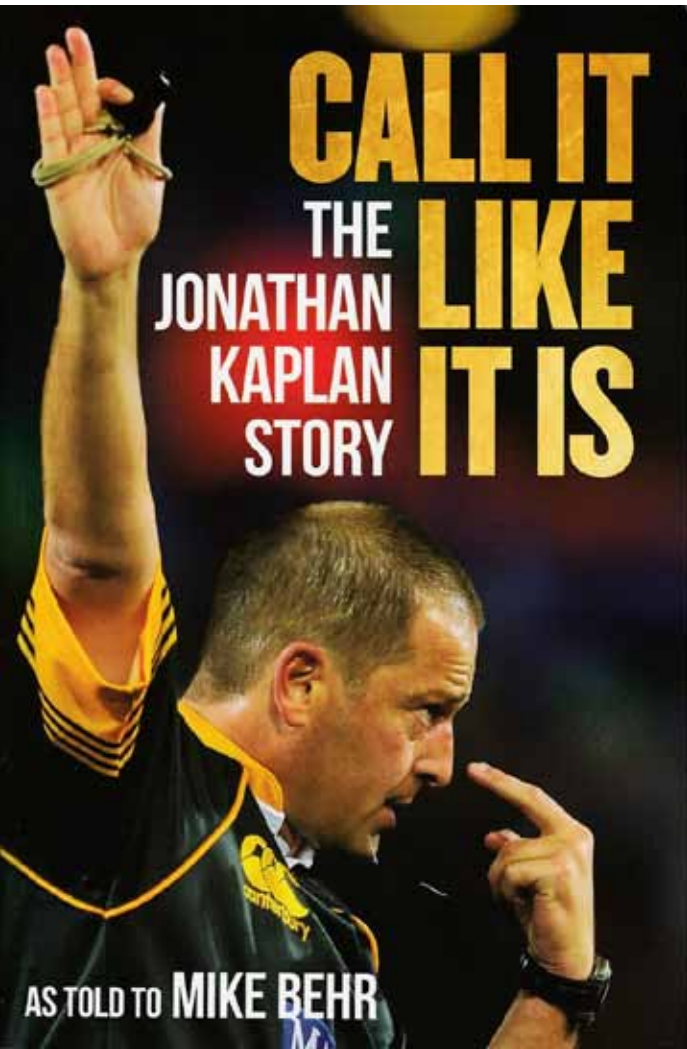
Kaplan to be inducted into Jewish Hall of Fame

JACK MILNER

South African rugby referee icon, Jonathan Kaplan, has been elected to the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame for 2016.

Kaplan, who turned 49 last month, is now the 11th South African to be awarded the honour. He joins Ali Bacher (cricket), Ian Froman (tennis), Okey Geffen rugby), Harry Getz (swimming administrator), Ilana Kloss (tennis), Syd Nomis (rugby), Wilf Rosenberg (rugby), Jody Scheckter (formula 1 motor racing), Joel Stransky (rugby) and Shaun Tomson (surfing) in that elite group.

Kaplan announced his retirement on October 26, 2013 and took charge of the 2013 Currie Cup Final between Western Province and the Natal Sharks as his final domestic league match as referee.



The cover of Jonathan Kaplan’s book, Call It Like It Is. Kaplan will be inducted into the Jewish Sports Hall Of Fame at the 2016 Maccabi Games in Israel.

His final test match as a referee was on November 16, 2013, when he took charge of the Namibia v Kenya match in the final fixture of the 2013 Namibian Tri-Nations in Windhoek.

“I didn’t become a referee to earn accolades,” said Kaplan on Tuesday. “I did it because I loved it. Having said that, it is wonderful to be recognised in this way. It is a great honour.”

It is particularly difficult to get a South African into the International Jewish Hall of Fame as the majority of the committee are made up of Americans and sports such as rugby and cricket are not that relevant to them.

Those honoured include Nicholas Massu, whose 2004 Olympics singles and doubles tennis championships marked Chile’s first-ever Olympic gold medals, International volleyball coaching icon Arie Selinger, 1952 Hungarian Olympic swimming gold

medallist Judit Temes and Azerbaijan’s 1952 Olympic gold medal gymnast Galina Urbanovich. They are joined by American sportscaster Al Michaels, All-Star baseball catcher Mike Lieberthal, National Hockey League commissioner QaIy Bettman and 1924 World Bantamweight boxing champion Abe Goldstein.

The Hall of Fame museum is situated in Netanya, Israel, at the Wingate Institute. “Our formal quadrennial Hall of Fame inductions will take place in July 2017 at the start of the World Maccabi Games, when Jewish sportsmen and leaders from numerous countries are in Israel,” said Joe Siegman, chairman of the selection committee.

Kaplan is the most experienced Test referee of all time. He became the first referee to reach the milestone of 50 Test matches when he refereed the Scotland v Ireland game during the 2009 Six Nations Championship, and has since increased his total to 68 Tests.

He also holds the record for refereeing the most Tests involving a single team. The New Zealand v Wales game in June 2010 was his 17th involving the host nation, surpassing the record of 16 matches previously held jointly by Welshman Derek Bevan (also refereeing New Zealand) and New Zealander Paul Honiss (refereeing Australia).

Other refereeing records held by Kaplan are: most Bledisloe Cup matches (7), most Tri-Nations matches (7), most Six Nations matches (16). He is the only referee to have participated in four British and Irish Lions tours and to have had charge of matches in all three tour countries (Free State v B&I Lions, South Africa 1997; 2nd Test, Australia 2001; 3rd Test, New Zealand 2005; Natal Sharks v B&I Lions, South Africa 2009).

Kaplan also holds South African refereeing records for most Rugby World Cup appearances (four - 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011) and most World Cup games (13), the most Super 14 games (75, including three finals and four semifinals), and most Currie Cup matches (133, including five finals and four semifinals).

He is the only person to have won the award as South African Referee of the Year for four years in succession (200 – 07).

Kaplan began refereeing in 1984, while still in high school. He made his first-class debut in 1991 and was appointed to South Africa’s national panel of referees in 1993. On May 4, 1996 he made his international debut in a match between Namibia and Zimbabwe in Harare.

At the moment he is not directly involved in day-to-day rugby. “After I retired I spent some time writing my book which was released last year. Other than that I have been lecturing and doing motivational speeches.”

His book, Call It Like It Is, The Jonathan Kaplan Story, has done very well in this country but at this stage he has no thoughts of getting it released outside of South Africa.

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