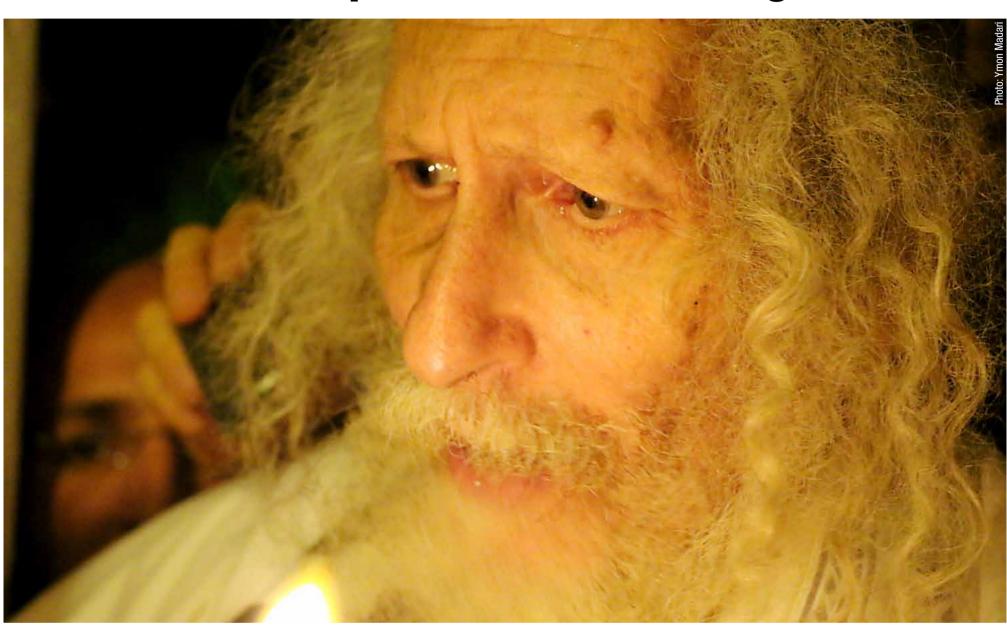


Jewish Report

- February 5 2016 / 26 Shvat 5776
- Volume 20 Number 4

www.sajr.co.za

Berland's escapades become a saga of note



By far the "hottest" Jewish topic this week is the elusive Shuvu Banim Breslov Rabbi Eliezer Berland who is evading the "full might" of the South African police - three times so far and still counting. The rabbi, who has cult status among his followers, has lent credence to the expression "wandering Jew", since he has, for four years, avoided standing trial in Israel on charges of sexual harassment and even rape. His wanderings have taken him to Morocco, Zimbabwe, South Africa (now twice), and Holland. There's an Interpol warrant out for his arrest, but that doesn't seem to deter him or his followers. (There's even the rumour that he slipped back into Israel not so long ago - and is back in South Africa.) To add spice to his escapades, his followers just over a week ago issued a din rodef on Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein - since withdrawn - as they had fingered him for tipping off the Hawks about Rabbi Berland's Midrand whereabouts. They seek him here, they seek him there... and the saga continues. See pages 3, 4, 6 and 15.

Women 'rabbis' in Orthodoxy remain a sensitive issue

Recently-ordained Rabbi Lila Kagedan has stirred up international controversy after adopting the title of rabbi. Kagedan is the first Yeshivat Maharat graduate to go by this



The Struggle was well worth it, says Denis Goldberg

Four South Africans, Denis
Goldberg, Ahmed Kathrada,
George Bizos and Joel, Lord
Joffe, were recently awarded the
Freedom of the City of London at a
ceremony in Guildhall's prestigious
Livery Hall, conducted by Dr Peter
Kane, Chamberlain of Londor

There's much more to Israel than Middle East conflict

For Diaspora Jewry, identifying with Israel has become a matter of showing solidarity in times of trouble, but the flipside is Israel's many achievements and the sheer richness and excitement of living in a thriving, multicultural Jewish state, says Avi Mayer, renowned social media spokesman.

Kotel prayer decision and shifting Israel-Diaspora paradigm

The Israeli government's passage of legislation that authorises egalitarian prayer in a section adjacent to the southern part of the Kotel, has been called groundbreaking, but there are also detractors who will not accept the Cabinet decision.

US polls: Bloomberg could be latest twist for Jews

The topsy-turvey US election journey may just be starting, as former New York mayor, Michael Bloomberg is considering throwing his hat in the ring as an independent candidate. Media mogul Bloomberg is prepared to put in \$1 billion of his own money.

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World News in Brief

Leaked document shows US, UK have spied on Israeli drones

LONDON - US and British intelligence services hacked Israeli drones and monitored their activity as part of a classified programme code-named "Anarchist", the online publication The Intercept reported, citing documents leaked by whistleblower Edward Snowden.

The UK's Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ) and America's National Security Agency (NSA) spied on the drones from Cyprus to collect information about Israeli military operations in Gaza and potential strikes on Iran.

They also monitored Israeli exports of drone technology world-

GCHQ and NSA collected images from the drones in 2009 and 2010 through "Anarchist", a programme operated from a high Royal Air

Force military post located near Mount Olympus in the Troodos Mountains of Cyprus.

"This access is indispensable for maintaining an understanding of Israeli military training and operations and thus an insight to possible future developments in the region," said a GCHQ report leaked by Snowden.

"We are not surprised, we know that the Americans are spying on the whole world, including their

That is disappointing, because for decades we have not spied, collected intelligence or attempted to crack the encryption of the United States," Israeli National Infrastructure, Energy and Water Minister Yuval Steinitz told Army Radio. (JNS.org)

My own (inner) Beth Din



Parshat Mishpatim Rabbi Asher Deren The Shul of Blouberg - West Coast

"And these are the judgments you should place before them" is how we open up this week's entry into Torah's laws of marriage, fair labour practices, civil liabilities, honourable jurisprudence, welfare, as well as laws of kosher, Shabbat and festivals. Quite a list of laws, 53 in fact, packed in to the first parsha after

"Place before them" is as Rashi explains, that all matters of civil dispute between two Jews should be brought before the Beth Din, the Jewish court of law, to be adjudicated according to the laws of Torah.

South Africa is blessed to have a vibrant Beth Din where many a business dispute has been resolved to the satisfaction and trust of both

Shortly after I assumed a rabbinic post here in Cape Town I had to be in Johannesburg for a family function, during the infamous "Beth Din on Trial" case where an individual took the Beth Din to the High Court over a judgment not in his favour.

I recall watching in amazement from the visitors' gallery how the Rosh Beth Din Rabbi Moshe Kurtstag sat, with unflinching dignity and pride, as a non-Jewish judge heard, and ultimately judged favourably, the message of this week's



parsha. But this message carries weight for the rest of us as well, even those who aren't in court - or even the Beth Din.

The Baal HaTanya explains that the words "(you should place) before them" - means "to their innermost selves". Hashem is telling Moshe that the message of Torah has to reach our deepest and innermost core; that our inner court also needs to be a "Jewish" court.

In an age of Facebook vigilantism where lives are shamed and destroyed on the flip of a coin, let's remember that judging others is a skewed reflection of our obsession with the external differences between us and the ones we are judging.

But in truth we all contain an inseparable spark of G-dliness. Inseparable from G-d, and our fellow man created in His image. From that perspective, the difference between ourselves and others is secondary to

that first nature and truth where we all are one perfect whole.

5 – 12 February 2016

Faith in G-d should automatically translate into faith in others.

It's no coincidence that all of the "normal" laws of how to do business, treat your family, eat a breakfast, and be a responsible "mensch" aren't just about feeling good.

We have to make sure that when we come to court, the ever functioning inner courtroom of the mind, we consciously function, like a Beth Din, by the light and wisdom of our Torah

KASHRUT ALERT

The kashrut division of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues has announced that Bar-One sandwich ice cream is now kosher certified. "A big thank you to Nestlé for the help in making this possible," the UOS said.

The kashrut division of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues advises that the fresh fish counter at Woolworths in Sea Point in Cape Town, is no longer under Beth Din supervision.

Shabbat Times

Parshat Mishpatim Friday 5 / 26 Shvat Saturday 6 / 27 Shvat

Ct ---t - E -- I -

Starts	Enas	
18:15	19:30	Johannesburg
18:24	20:24	Cape Town
18:15	19:25	Durban
18:15	19:43	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:55	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:43	East London

Opinion and Analysis

Women 'rabbis' in Orthodoxy remains a sensitive issue

SHIRA DRUION

Rabbi Recently-ordained Lila Kagedan (pictured) has stirred up international controversy after adopting the title of rabbi. Kagedan, the first Yeshivat Maharat graduate to go by the title "rabbi", has been hired by Mount Freedom Jewish Centre in Randolph, New Jersey.

The synagogue announced that Kagedan will be joining the "spiritual leadership team". The news release did not use the word "rabbi", but instead referred to Kagedan as a "Yeshivat Maharat graduate"...

"Her responsibilities will be 'to teach Torah, encourage greater love and celebration of mitzvot, provide learning opportunities for adults and children, connect with young families in and around the community and participate in lifecycle and pastoral needs alongside Rabbi Menashe East."

Kagedan, a native of Canada, was ordained in June by the New Yorkbased seminary training under the leadership of Rabbi Avi Weiss. Most female graduates there have eschewed the title rabbi, but have instead opted for the title of "maharat" or "rabba".

Although issues like these are of great relevance in the international arena, the South African Jewish community continues to be more conservative in its appointment of women scholars as rabbis and is yet to contest these topical issues with any urgency.

Ann Harris, a doyenne in the South African community, and widow of former Chief Rabbi Harris zt"l, comments: "There are many women who hold significant leadership roles in the South African Jewish community and who have played pivotal roles for many years already. Mary Kluk, Marlene Bethlehem and Wendy Kahn are women who are very well-respected and have made enormous contributions to our community as they unabashedly address tough issues with great competency and ability."

Harris' passion and ability to interpret Judaism with clarity and a balanced approach, shed much light on the controversial issue: "Regarding women taking rabbinical positions, I believe that the issue is layered and that women who assume scholarly roles in the community can be of tremendous benefit by making a remarkable contribution in the knowledge they can share.

"But, the community needs to be ready to make such an appointment. In Orthodox circles, women who have obtained smicha can enrich a community as educators without crossing into more controversial waters where the more pastoral duties like officiating at ceremonies and pulpit rabbanut are part of the equation.

"So, the pastoral duties continue to remain in the men's domain, but women should be recognised for their knowledge and be provided with a platform to share it with their communities."

There is no doubt a growing need to hear from women scholars grow in their desire for advanced knowledge and intellectual stimulation.

Adina Roth, a clinical psychologist who is well known for her empowering batmitzvah programme in the UK, commented: "I think it's widely known that the South African Jewish community is more cautious than Orthodoxy in Amer-

"In America, women's and men's voices in the Orthodox community have clamoured for change and rabbis have listened to their



communities. In South Africa, the as women within the community voices of those who would like a more egalitarian approach to Judaism seem to be in the minority and most people seem content with the status quo.

"We are a rich community in our traditional life and social support systems. But we could do better at embracing diverse voices in our midst. Those voices tend to be marginalised and so those people often leave the community and become non-practising and nonaffiliated. I think our community would be greatly enriched by opening up and establishing sincere dialogue with the minority voices.

"I think some South African Jews hear 'women rabbis' and they think these are women who have a political agenda. Having met many of these women, I can say I marvel at their sincerity, commitment, love of Judaism, Torah and the Jewish people. I don't think anyone would give five or more years of their life to the fulltime study of Talmud and Halacha in order simply to make a statement."

Roth drives the point home by saying that if indeed one has undergone a rigorous process of learning, then it should be recognised and the candidate should be awarded a deserving title.

"If someone studied anatomy, pathology, physiology and clinical medicine and then asked to be called doctor, would they be making a statement? Our Sages teach that we should study in order to teach in order to do.

"The flowering of Jewish women's learning since the early 20th century is naturally going to lead to women with more Torah knowledge who have more to contribute to the wider Jewish community and so seek ordination or its equivalent."

Jewish Report



The hunt for Berland leads to death threats and allegations

ANT KATZ

Rabbi-on-the-run Eliezer Berland dodged an arrest attempt by Interpol and the South African Hawks for the third time last month, despite security forces arriving with a well-armed tactical team.

Berland has been on the run for four years. He skipped Israel after allegations were made by female followers that he had sexually harassed or raped them.

The fugitive rabbi is head of the enormously wealthy Shuvu Banim Breslov sect based at a yeshiva a stone's throw from the Kotel

After the raid at a hotel in Samrand, north of Johannesburg, where the 78-year-old rabbi has been staying on and off with a number of his disciples, a death threat against SA Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein was made on Berland's social media pages.

The "din rodef" – against the chief rabbi - a concept in Jewish law which allows for the killing of an individual who intends to kill or harm others - rattled SA Jewry to the extent that five of the most prominent Jewish communal organisations, the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, the SA Zionist Federation, the Union of Orthodox Synagogues, the Office of the Chief Rabbi and the United Communal Fund, this week issued a joint call for Rabbi Berland to go back to Israel and face the charges against him.

The same sentiment was expressed by Hawks spokesman Brigadier Hangwani Mulaudzi who said that it was time for Berland to face the music.

After his original flight from Israel, Berland and some of his followers went to Morocco - and were later expelled from there and from Zimbabwe before coming to South Africa in April 2014. After seven months and a second botched attempt to arrest him in 2014, he fled to Holland from where he eventually jumped a reported R2 million bail after losing an appeal against his extradition to Israel

He returned to South Africa some six months ago with 200 followers in tow. Reportedly this number has now grown to around 500

The story went main-stream last weekend after the Sunday Times, Ha'aretz in Israel and SA Jewish Report Online all published the story. It has since created a frenzy and been republished in almost every form of media in Israel and Jewish media worldwide.

After returning to SA in 2015, Berland has managed to live under the noses of the authorities by staying at hotels and golf estates. Most of his followers have remained in Midrand, but he is followed by some of the families to whom, wrote the Sunday Times, "he is a spiritual guru. The men study with him all day and teach the younger boys while their wives take care of the many children and cook.

"They may not eat the food or use the crockery and cutlery at any of these establishments since the hotels are not kosher. They cook in their rooms."

Most of the sect members only speak Hebrew and are hunkered down at the Midrand hotel. They are legally in SA on tourist visas which they are able to renew every three months by going to neighbouring Botswana and returning on a new three-month visa reprieve.

They're not entitled to work in South Africa or to access social benefits. They are adamant that the rabbi will return to the hotel in a few weeks' time when things are "calmer". They said they were upset about the police raid and their children had been "traumatised".

Hila Nakesh, whose mother was born in Greenside, Johannesburg, said she saw a policeman pull an oxygen mask off her eight-

year-old son, Nathan, who has Down's syndrome, and who was "traumatised" by the "assault" and had to be taken to hospital in

Brigadier Mulaudzi denied that the boy had been touched. He told Jewish Report this week that Berland had been at the hotel at the time of the raid, but had managed to slip through their fingers. He believes that the sect had some inside information regarding the raid. Berland, in the meantime, is now in hiding.

Nothing had been heard from Berland or Rabbi Goldstein until this week Tuesday, when Berland emerged to deny any responsibility for the threats to the Chief Rabbi. Rabbi Goldstein, who is in the US for a series of meetings regarding his Shabbos Project, contacted the Jewish Report to say that he did not accept what Berland had to say.

Berland's followers promptly followed suit and recanted their own positions.

The last time that the din rodef was invoked in recent times was in Israel in 1995 when Yigal Amir, the murderer of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, defended his actions partly on the basis of din rodef. Amir argued at the time that Rabin's offer of concessions to the Palestinian Authority would endanger Jewish lives.

The joint response by the South African Jewish community to Berland and his sect read as follows:

continued on page 4>>



- Israeli police notify Berland they want to question him
- Berland leaves Shuvu Bonim Yeshiva in Israel
- Berland & followers settle in Morocco
- Expelled by Moroccan King, go via Egypt to Zimbabwe
- Settle outside Bulawayo on mine of disciple Yaron Yamin
- More followers and families arrive
- Agree with Bulawayo congregation to stay clear of shul
- Thousands plan Zim trips to have Pesach with their rabbi
 12 April Shuvu Banim unexpectedly given 24 hours to leave Zim
- **13 April** Arrive in SA, others due for Pesach diverted to Johannesburg
- 13 April Chief Rabbi asks community not to feed or house
 Pesach Thousands of followers in Glenhazel, sleep in parks
 29 April First attempt by Hawks to arrest Berland foiled
- Followers freezing in parks, locals offer food, shelter
- **9 Sept** Hawks botch second arrest attempt and are shot
- **10 Sept** Berland and Yamin fly to Holland on KLM
- 11 Sept Dutch police hold Berland at airport at Israel's
- 14 Aug Court releases Berland, keeps passport, asks Israel for warrant
- After 3 attempts, Israel gets extradition. Rav loses appeal
- Berland runs again forfeiting purported R2-mil in bail
- Exact date unknown Berland & 200 disciples enter SA
- Followers stay in Midrand. Rav moves daily to avoid detection
- 3 Jan Berland celebrates 79th birthday with son, grandchildren
- 4 Jan Berland's SA English blog being populated with his
- 6 Jan Son says Berland a SA citizen, says it is "victory over Israel"
- 22 Jan Interpol and SAPS botch third attempt to arrest fugitive rav

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Joel Harris 082 929 0287 | 011 880 3550



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Joel Harris 082 929 0287 | 011 880 3550



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Bradley Gogoski 082 828 9658 Janice Heyman 082 330 2701 | 011 880 3550 Continued from page 3>>

The hunt for Berland ...

"The South African Jewish community calls on Rabbi Eliezer Berland to return to Israel immediately to face the serious criminal charges laid against him and for which there is an international warrant of arrest against him," it said.

"We further condemn the baseless malicious lies and incitement to violence aimed at our Chief Rabbi, including the libellous accusation that the Chief Rabbi was responsible for the police raid on Berland's compound."

Asked why Berland's followers had accused Rabbi Goldstein of "a merciless blood libel campaign", a long-standing Jewish Report contact and spokesman from the Yeshiva in Israel, Yossi (the sect only use first names), said: "This is what we feel is being done to us. Only by us we don't have the SAPS... or the government protecting us, and sending after us the Hawks or the police and spreading lies about us in the media - which is literally spilling innocent blood."

Death threat to Chief Rabbi Goldstein withdrawn

Rabbi Eliezer Berland, whose Shuvu Banim Breslov sect has made worldwide headlines by making a death-threat to Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein, spoke out for the first time on Tuesday, and insisted that he had nothing to do with the threat. He also said that he withdrew the threat on behalf of his organisation.

His short, taped message was quickly followed by a statement from some of his most trusted disciples, those who populate his social media platforms, announcing that they, too, having heard what Berland had said, along with all of Berland's followers throughout the world: "take back any harsh words that may have been spoken in the past".

Rabbi Berland had not been seen or heard from and has been in hiding for the past 10 days after Interpol and the specialised crime unit of the SA Police Service, The Hawks, attempted to detain and extradite him to Israel on an Interpol warrant from which he has been on the run for the past four years.

Hear Rabbi Berland's retraction on www.sajr.co.za



SA Jewish Report (011) 430-1980

The Struggle was well worth it, says Denis Goldberg



Denis Goldberg; Ahmed Kathrada; George Bizos; and Lord Joffe, honoured by the Chamberlain of London, Dr Peter Kane.

SHIRA DRUION

The award of the Freedom of the City of London is extremely rare and is usually bestowed upon royalty, heads of state or figures of genuine global standing. On Wednesday last week, 20 years since Nelson Mandela received the award, it was given to four exceptional South African Struggle icons in an inspiring ceremony.

Ahmed Kathrada and Denis Goldberg received the award with fellow South African legendary lawyer George Bizos and Joel, Lord Joffe at a ceremony in Guildhall's prestigious Livery Hall, conducted by Dr Peter Kane, Chamberlain of London. Andrew Mlangeni, another surviving member of the Rivonia trial, was too ill to travel to London to accept the honour in person.

The men took to the stage as a unified force, recognised for their fight for democracy and equality and ultimately for the roles they played in changing the face of South African history. Other recipients of the award have been Florence Nightingale, Winston Churchill and Princese Diago.

Relative to their small numbers in the South African population, Jews played a disproportionately important role in the struggle for freedom and democracy in South Africa.

The Freedom award is the highest honour which the City of London can bestow on someone and usually takes place in Guildhall in the presence of the Common Council and with the Lord Mayor, sheriffs and aldermen present, along with invited guests.

Questions were posed to the panel by visiting school children and Goldberg spoke candidly and with clarity of the past. It is hard to believe that he is into his 80s as he still radiates with palpable vibrancy.

"Most whites were apathetic and did not do enough to change the policies of apartheid. I was a white, I benefited from it, had a deep conscience about the injustice and did not want to be responsible for it and there weren't enough of us, but there (still) were many.

"Not everybody ended up in prison, but white South Africa, from top to bottom, benefited from apartheid and allowed it to go on."

He thanked the anti-apartheid activists from the United Kingdom and all over the world who he acknowledged had played "a magnificent role" in bringing the fight against apartheid to a head.

Goldberg took the audience back in time as he recalled the events that had taken place during the Rivonia Trial.

"When the judge delivered his verdict he spoke very softly and my mother couldn't hear very well. After he finished speaking, my mother screamed out: 'Denis, Denis, what is it!?' You know I was still my mother's little boy and I answered: 'It's life and life is wonderful!'

"In only 21 years (in South Africa), we have come a long way in undoing the laws of apartheid where for 300 or more years, racial segregation took place. It's been burnt into the minds of all South Africans.

"The ANC today is a different situation and my personal view is that my current comrades in government, at every level, have followed the example of British colonial South Africa and the National Party in having created a crony economy where political power means enrichment - show me in Britain where it does not happen. We have learned from you."

He told the audience that prison had "obviously been good" for the trialists as he is now 82 and the others well into their late 80s and early 90s! When asked about his views on the future of South Africa he said: "I reckon it's going to take a generation to change. It's a shame and a tragedy because in a sense the current situation robs our people of a democracy but we do have a flourishing democratic environment of people who speak out in the streets and riot and I'm happy to add my voice to it.

"The strength of the ANC is that some of the leaders within the ANC are speaking out against it, which gives me hope for the future."

As the award was given, Goldberg, to the applause of the audience exclaimed: "My grandfather from Lithuania escaped and pushed a barrow selling rags for a living and here I am!"

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New campus for school and Cape Town Jewry in Sea Point

MOIRA SCHNEIDER CAPE TOWN

A strong vote of confidence in the future of Cape Town's Jewish community has been cast with the acquisition of a large property, formerly occupied by the Tafelberg Remedial High School, in the heart of Sea Point.

Expenditure of R135 million might raise eyebrows in what was regarded as an ageing community, but this demographic has been reversed over the past five to 10 years, according to Lance Katz, deputy chairman of the board of governors of the Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School through which the property was acquired. "The community here is not in decline," he stresses.

"We think it's growing and we see evidence of this. Ten years ago it would have been quite a different story, but what we see today is that school numbers are growing at the pre-primary and primary level; we're seeing a lot more families staying in Cape Town, who were emigrating before, there's a lot of 'semigration' - people moving down from Johannesburg - and people are having larger families

"Five years ago at Herzlia Weizmann (school), for example, I think they had one grade six class and they were worried about the sustainability of the school. Today, in the pre-primary area, they've got three, sometimes four classes and the school is full.

"So, in terms of younger families, the community is growing, especially on the Atlantic seaboard," he says, estimating that a third ("a growing percentage") of the Jewish population of this city lives there.

It is intended that this purchase will unlock a long-term property solution for the Phyllis Jowell School, which has been looking for an alternative site for some time, having outgrown its present premises in Camps Bay. It currently has 150 learners from pre-primary level to grade six and requires increased space and enhanced facilities to allow it to expand.

"We bought it through the school, but very much with the broader Jewish community's needs in mind," Katz told Jewish Report. To this end, a working committee of community representatives has been set up to determine how best to utilise the space for the benefit of all, including the most efficient use of community resources.

The "very substantial" site and "magnificent" historic school building dating back over 100 years have "tremendous potential" for educational, communal, recreational and commercial usage, says Katz. The property has not been used for five years since the previous occupants vacated and is in desperate need of restoration.

"That is part of what makes this project so

exciting. We will pay very close attention to the heritage aspects of the site - the historic school building and the tree-lined lane leading up to the school.

"I think it's a wonderful investment in the future and the more we're able to use the property effectively as a community resource, the more attractive Cape Town will be for future community growth."

The Torah school is in a process with the provincial government to transfer the property according to the terms and conditions of the tender and related agreements. Transfer is expected to take place within the next few months.



Learners of the Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School. The school has purchased a property in the heart of Sea Point and will relocate from Camps Bay.

World News in Brief

Jennifer Lopez scheduled to make debut performance in Israel

JERUSALEM - American singer and actress Jennifer Lopez reportedly will perform in Israel for the first

Lopez agreed to hold a concert this summer in Hayarkon Park in Tel Aviv, the Ynet news website reported on Monday.

She is among several high-profile artists and bands who are scheduled to perform in Israel this summer. They include Elton John, Deep Purple, Megadeath and Julio Iglesias.

Lopez, who stars with Ray Liotta in the new television show "Shades of Blue", will serve as a judge for the 15th and final season of "American Idol". She has been on the show for several seasons. (JTA)



SUNDAY 14 FEBRUARY, 7:30 pm

Sydenham Community Centre, Seeff Hall

Entrance R50. Tea will be served. Secure Parking. Reserved Seating: 011 640 5021 or www.sydshul.co.za



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It's time for Berland to face music in Israel

The Jewish world is not short on excitement lately: in the US, a powerful Jewish billionaire has become the latest contender for the White House; Israel continues to grapple with violence and tensions in the territories, and the South African Jewish community is dealing with a roving Shuvu Banim Breslov sect from Israel in its midst whose eccentric leader, Rabbi Eliezer Berland, is a fugitive from Israeli

When a rabbi, or any religious or secular Jewish leader, is wanted for crimes – it is important that he or she is answerable to civil law. authoritie

This story has developed like a Robert Ludlum thriller, having captured headlines in the international Jewish press as well. Berland has been on the run from Interpol since 2012 on sexual harassment charges, hiding in Morocco, the Netherlands, Zimbabwe and most recently South Africa. He was also here in 2014 and after avoiding several attempts to arrest him in 2014, he fled to Holland, where he eventually jumped bail and returned to Johannesburg, along with 200 of his followers.

After last weekend's Sunday
Times exposé - "Fugitive rabbi's
death threat to Jewish chief", this
ltest development, was unleashed
to the world. Berland's followers
allegedly believe that Chief Rabbi
Warren Goldstein was behind an
unsuccessful police raid on the
group two weeks ago at a Midrand
location, and apparently they issued a death threat against him.

The chief rabbi is understandably fearful: the sect's followers are considered dangerous and when the SA Police tried to arrest Berland last time he was in South Africa, they were shot at by Berland's body guards.

Berland's son also told the Jewish Report recently that his father had suddenly obtained South African citizenship, or some sort of diplomatic immunity. It is hard to imagine that citizenship, which is usually a five-year process, would be possible, while diplomatic immunity would require some high profile connections or payoffs. If Rabbi Berland is indeed above reproach and a great spiritual leader, why is he in hiding and not eager to prove his innocence?

There remain a lot of other unanswered questions. Why have the police not been able to find him? How has he avoided capture in Israel, Europe and Zimbabwe? Rumours

swirl that he has doubles; some people close to the situation believe he has recently managed to get back to Israel unnoticed by the police. He is reputed to have wealthy and powerful supporters who are paying the bills for the sect, and arranging places for Berland to hide out. Others say Berland's group is involved in illegal business activities, never mind the harassment charges!

Several South African Jewish community organisations, including the Chief Rabbi, this week called on Rabbi Berland to "return to Israel immediately" to face the serious criminal charges laid against him.

When a rabbi, or any religious or secular Jewish leader, is wanted for crimes – it is important that he or she is answerable to civil law. The Jewish community does better for itself when its members are not dealt with by internal mechanisms such as Batei Din or reprimands



Jewish Report

from other senior authorities as has sometimes been the case with fraud or abuse. The Melbourne yeshiva sexual abuse allegations went before a Royal Commission in Australia; former Israeli President Moshe Katsav is serving a seven-year sentence for rape; while Washington's prominent mikveh peeping rabbi is in jail too.

It is an important stand that the Chief Rabbi and our community have taken – Rabbi Berland needs to go home and face the music.

– Vanessa Valkin, editor

US polls: Bloomberg could be latest twist for Jews

SEAN SAVAGE/JNS.ORG NEW YORK

The 2016 US presidential race has been high on twists, with billionaire real estate mogul Donald Trump and socialist Bernie Sanders leading in many polls. But the topsy-turvy journey might just be getting started. As voters cast their first ballots in Iowa and New Hampshire, former New York City mayor and Jewish billionaire Michael Bloomberg, whose net worth dwarfs even that of Trump, is reportedly considering an independent run for president.

"[Bloomberg] would make an exceptional candidate for a variety of reasons, in particular for the Jewish community. He has always shown himself to be a big supporter of Israel in different ways, such as donating his personal money in various charities," Stan Steinreich - president and CEO of Steinreich Communications, a New Jersey-based public relations firm that also has an office in Israel - told JNS.org.

During the 2014 Gaza war, Bloomberg made waves by boarding an El Al flight to Tel Aviv in defiance of a Federal Aviation Administration ban on flights to Israel. The ban came after a Hamas rocket fell near Israel's Ben-Gurion Airport.

"This evening, I will be flying on El Al to Tel Aviv to demonstrate that it is safe to fly in and out of Israel... The flight restrictions are a mistake that hands Hamas an undeserved victory and should be lifted immediately," Bloomberg said at the time.

Bloomberg has donated significantly to the Israeli emergency response organisation Magen David Adom, whose Jerusalem station is dedicated to his father, William H Bloomberg. In 2014, Bloomberg was the inaugural recipient of Israel's Genesis Prize, an award given to individuals who can inspire the next generation of Jews worldwide.

Bloomberg has considered running for president in the past but concluded that running as a third-party candidate would be too difficult. Yet according to the New York Times, Bloomberg has been "galled" by Trump's dominance in the Republican field as well as "troubled" by Hillary Clinton's stumbles and Bernie Sanders' rise on the Democratic side. This confluence of events has led Bloomberg to consider a bid for president as an independent in 2016.

As such, the New York Times reported that Bloomberg's aides say he is prepared to spend at



Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg (left) is pictured with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as Bloomberg arrives in Israel on July 23, 2014. At the time, Bloomberg flew to Israel to take a stand against a US Federal Aviation Administration ban on flights to the Jewish state.

least \$1 billion of his own personal fortune on a presidential campaign and would likely make a final decision on running in early March.

In a race for president that has defied political norms, Bloomberg would seek to capitalise on his unique combination of business experience and governing that the other candidates only partially share.

"If you look at it, his candidacy would have many different elements of some of the current leaders in the polls," Stan Steinreich told JNS. org. "For example, he certainly has Donald Trump's business acumen, and he certainly has liberal policies like Bernie Sanders."

Bloomberg is one of the richest people in the world, with Forbes pegging his personal fortune at \$36 billion and others estimating it could be as high as \$48,8 billion - far higher than the \$4,5 billion Forbes estimate of Trump's net worth

"I would love for Michael to do it," Trump told CNN regarding the reports on Bloomberg's potential candidacy. "We used to be friends. I guess we're not friends anymore. I don't think we are."

Unlike Trump, who inherited a considerable real estate fortune from his father, Bloomberg built Bloomberg LP - a financial services,

technology, and media empire - from scratch, through the development of his own in-house computerised financial system that eventually became a mainstay for financial experts.

Despite his business prowess, Bloomberg has staked a number of socially liberal positions that eventually led him to abandon the Republican Party in 2007 to become an independent. Bloomberg had been a lifelong Democrat prior to becoming a Republican in 2001, when he ran for mayor in New York. His liberal policies include strong support for gun control and a woman's right to choose. He endorsed President Barack Obama in the 2012 election, citing climate change.

Many New Yorkers hailed Bloomberg's 12 years as mayor for making the city cleaner, safer, and more prosperous, especially in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the 2008 financial meltdown. Others, however, criticised him for a hands-on style that included a "stop and frisk" police policy as well as pushing for bans on soda and smoking in public places.

Some went as far as calling Bloomberg-led New York a "nanny state." He also controversially orchestrated the city's extension of mayoral term limits so that he could serve a third term.

"Even though I don't agree with [Bloomberg]

and it would be good for the national debate for him to throw his hat in the ring," said Seth Lipsky, the founding editor of two newspapers, the New York Sun and the English-language edition of the Yiddish Forward. (The New York Sun has not endorsed any candidates, including the rumoured candidacy of Bloomberg, in the current election.)

on all issues, I think he is an important voice,

"It would be no small thing for a Jewish American to appear at the top of the ballot, let alone two of them," Lipsky told JNS.org, referring to Bloomberg and Bernie Sanders.

Bloomberg, he said, "has been a strong voice in support of Israel. The Jewish angle is interesting, but not an overriding issue."

While Bloomberg's Jewish faith and support for Israel would be selling points for the Jewish and pro-Israel communities, many of the other major candidates also largely have pro-Israel credentials and Jewish backers.

"As a community, we [Jews] are always excited and proud when one of our own decides to run. There is an element of pride, he did a great job as mayor of New York... But the Jewish community is also really excited about other candidates in the race. All major candidates have their Jewish supporters, from Hillary Clinton, to Donald Trump, Jeb Bush, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, and Chris Christie," said Steinreich.

Nevertheless, Bloomberg faces a daunting task if he decides to run as an independent without the support of either mainstream political party. Since the presidential election of 1856, when the modern-day Republican Party emerged as the Democrats' chief competition, no independent or third-party candidate has ever won an election.

This even includes the widely popular former President Teddy Roosevelt, who ran as an independent in 1912 after leaving the Republican fold but eventually lost the election to Democrat Woodrow Wilson.

"The euphoria is wonderful, but there are many practical elements to winning an election. It is a long way to November," Steinreich said, adding: "Even putting his financial resources aside, you have to get an organisation in place and the signatures to get on the ballots. There are some potential stumbling blocks regardless of a popular movement and whether people are excited about the candidacy." (JNS.org)

There's much more to Israel than Middle East conflict

DAVID SAKS

For Diaspora Jewry, identifying with Israel has today largely become a matter of showing solidarity in times of trouble and defending it against its multiple detractors. The flipside of this is that Israel's many extraordinary achievements and the sheer richness and excitement of living in a thriving, multicultural Jewish state, tends to be overshadowed.

At Beyachad last week, world-renowned social media activist and Jewish Agency International spokesman, Avi Mayer, pointed to some of the very positive aspects of modern-day Israel, and why Israelis remain largely optimistic despite the current difficulties facing the country.

In her introduction, SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn lauded Mayer's success in presenting a perspective of Israel that went beyond the conflict, one that also showed the vibrancy and innovation in all facets of daily life

She further commended him for the pivotal role he had played, through Twitter and other social media platforms, in giving the Israeli Defence Forces a voice that it had never had before.

Mayer began his talk by quoting the opening paragraphs of A Tale of Two Cities, "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times". He went on to identify some of the problems that Israel is currently grappling with, most obviously the ongoing knife and vehicle attacks and the damaging impact this is having both on public morale and the economy.

Internationally, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) and related efforts to delegitimise Israel continue apace and in mounting instances, these are manifesting in the violent disruption of Israel-related events.

World News in Brief

US policy on Israeli settlement labelling issue 'hasn't changed'

WASHINGTON - US policy on labelling Israeli settlement products has not changed, the State Department said last week when the US reissued guidelines on the labelling requirements for products manufactured in Judea and Samaria.

The guidelines, which have been in effect since 1995, note that under US law, "it is not acceptable to mark the aforementioned goods with the words 'Israel', 'Made in Israel', 'Occupied Territories-Israel', or any variation thereof."

The decision to republish the guidelines raised some eyebrows, as it came several days after US Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro criticised Israel's conduct in Judea and Samaria and accused Israel of discriminating against Palestinians there. But State Department spokesman Mark Toner insisted last week that the reissuing was designed to clarify US policy on the matter following reports of mislabelling.

"US Customs and Border Protection reissued guidance on their marking requirements," Toner told reporters. "It in no way supersedes prior rulings or regulations and nor does it impose additional requirements with respect to merchandise imported from the West Bank, Gaza Strip, or Israel."

According to an Israeli Channel 1 report, the reissuing came in response to Palestinian complaints that some Judea and Samaria products were being labelled as "Made in Israel", in violation of US law. Toner appeared to confirm that report.

"Our understanding is that there were allegations of mislabelling, around nine or 10 complaints," Toner said. "As you know, US guidelines don't differentiate between products produced in settlements or anywhere else in the West Bank."

Israeli officials confirmed last week that there was no change in US policy. (Israel Hayom/Exclusive to JNS.org) In the midst of all this, however, there are "signs of hope and brightness". Amazingly enough, according to a new study published in US News & World Report, Israel is now ranked as the world's eighth most powerful country.

"Power", for purposes of the study, was defined as "a leader, economically influential, politically influential, strong international alliances, strong military". Another plus factor is that Israel is experiencing a major wave of aliyah from France, with 7 800 - amounting to 1,5 per cent of the community - having arrived in the past year alone. Escalating anti-Semitism levels are the main reason for the influx.

Domestically, the Israeli government is investing massively in the Arab-Israeli sector to foster social and economic upliftment and it is

hoped that this will help to normalise Jewish-Arab relations over time.

Mayer also pointed to an "interesting counter-trend" with regard to BDS campaigns abroad. As the West and the US are drawing closer to Iran, so are a number of Arab states leaving the Iranian orbit and drawing closer to Israel.

There is already close co-operation in the field of water conservation and recycling, with Israel in this field an undisputed world leader.

Meanwhile, economic giants like China, India and Japan are all "clamouring for involvement in Israel's start-up economy". Nor did Mayer see the increasing tendency of BDS activists to resort to violent disruptions and intimidation to prevent alternative views on

the Israel-Palestine issue from being heard, as being altogether a bad thing.

For him, what these showed is a de facto concession by the BDS movement that it cannot win the war of ideas and that it therefore has to silence the other side rather than engage with and refute its arguments.

Mayer urged his audience to educate themselves about Israel and follow what was happening there. The tools for doing so today are readily to hand in the form of social media and other online platforms.

Ultimately, though, there is no substitute for visiting Israel and experiencing what it was about for oneself in order to better speak on its behalf. It is, he said, a country that "defied expectations in every way".



Kotel prayer decision and shifting Israel-Diaspora paradigm

MAAYAN JAFFE-HOFFMAN/ JNS.ORG AND WIRES

A victory

The Israeli government's passage of legislation that authorises egalitarian prayer in a soon-to-be-created section adjacent to the southern part of the Western Wall has been called groundbreaking, empowering, dramatic, and unprecedented. The section could be ready in as soon as a few months from now.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called it a "fair and creative solution". Last Sunday his Cabinet approved the measure with a 15 - 5 majority vote.

Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, said the decision would "connect world Jewry to the State of Israel".

Calling it a "Progressive victory at the Kotel", the South African Association of Progressive Rabbis and the South African Centre for Religious Equality and Diversity said that they "celebrate the significant resolution by the Israeli government..."

"That historic resolution is a result of three decades of struggle by the Progressive and Conservative movements, representing a majority of the world's Jews, led by the courageous Women of the Wall movement, whose leaders defied arrest and harassment over many years. We are proud to stand in comradeship with them."

This last victory, they say, "is just one sign of the increasing power our movements are gaining, as people move away from discriminative religious practices, choosing better and more enlightened forms of our ancient faith."

Jerry Silverman, CEO of the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), said it was a "major step forward". Member of Knesset Merav Michaeli (Zionist Union) said the Kotel was "liberated" again, this time not by soldiers, but by women in Jewish prayer shawls.

Indeed, for 27 years, the Women of the Wall group pushed for women's equality at the Kotel. More



Anat Hoffman, leader of the Women of the Wall group, speaks with members of the media near the Western Wall on January 31, reacting to the Israeli government's passage of a new plan on egalitarian prayer rights at the Jewish holy site.

formal negotiations have been going on for almost three years. In a statement, the group said more than just an agreement has been achieved.

"The vision of the new section of the Kotel is a physical and conceptual space open to all forms of Jewish prayer. Instead of splitting up the existing pie into ever more divided, smaller pieces, we are making the pie much larger."

A paradigm shift.

Beyond the blueprints, the ratified plan is a powerful statement about the overt impact Diaspora Jewry and global Jewish leaders could have on Israeli decision-making.

US Jews have traditionally served as a political lifeline for Israel, lobbying American governments on behalf of the Jewish state. Recent occurrences have shifted the relationship between the American and Israeli Jewish communities into one of semi-equality, which includes American Jewish leaders objectively discussing Israel's policies rather than blindly supporting them.

Silverman called this shift evolutionary. Rabbi Gilad Kariv,

executive director of the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism, said the negotiations "prove the role that North American Jewry... can and should play in helping Israel make our country more inclusive".

Jewish Agency for Israel Chairman Natan Sharansky said that American and Israeli Jews are becoming increasingly interdependent. The US needs Israel to help strengthen Jewish identity in a Diaspora community that is slowly shrinking from assimilation and intermarriage. Israel, attacked daily by the international community, needs the solidarity of Jewish communities abroad, he explained.

"I am sure that the [Israeli] government must now take into account - should take into consideration - the position of world Jewry on the decisions it makes," Hagay Elizur, senior director of Diaspora Affairs for Israel's Ministry of Public Diplomacy & Diaspora Affairs, told JNS.org.

Netanyahu might be feeling the pressure of unprecedented US-Israel political tension. Last August's Peace Index poll by the Israel Democracy Institute and Tel Aviv University showed that 48 per cent of Israeli Jews worried that Netanyahu's campaign against the Iran nuclear deal would damage US-Israel relations.

Last November, speaking at JFNA's General Assembly, Netanyahu called on American Jewish leaders to "work together to unite the Jewish people". At that time, he underscored his new commitment to guarantee equal rights to members of the Reform and Conservative movements in Israel.

The prime minister noted his work with the committee for a compromise on the Kotel as an example of his efforts.

Now, pluralistic Jewish leaders are touting the work they did as a model for future initiatives. Rabbi Julie Schonfeld, executive vice-president of Conservative Judaism's Rabbinical Assembly, said the negotiating process was almost as significant as its outcome in that it showed that even Jewish leaders with varying opinions could "hang in there" and handle "complex negotiations" when they have a shared interest.

The next big issue for the plural-

istic Jewish movements is marriage equality, or the ability to perform civil marriages and marriages outside of the Chief Rabbinate, which adheres to Orthodox traditions.

Jonathan Greenblatt, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League, praised the passage of the agreement, calling it "historic".

Opposition

Some Orthodox leaders, however, are not going to let these changes happen easily. In an interview with JNS.org, Rabbi of the Western Wall Shmuel Rabinovitch called the government's Kotel plan a desecration of G-d's name. He said he did not consider himself a partner in the Kotel negotiations.

"I don't know if there is anything we can do to stop it now, I am deeply saddened... I hope that we can get the whole thing cancelled," he said.

Rabinovitch did say, however, that the ratified Kotel plan was a better option than bad alternatives that were discussed.

Member of Knesset Moshe Gafni (United Torah Judaism) called members of the Reform movement "a group of clowns stabbing the holy Torah". Israeli Tourism Minister Yariv Levin (Likud) said the Reform movement represents assimilation.

"Their rabbi married [Bill and Hillary] Clinton's daughter [Chelsea] with a priest," Levin said.

Ironically enough the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Sheik Muhammad Hussien, has also condemned the agreement, according to JTA.

He says the area next to the Western Wall is "the property of the Islamic Waqf that was taken by the Israeli occupation in 1967".

He called the decision "a brutal attack on the Waqf and additional evidence of the Israeli aggression against Muslim holy places, in an attempt to Judaise Jerusalem".

The approval of an egalitarian section of the Western Wall "profanes" the holy site, the haredi Orthodox group Agudath Israel of America said in a statement released on Monday, according to JTA.

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These gentiles are not so gentle in 'stealing' Jewish script!



BARBARIC YAWP

David Saks

No doubt JK Rowling is still enjoying the illgotten proceeds of her phenomenally successful Harry Potter series. Hardly anyone knows, or cares, that her prosperity came about through having pulled off one of the most shameless literary heists in living memory.

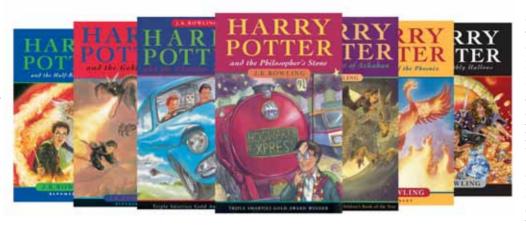
Somehow, it appears that JKR got hold of a rare manuscript copy of the writings of the famed Litvishe raconteur Faivel Finkelstein, from which she plagiarised shamelessly. Not only the plots, but even the names - and indeed at least two book titles - were thinly disguised versions of what Reb Faivel had come up with a century before.

To cite just a few examples: Ron Weasley, Albus Dumbledore, Hermione Grainger, Voldemort, Harry Potter himself and indeed, even the witching and wizardry school, Hogwarts, have their obvious counterparts in the latter's now unjustly forgotten works.

Nonsense, you say? Well consider this: Faivel Finkelstein's stories centre on a certain yeshiva student named Heschie Porter and his two close side-kicks Irma Yonnie Groeniger and Ran Weiss-Eli.

The official name of their yeshiva is the Wkrczr Beth Medrash, but on account of the drashas on the vamim tovim for which it is renowned, it is informally known as "Chag Vorts". Its rosh yeshiva is the eminent posek Hagaon Harav Elifaz Trumpeldor.

The mashgiach is the saturnine Shabsi Schnapps, about whose true nature we are



skillfully kept in the dark until late in the

Sound familiar, so far? Let's continue... Boasting rare Kabbalistic gifts, Heschie must protect his friends, and the yeshiva, from the dastardly Mort Wolder, a yeshiva bocher who has gone badly off the derech, and seeks to wreak as much mischief as he can.

In the first book of the series, Heschie thwarts a plot to smuggle treif pastries into the yeshiva kitchen ((Heschie Porter and the Half-baked Blintz).

The book was an immediate hit, especially with kosher caterers and desperately bored wagon drivers (although many yeshivot prohibited it as an unwanted distraction. Despite the ban, contraband copies found themselves pasted into the backs of many a gemara).

Next, Heschie must come to the aid of a professional scribe (sofer), one who specialises in reproducing the works of the great Jewish philosopher-commentator of the post-Maccabean era, Philo. Spitefully, Mort Wolder contrives to spill ink on his manuscripts, and it is up to Heschie to find a way to remedy

the situation (Heschie Porter and the Philo

The later Heschie books have a darker tone. In the final instalment of what unfortunately proved to be a truncated series, an increasingly vindictive Wolder rounds up all those local baalei battim who have failed the audition for the shul choir, and has them sing menucha v'simcha and other popular ditties outside the yeshiva gates at all hours (Heschie Porter and the Deadly Hallels).

Does Heschie go on to obtain smicha and become the Godal Hador? Does the appalling Mort Wolder do teshuva? Sadly, we will never know. Returning from work one day, Reb Finkelstein took a short-cut through a yellow wood. Two roads diverged, he took the path less trodden by and was eaten by a bear. As for his works, they quickly fell into obscurity, and a century after his death appeared to have been forgotten altogether - that is, until a certain Scottish shikse on the make came into the picture.

I have on previous occasions in these pages lamented how the reputations of many supposedly brilliant gentile writers rest on what they have been able to plagiarise from their more talented Jewish contemporaries. Everyone knows the famous opening line of Hamlet's great soliloquy, but how many are aware that it is based on the musings of one of Willie Shaknovis' characters, who is vacillating over whether or not to marry his childhood sweetheart ("Taube or not Taube?").

As for "Shakespeare", those who claim that his works were really written by Francis Bacon are right. To cover his tracks, Bacon changed his name to something that sounded less obviously un-Jewish. What a chazzer!

There are other depressing examples of literary theft. Even today, it is virtually unknown that the character Huckleberry Finn was not invented by Mark Twain, but was closely modelled on Chaikl Ari Fine, a crayfish fisherman in the Volga area. Nor was the character Harry Flashman of Rugby School the creation of Thomas Hughes; he was shamelessly plagiarised from Velvel Blobstein's wayward kollelnik Hirschie Fleis-

Tangentially, it is worth noting that the works of Gilbert and Sullivan are translations from the Yiddish operettas of Goldblatt and Solomon, both of whom had to change their names to makes headway in the anti-Semitic milieu of Victorian England. Karl Dickstein likewise had to change his name for the English edition of his popular novel Dovid Kuperfeld.

Shocking as these revelations are, though, it is doubtful whether anyone will really believe them. No doubt, with Adar just around the corner, they'll dismiss it as just another Purimspiel.

Community Columns ----- A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies -----

As South African Jewish citizens, we

have an obligation

to combine our own

specific concerns as

active participation in

addressing problems

facing our country as a

whole. One particularly

pressing area involves

continuing threat of

racism and other forms

dealing with the

a community with



Jeff Katz

Above Board National Chairman

of prejudice in our society.

The Board is an active, visible presence in the various initiatives that have been launched to confront this scourge. In addition to being the correct moral and ethical thing to do, our participation allows us to maintain and enhance valuable partnerships with other human rights activists which lends additional credibility to our efforts to combat anti-Semitism.

This week, National Director Wendy Kahn took part in two important public events aimed at addressing racism and bigotry in our society. On Monday, she attended a convention towards a Front for Nation Building, Social Cohesion and Reconciliation, and the next day a press briefing by the newly formed Anti-Racism Network of SA to announce the upcoming launch of Anti-Racism week (March 14 - 21).

The former event, held under the auspices of the Ministry of Arts and Culture, was organised in response to the recent spate of racist incidents highlighting that some South Africans still today remain bitterly divided along racial lines.

As was correctly pointed out, the current situation urgently requires people to focus on what unites, rather than what divides us and

that the concepts of equality and inclusivity have to become ingrained within all of us if we are to succeed in meeting the challenges facing us as a nation.

Problem of racism, discrimination

The Board also continues to be actively involved in the work of the Hate Crimes Working Group (HCWG). Alana Baranov, vicepresident of the Council for KwaZulu-Natal Jewry, is a member of its steering committee.

Last week, she was responsible for coordinating a series of interviews with various organisations representing the Somali, Nigerian, Ethiopian and Rwanda refugee communities for the HCWG Research Unit to collect testimony from victims of hate crimes and discrimination.

Positivity and energy from Avi Mayer Avi Mayer's whirlwind visit to South Africa, during which he addressed various communal groups, gave workshops and met with a range of lay and professional leaders, concluded this week. We are extremely grateful to him for all his efforts, and for the undiminished enthusiasm and ready helpfulness that he displayed at all times.

Everyone who engaged with Avi, in addition to benefiting from his insights (particularly regarding using social media) and knowledge of developments in Israel and the Jewish world in general, was uplifted by his enthusiasm and sheer positivity that he brings to everything he does. Avi in so many ways reflects the dynamic, "can-do" positivity of Israel, which is seeing it accomplish so much despite the many formidable challenges that confront it. It was an honour and pleasure for the Board to have hosted Avi and we look forward to his next visit

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News



SUZANNE BELLING

With the school year having recently begun, there is again a cry from parents of school-going children across the country about the high cost of uniforms.

Hardest-hit are children from poorer schools, although rules are not as rigid in those schools, and basic grey shorts and white tops with minor additions are acceptable.

One may think parents of children from private Jewish day schools would comfortably be able to bear the cost of the uniforms. But this is not always the case, especially when these children are receiving subsidised school fees.

In several of the Jewish day schools, members of the PTA have recognised the problem and have opened previously-owned uniform shops to help combat the soaring costs - especially since youngsters grow so fast that more often than not, a blazer may still be in mint condition - but too small! Also, a "snobbish stigma" of yesteryear has in many cases made way for practical considerations.

"It is very informal," says Melanie Burman, who runs such an enterprise from her home for the benefit of Yeshiva College.

"It is never-ending. And children are always losing things, too. I think

it is great to have a second-hand shop whereby uniforms in good condition are donated."

Burman thought of the idea about 14 years ago when she came across "a whole lot of uniforms in black bags at the school". She brought them home and began selling from there, which she feels is more discreet.

Coincidentally, her sister Desiree Hoppenstein, unbeknown to Burman until recently, had exactly the same idea for Hirsch Lyons.

"I have a spacious home and thought the school could benefit. The stuff I have is of excellent quality. Cost of the garments is R10 per item and proceeds of the sales go to school

Melanie Burman can be reached on 082-462-7713 and Desiree Hoppenstein on 082-680-5353.

King David Schools have been running a pre-owned shop in Linksfield for the past 10 years. There are three cupboards in an office set aside for this purpose.

It was started for 45 needy families and now caters for pupils from grade 1 to grade 7 of all the King David

A spokesman for King David said R20 could buy whatever was needed, with the proceeds going towards a therapy fund for children who needed therapy, but whose parents could not afford it.

Many of the items come from lost property. "There is a clean-up at the end of every term, notices are sent out, announcements are made in the newsletter and if unclaimed (most of the garments are unlabelled) the clothes are put up for sale in the shop, which is open every Tuesday and Thursday morning at KDL Primary."

Another point made by King David was that children were growing all the time and that items were always getting lost.

The United Herzlia Schools in Cape Town has a pre-owned shop run by PTA mother Beth Silbert for the five primary schools, the Middle School and the High School.

It has been in existence for many years. Those wanting to purchase previously-owned uniforms may email Silbert at beth@infochoice.co.za and inform her of your needs.

A King David Linksfield parent feels pre-owned uniform shops are a "great idea" and hopes parents will donate outgrown or used items.

"In government schools it is possible to buy shirts, for example, or grey pants from affordable clothing shops. But the problem is that many of the logos of the schools are part of the shirts at the Jewish day schools."

Although she has not found it necessary to buy pre-owned gear in the past, "I would not hesitate to buy quality second-hand clothes, if necessary".

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World News in Brief

Hamas operatives pose as medical patients to enter Israel

BOOKING AT COMPUTICKET

JERUSALEM - Two Hamas operatives were arrested by Israeli security services after posing as medical patients in order to enter Israel.

The two operatives, 31-year-old Mahmoud Matok and his 52-year-old father of the Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza, entered Israel on forged medical documents on January 7. They later escaped from the hospital and travelled to the Israeli Arab community of Umm al-Fahm in northern Israel, where they were arrested, said Israel's Shin Bet security service

During their interrogation, the two confessed to using a relative's medical condition by posing as that relative to gain medical attention in Israel. They paid NIS 7 000 (\$1 777) for the forged documents.

"This is a serious incident that illustrates the cynical exploitation of Israel's willingness to meet the humanitarian needs of Gaza's residents, which could lead to a tightening of entry regulations, and ultimately harm the residents of the Gaza Strip," a Shin Bet official told the Jerusalem Post. (JNS.org)

Iran gains access to \$100 billion in sanctions relief

TEHRAN - The Iranian government said on Monday that it has now gained access to more than \$100 billion of frozen overseas assets as part of the sanctions relief promised under the nuclear deal signed last summer with world powers.

"These assets have fully been released and we can use them," Iranian government spokesman Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht said, Iran's state-run Press TV reported.

According to Press TV, much of the money that had come from international sales of Iranian oil had been piling up in banks in China, India, Japan, South Korea and Turkey. Those countries have been holding the funds in escrow since sanctions were imple-

Additionally, several Iranian banks were reconnected to the Belgian-based SWIFT financial transaction system that handles wire transfers between financial institutions.

Many Israeli officials, as well as Arab states like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, fear that Iran may use these funds to pay its terror proxies such as Hezbollah or the Houthi rebels in Yemen, which could in turn destabilise the Middle East. Furthermore, officials and analysts fear that Iran could also use the money to develop its ballistic missile programme. (JNS.org)

Jerusalem grand mufti condemns Western Wall agreement

JERUSALEM - The grand mufti of Jerusalem has condemned the agreement approved by Israel's Cabinet to establish an egalitarian prayer area at the Western Wall.

The area next to the Western Wall is "the property of the Islamic Waqf that was taken by the Israeli occupation in 1967", Sheik Muhammad Hussien said in a statement issued on Monday, The Jerusalem Post reported.

Hussien called the decision "a brutal attack on the Waqf and additional evidence of the Israeli aggression against Muslim holy places, in an attempt to Judaise Jerusalem." The Cabinet approved the agreement on Sunday. (JTA)

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Disclaimer

The letters page is intended to provide an opportunity for a range of views on any given topic to be expressed.

Opinions articulated in the letters are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, staff or directors of the Jewish Report.

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

Guidelines for letters

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

BE CAREFUL NOT TO BE LEFT WITH A PARTIALLY SINKING SHIP

If a department is underperforming it is common practice to replace members of that organisation. In light of this, it made sense to replace the minister of finance, since our economy has been struggling.

To then criticise the president and hammer the value of the rand, may have been an overreaction by those with an axe to grind, even if it might have been a mistake to appoint someone who is relatively unknown and inexperienced to that position.

There is nevertheless a different concern about this frequent practice of replacing people, especially when done in haste. There is always good reason for any situation.

If an organisation is performing badly it may not necessarily be the fault of its head or its members. Just dismissing someone would not always solve the underlying problem. In addition to the existing problem, more challenges would be created.

To just get rid of experienced people is not a good idea - they have much information on the running of the organisation and in dealing with its challenges. Starting again with inexperienced staff could be a big setback.

Suddenly firing people is usually an overreaction and is a cruel way of treating those who have been loyal and hard working. This creates some instability in the organisation where the morale of its staff is affected.

They might worry that their own job security could be on the line and consider leaving; they may also not be willing to go the extra mile and serve with loyalty if this and other tough practices are employed. Thus, while management might be intending to run a tight ship, they could land up with a partially sinking ship.

Martin Zagnoev Sunningdale Ridge, Johannesburg

RABBIS IN THE GALUT HAVE DUTY TO PREACH ALIYAH

Last week's edition of Jewish Report features an article by a leading (Chabad) rabbi in which he strongly emphasises the need for faith in Hashem and the Torah. He invites questions from readers concerning this need for faith and ways of developing faith and trust in Hashem.

I would like to ask the rabbi the following question: The number of Torah observant Jews in the galut are estimated to be a little over one million. There is Torah learning and mitzvot observance. There are many rabbis, roshei yeshiva, Chassidic rabbis, teachers and daf hayomi learners.

They all believe in Hashem and His Torah as the absolute universal truth. My question is: By remaining in the galut when the gates of the Holy Land have been opened for the past 67 years, after 2 000 years of non-Jewish rule, inviting you to return, are you not showing a lack of faith/trust in Hashem?

At this time, when there are close to seven million Jews in Eretz Yisrael, do you still question the fact that we are in the process of the final redemption?

Where is the one eminent rabbi in the galut who will call out to his community to trust and have faith in Hashem and leave the galut behind and return home? To my mind, rabbis who remain in the galut and fail to encourage the young people in their communities to make aliyah are acknowledging doubt in the legitimacy of the words of our prophets that Hashem will return us to the Holy Land.

Chabad, and other observant groups have done much to strengthen Judaism in the galut. Is it not time to complete this task by encouraging as many young Jews to follow up and bring their knowledge and talents to their own Land?

The Judaism of Eretz Yisrael is to be our true goal. Salvation from the Diaspora will in turn bring Torah life to where it belongs - Eretz Yisrael.

Choni Davidowitz Golden Acres, Johannesburg

THIS ACT OF KINDNESS DID NOT GO UNNOTICED

I would just like to point out the exceptional kindness of a member of our community. Last week Friday morning I had to take my husband to the Linksfield Clinic for an emergency blood test. The parking lot was full. I was very stressed and anxious and out of desperation parked in a space for deliveries.

The security guard told me to move immediately or else he would clamp my wheels. I tried to explain to him the urgency of the situation but he was adamant on clamping my wheels.

A man was standing and observing the whole situation and immediately offered his help. He parked my car for me in a very narrow parking bay into which you had to reverse park. I was so taken aback by his unselfish act of kindness and asked him what his name was. He told me that he is Rabbi Aaron Rose. I can't thank you enough Rabbi Rose, for your help on Friday.

Judy Harris Johannesburg

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VAST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 'ECCLESIASTICAL' AND 'ECUMENICAL'

I refer to the article in last week's Jewish Report, by Ant Katz: "Is smoking acceptable in halacha?" Reference is made in the article to the Beth Din as being the ecumenical court; this is entirely incorrect. The Beth Din is the "Jewish ecclesiastical court". Ecumenical is the general or universal term, belonging to the entire Christian Church.

Isaac Reznik Johannesburg

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A FREE LUNCH

Who said that if you think that medical cover is expensive now, just wait till you find out what it will cost you when it is free?

Jack Miller Gresswold, Johannesburg Good heavens, Eli Knight, isn't Jewish history interesting? We are still debating the same topic which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Clearly you are unaware that the history of Judaism is a minefield best not entered into if one is ignorant of the facts.

REFORM AND ORTHODOXY: DIVIDED HOUSE OF JUDAISM

By pointing fingers at Reform Jews and dismissing them as worthy of the fires of Gehinnom, you have fallen into that sanctimonious trap so common among members of your sect, blinded by a belief of right and a sense of superiority.

I'm sorry to disturb your comfort zone and burst your bubble but you are wrong. If our patriarchs were all alive today, stretching from Abraham to Malachi, then none would recognise what we Jews are practising. Indeed they would be horrified to observe what we sectarians believe in and have the chutzpah to accuse others of.

This is because both Orthodoxy and Reform Judaism are equally and ironically modern versions of their time. Judaism as she is presently known, has gone through many evolutions but also two bloody revolutions. The first occurred under the Syrian demigod Antiochus Epiphanes, from where we got the Chanukah story; the last occurred when Rome, against its own foreign policy, decided to sack Jerusalem.

Jewish commentary around these two events is mired in myth-making and controversy. I believe it's a rather cock-eyed version which had eventually made it into the books. We've all been taught that the authorities of the Second Temple-era were purists or tzaddikim. This is what Josephus

wrote and subsequent rabbis elaborated on.

But with all due respect to the Jewish historian, he was a compulsive liar and a charlatan. The internecine conflict of 66 - 70 CE was entirely a sectarian war between reformists and traditionalists. It was the "priestly" caste or Greek reformers who had been ringing in the religious changes - the same people whose ancestors had aligned themselves with Antiochus in earlier times.

Since Josephus was born into and belonged to this party, this "priest" naturally took it upon himself to cook and flavour historical facts to suit his party's own cause.

Perhaps you recognise them? These reformers were Roman lackeys and when the real traditionalists (the common people) started to revolt, it was first against them that they directed their anger and frustrations - only afterwards against Rome.

It was not only Josephus whom the people accused of traitorous conduct, but also his entire progressive party. Of course, after Rome had almost destroyed the Judeans, there had to be a faction left who would rewrite Jewish history.

How interesting that the ones trusted with this mammoth task were those Jews feted and protected by Rome. How things have changed. yet remain the same! The moral of the lesson: People who live in glass houses...

Colin Jantjies Rugby, Cape Town

IMAGINE IF NEVER AGAIN WAS FOR EVERYONE AND NOT JUST FOR US

Imagine if Wendy Kahn, the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) had travelled to Scottburgh, KwaZulu-Natal last month and had tea with Penny Sparrow (who had made racist remarks about black people).

Imagine if Kahn had explained the history and dangers of comparing human beings to monkeys. Imagine if she showed Sparrow pictures of Jews crowded into ghettos as they were considered subhuman, incapable of full emotions and undeserving of rights.

Last week, we commemorated International Holocaust Remembrance Day which marked the 71st anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. Jews have a long history of being on the receiving end of racism, prejudice and hatred.

Jews - together with other religious people in many countries in the world - have been at the forefront of the fight for human rights and justice. The great sage Hillel said: "Do not do unto others what is hateful to you; the rest (of the Torah) is commentary."

In the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, Jewish communities, organisations and individuals joined the cause for equal rights for blacks. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Herschel was on the front lines of the march to Selma, Alabama, marching with Dr Martin Luther King.

Closer to home, Rabbi Norman Bernhard, as a member of Jews for Social Justice, Helen Suzman, Joe Slovo as well as many UDF (United Democratic Front) activists, were among the Jews who spoke out against apartheid and criticised the injustices of unequal treatment of people based on race.

Most South African Jews, being of Lithuanian descent, grew up hearing the stories of our families' experience at the receiving end of East European anti-Semitism; we have a role to play in sharing our understanding of bias, prejudice and hatred with sections of society who are unable to fathom the dangers of racism.

And yet, the organised Jewish community - the SAJBD - has been heavily criticised over the years for not taking a stand against apartheid. This resulted in a moving apology by Rabbi Cyril Harris on behalf of South African Jews at the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) hearings.

Now is the time for the SAJBD, our shuls, Jewish organisations and individuals, to oppose racism in South Africa.

Imagine if being against racism was about actions rather than mere conferences. Imagine if never again was for everyone and not just for

Rina King, Jessica Sherman Jewish Voices for a Just Peace

PLEASE, RABBI ELIEZER BERLAND, GO TO ISRAEL AND STAND TRIAL!

I refer to the article in a Sunday newspaper: "Fugitive rabbi's death threat to Jewish chief".

As a South African Jew, I am obliged to speak out, in order to set the record straight: Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein has no time or reason to deal with a minority Israeli sect. Fingering him in his personal capacity as a precipitator of problems, is a false accusation and ruse used to shift the focus...

This sect's head faces serious allegations of sexual harassment and rape, which must now be heard in Israeli courts. In Judaism, we are commanded to heal the world (tikkun olam) and promote cosmic love (ahavat olam). The essence of our existence is based on peace (shalom).

We are directed to do everything in our power to reduce the world's evil, without ever shedding blood or endangering life.

I find it most strange that this sect's formal and serious studying takes place while lying on unmade hotel beds, with cooking in the bedrooms.

It is very sad and embarrassing that the South African Police Service has to be foisted into this religious imbroglio.

I truly hope that the law now takes its course in Israel, without any further delay, and that peace and brotherly love prevail.

Raymond Chait, Cape Town

Mendelsohn takes reins at Commonwealth Jewish Congress

SUZANNE BELLING

The Commonwealth Jewish Council, which includes southern Africa, has elected a new president, Jon, Lord Mendelsohn, who succeeds the late Lord Janner.

> Kessel is the son of Mike Kessel, president of the Hermanus Hebrew Congregation, and former principal of United Herzlia Schools.

South Africans on the executive board include Ann Harris, African regional president, Chaya Singer, (South African Jewish Board of Deputies) and Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, CEO of the African Jewish Congress and country communities' spiritual leader.

Rabbi Silberhaft was in London as a guest of Emunah during a speaking tour to promote charity work supporting disadvantaged



Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft; Chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth, Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis; and Shlomo Kessel, international director of Emunah.

Schools. He was also Chief Rabbi Mirvis' principal at Herzlia, while Rabbi Mirvis is the son of the well-known Kabbalist Rabbi Dr Lionel Mirvis of Cape Town.

Shlomo Kessel often conducts High Holy Day services in Hermanus, which falls under the aegis of the Board's country communities' department. Heading up Emunah, he has contributed towards putting the organisation on the map. Audiences saw a film "Every Child Counts", a first-hand account by Shlomo Kessel, who was formerly director of the Emunah Children's Home in Afula.

The Commonwealth Jewish Council (CJC) provides links between Commonwealth Jewish communities, such as those in South Africa, Britain, Canada and several African countries including Zambia, Botswana and Kenya. It supports their interests, cultivates constructive relationships to help further the goals of CJC and makes representations on behalf of Commonwealth Jewish communities to governments and other relevant bodies and people as and when seems suitable. Its work is funded by donations and subscriptions.



the Commonwealth Jewish Congress.

Strict legal interpretation splits family

children in Israel, organised by

director of Emunah, who accom-

ments. These included a meeting

Kessel is the son of Mike Kes-

Hebrew Congregation, and former

panied the rabbi on his engage-

at the home of Commonwealth

sel, president of the Hermanus

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis.

principal of United Herzlia

Shlomo Kessel, international

MICHAEL BELLING

The six-year-old daughter of South African citizen Yaron Schapiro has been banned from re-entering South Africa for five years, resulting in her family being split between this country and Israel.

Her parents and her two older sisters - Yaron, his wife Jessica and daughters Sophie (now 13) and Maya (now 10) - moved to Israel in 2006.

Schapiro, who has a business in South Africa, went to Israel to help care for his mother, who was in failing health.

Noa Schapiro was born in Israel on January 28, 2010, but her birth was not registered with the South African embassy in Tel Aviv, as Schapiro thought she was automatically a citizen of this country by virtue of his citizenship.

The family returned to South Africa in 2015. Sophie and Maya hold dual South African and Israeli citizenship. Like them, Noa travelled using an Israeli passport and her parents believed the same applied to her.

On their return, Schapiro devoted himself to his business in Cape Town, which he never gave up, and he and Jessica found a new home for the family, renewed their driving licences and registered the two older children at school and Noa in a nursery school.

Maya requires special schooling as she is deaf and knows sign language only in Hebrew.

Schapiro said he had enquired about Noa's status at the South African embassy in Israel and was told it could be sorted out in South Africa.

In December the family went to Mauritius on holiday but was told that Noa had overstayed her visa and would have to leave the country.

Schapiro told the SA Jewish Report that Noa had been "generously handed" the status of undesirable and could not return to South Africa for five years. As a result, Jessica and Noa have gone back to Israel, while Yaron and the other two girls are in Cape Town with their father.

"How do you disconnect a five-year-old girl from her parent and siblings, all of whom carry a South African identity document?" Schapiro asked.

"I don't know how long the separation will last."

The Department of Home Affairs in South Africa has applied a strict interpretation of a

law on birth registration that took effect in 2014, providing that the birth of a South African child had to be registered within 30 days, even though in this case it meant splitting the family.

"I believe I am a good, law-abiding South African," Schapiro said. I run an honest company. But does it help if you do all the right things in South Africa?"

He said the Home Affairs decision affected him on several levels – beyond just his immediate family.

He employs 60 people in his business, which is suffering.

"The financial ramifications are not only for me. I had to cancel four business trips as a result of this."

He is looking to obtain assistance to rectify the matter at Home Affairs from anyone who might have contacts in the department and be able to approach someone senior there to help resolve the issue – whether on the level of a deputy minister or a senior departmental official.

He is also working with a lawyer and publicising the matter on social media.



Noa Schapiro, who has returned to Israel with her mother after being banned from South Africa for five years as "undesirable" and her sister Maya, who has remained with her father in South Africa.

Although Schapiro has not yet had any response from Home Affairs, he believes from what he has heard that the matter can be resolved and that he will have to go through the embassy in Israel to do so, which could take several months.

He hopes, however, that he will be able to reunite all the members of his split family before then



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Visit to Israel was truly food for our Jewish soul

REBECCA SARCHI
PRINCIPAL, TORAH ACADEMY GIRLS' HIGH
SCHOOL

As always, the Israel Encounter proved to be the trip of a lifetime, with 10 glorious days of touring, visiting seminaries, bonding with South Africans and Israelis and of course eating.

From north to south, east to west - the girls from Torah Academy Girls' High, Beis Yaakov, Hirsch Lyons and three representatives from Yeshiva College, Crawford and Beth Rivka, Australia, got to know and love our homeland, Israel.

The Golan, Tiberius, Jerusalem, Mibereshit, the Dead Sea, Masada, a deaf museum, a shuk in Tel Aviv, were among the many experiences never to be forgotten.

Our every need was taken care of; we saw Israel both through the eyes of a tourist and a local.

Shabbos was a memorable experience - so many Jews in our homeland and a special bond shared by everyone. Friday night in Mea Shearim - a new and inspiring experience - even in the freezing cold.

Volunteering at Aleh, a home for children with genetic diseases, made us realise how blessed and fortunate we are. Walking the streets of Ben Yehuda on motsei Shabbos was such fun. Ice creams and crepes, loads of young people.

When finally, it was time to head back to Ben-Gurion Airport, we did so sadly but optimistically, knowing that we would be returning back home to Israel very soon.



Gemilus chesed brought smiles to Sandringham residents



Adam Sandler, Gabriel Herbert, Erin Lazarus, Tsipra Boudnitski, Cheyney Travis, Jordan Upiter and Zach Gerber bonding.

DANIEL GEWER, HEAD STUDENT LEADER

It says in Pirkei Avot that the world stands on three things, namely Torah, service and acts of loving-kindness. The Student Leader Body of 2015/6 of King David High School, Linksfield, initiated a chesed programme whereby they accompanied the grade 8 group to Sandringham Gardens and performed the mitzvah of gemilus chesed by interacting with and giving chocolates to the residents. While giving of their time and energy, the grade 8s received wisdom and love.

Not only did they grab the opportunity with such enthusiasm and eagerness to give back to the community, but were very interested to learn about the inspiring lives of many residents. It was heart-warming to see smiles on the faces of both the residents and learners.

The grade 8s as well as the student leaders, realise how important it is to give back and what an impact each one of them, as proud King Davidians, can make.

"Happiness doesn't result from what we get, but from what we give."

The executive Student Leader Body 2015/2016 comprises Daniel Gewer; Jessa Marx; Chadd Silver; and Tali Ogus.

Certificate awards: GDE respects Jewish Sabbath



SUZANNE BELLING

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin, principal of Torah Academy Boys' High School, described last Friday night's actions of the Gauteng Department of Education as a "Kiddush Hashem" when the department was alerted to the fact that the TA learners would not be able to receive their District Matric Awards because of Shabbos.

The GDE changed the programme, distributing certificates at the start of the proceedings - before the guest speakers - giving Torah Academy enough time to make it to shul.

"It is a very big thing that they respected our religion," Rabbi Chaikin said. Torah Academy received a framed certificate for its 100 per cent pass rate, while Meir Rosendorff received a certificate for attaining the top marks in CAT (Computer Applications Technology) - 93 per cent.

Shabsi Katz, who is studying abroad in a yeshiva, received an award for top marks in history (96 per cent).

Both boys scored the highest marks for these subjects in Gauteng.

Walking or tumbling, sliding or swinging... for Sydenham tots

SUE BENJAMIN

Learning gross motor skills plays an important part in healthy development. These skills enable children to navigate their environment with confidence and agility.

Whether it's walking, tumbling, rolling, sliding, swinging, climbing, crawling or balancing, the opportunity to practise these skills has been incorporated into the newest playground equipment at Sydenham Pre-Primary School.

The equipment lends itself to imaginative play - children can hide in tunnels, view the garden from the deck, or hang from the monkey bars underneath

Pictured - bottom to top - are Brandon Blacker; Chad Diamond; Noah Meyers; Aiden Meyers; Kiara Bergman; and Sofia Cohen.



Bad Jews, Berland: Who talks for the Jews?



TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin

It is ironic that the provocative play Bad Jews is on in Johannesburg at the same time as the strange saga of fugitive Rabbi Eliezer Berland is playing itself out. Both have been reported on in this newspaper and others. The resonance between them has to do with who takes responsibility for the well-being and behaviour of Jewish communities; both are attracting intense interest.

Bad Jews, by US Jewish playwright Josh Harmon, is playing to packed houses - consisting not only of Jews - at the Theatre on the Square in Sandton. It explores the myriad contradictions inherent in Jewish identity, and the tensions and neuroses portrayed in the past by iconic figures like Woody Allen.

They are taken to a new, 21st millennium

level in Bad Jews, which drags in everything from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,

"politically correct" Jewish intellectuals at fancy universities who are fascinated by other cultures but defiantly turn their backs on their Jewish heritage, the Holocaust, women's roles in religious ritual, and overprotective mothers. And, of course, the eternal biggie: marrying out, and the reaction in a Jewish man's family when he falls in love with a non-Jewish woman and proposes to marry her.

The Berland story, involving a rabbi on the run because of alleged sexual misdemeanours in Israel, has provoked South African Jews to somehow take public responsibility for his case, lest he reflect badly among South Africans about Jews' morality.

Jews are inherently insecure. They feel the need to protect their image among non-Jews, for fear of the anti-Semites gaining ammunition. In contrast, if an individual Christian breaks the law, it is unlikely the churches would feel it necessary to issue a statement distancing themselves.

To many Jews, it seemed necessary for South

African Jewry to distance itself from Berland. The combined public statement of the major mainstream organisations purported to speak on behalf of all South African Jewry, saying the criminal justice system should take its due course - meaning he should be arrested by SA police and sent back to Israel.

Inevitably, however, Jews will always express vehemently different opinions. Some immediately objected to turning another Jew over to non-Jewish authorities. One letter on the SAJR website said Berland "should be welcomed into the community, he is a messenger from Hashem and can only help out".

Another said: "[Chief Rabbi] Goldstein, who gives you a right to make a 'communal statement'?! Did you ask the community what they believe?! I for one disagree with this statement and I know many who feel like me..."

There are many Jews unaffiliated to the 'official' community, and others who reject the representativeness of the organisations. It was the same during apartheid: the SAJBD issued no statement against the immoral racist system

until 1986, when it was already safe to do so because there would be no recriminations from the regime. This enraged those Jews who were actively fighting apartheid, often at great personal risk, alienating them from the Jewish mainstream.

The truth is, the Jews are not "one". Unity is elusive even in a clear-cut case of supporting Israeli law and Berland's accountability to it. American poet Rodger Kamenetz said wryly in his book, The Jew in the Lotus, that Jews are definitely the eternal people: they will last forever because there isn't enough time in the universe to finish their arguments.

Berland and Bad Jews are pressing many of the same sensitive Jewish buttons.

In another book Kamenetz examines Franz Kafka's works. This is ironic too, since the Berland saga and the so-called bad Jews' reaction to it, is distinctly Kafkaesque.

 Read Geoff Sifrin's regular columns on his blog sifrintakingissue.wordpress.com

World News in Brief

25% of Israeli Jews fear another Holocaust, poll shows

JERUSALEM - More than half (59 per cent) of Israelis are afraid to travel outside the country, with 25 per cent saying they are usually afraid to do so and 34 per cent saying they have become more afraid this past year, a new poll commissioned by the World Zionist Organisation shows.

According to the poll, which was conducted by the Midgam Consultants and Research Institute, more women than men say they are afraid to travel abroad.

Sixty-five per cent of respondents say their concerns prompt them to play down signs of Israeli or Jewish identity while abroad, a group among whom 36 per cent say they do so regularly and 29 per cent say they have changed their habits and have recently started hiding their Jewish/Israeli identities.

Additionally, 25 per cent of the Israelis polled say they believe there is reason to fear that another Holocaust will be perpetrated against the Jewish people, and 24 per cent believe there is a chance that the State of Israel will cease to exist. More than two-thirds are worried about the safety of Jewish communities outside of Israel (Israel Hayom/Exclusive to JNS.org)

Israel imposes partial closure on Ramalla

JERUSALEM - Israel's military has imposed a partial closure on Ramallah, the West Bank city that is the seat of government for the Palestinian Authority.

The closure, which was imposed late on Sunday night, is the first for a Palestinian city since the start of the current wave of Palestinian terror against Jewish-Israelis in October. It came hours after a Palestinian Authority police officer from Ramallah shot and wounded three Israeli soldiers at a security checkpoint near the city.

Under the edict, non-residents are banned from entering the city and residents are restricted from leaving.

The closure also was imposed due to security warnings for the area, Haaretz reported, citing an unnamed Israel Defence Forces official. (JTA)





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Recent typhoid cases present no cause for alarm

SUZANNE BELLING

There is no typhoid outbreak in Johannesburg, according to Professor Lucille Blumberg (pictured), deputy director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD).

One recent death and three other reported cases "prompted an investigation", Blumberg says.

Three of the cases probably were infected outside South Africa and "imported" to this country. The only cases that are linked are those of two siblings.

"Based on that, there is not an outbreak, because they have different sources," she says.

In the case of an outbreak, there is a link to common exposure. The locally reported cases are "sporadic" and do not represent an outbreak for this reason.

The NICD is the national public health institute for South Africa, providing reference, surveillance and public health research to support the government's response to threats from communicable diseases.

The NICD primarily supports the programmes of the national and provincial departments of health, as well as public health services such as collaborating laboratory or regional reference laboratory functions for global programmes of the World Health Organisation.

Blumberg is also deputy director of the National Health Laboratory Service and head of the Public Health Surveillance and Response Division. With specialist qualifications in clinical microbiology, travel medicine and infectious diseases, she is a member of the joint staff at the University of the Witwatersrand and associate professor at the University of Stellenbosch in the department of medical microbiology.

Typhoid, also know as typhoid fever or enteric fever, is highly infectious, but is not that easy to catch, with around 100 000 infectious organisms required to cause infection.

The disease spreads through the ingestion of contaminated food and water containing faecal matter. It is common in communities where there is inadequate sanitation.

Symptoms include high fever, headache, abdominal discomfort, often with vomiting and diarrhoea and skin rash ("rose spots"). The incubation period is usually between 10 to 14 days.

Typhoid is endemic in this country and the southern African region. Approximately 100 cases are reported in this country every year throughout all nine provinces.

Contamination of water supplies has resulted in several large-scale outbreaks. Delmas in Mpumalanga, for example, has experienced repeated outbreaks, with over 1 000 cases in 1991 and over 400 in 2005, with three deaths.



A number of South Africa cases have been linked to an ongoing typhoid outbreak in Harare, Zimbabwe, that began in 2012 and was related to contaminated water sources. Over 4 000 cases have been diagnosed to date.

The numbers usually increase in summer because of seasonal changes or people being infected with typhoid while travelling to neighbouring countries in December.

Every case is investigated by health officials to confirm the likely source and protect the health of the public.

Health workers are on the lookout for cases of typhoid and also to ensure that other conditions that present with similar signs, such as malaria, are appropriately diagnosed and treated.

The drug of choice in treating typhoid fever is Ciprofloxacin, which resolves the symptoms and avoids the patient remaining a carrier of the disease after treatment. Other treatments are also available, but not always with results that are as favourable.

The three most effective methods of preventing typhoid are strict hand washing with soap and water after using the toilet and before handling food, providing safe water and adequate sanitation.

Animals are not affected by typhoid.

Tova Herzl gives fascinating insight into diplomatic life

CHARISSE ZEIFERT

The World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban in 2001, left a psychological scar on anyone who witnessed the blatant anti-Semitism that accompanied it. But what was it like for Israel's ambassador to South Africa at the time, Tova Herzl?

Would Israel and the US in fact participate? Was it the right decision to boycott it altogether? Would it not have been better to stay at the conference, and battle it out?

These are some of the questions that Herzl asks herself in her book, "Madame Ambassador: Behind the scenes with a candid Israeli Diplomat".

It would indeed be hard to find a more candid and honest account of diplomatic life for Israeli diplomats.

Herzl is upfront about some of the

dilemmas that faced her-whether to learn Russian when going to the Baltic States, how to engage with Holocaust memory, what the response should be to the Jonathan Pollard controversy and how best to deal with hostile anti-Israel sentiment in South Africa.

SRAELI DIPLOMAT

TOVA HERZL

She writes about important issues for Israel and explains how easily diplomatic misunderstandings can happen. And, while there are some meaty discussions on topics such as the relationship between Judaism and other religions, and Israeli versus Jewish identity, her book is so much more.

She has a keen sense of humour and provides some laugh-aloud moments in which we get glimpses of faux pas that have left her blushing and the reader cringing in sympathy and embarrassment (see the chapters entitled "Diplomacy and Dignity" and "Bodyguards").

She also describes the occasional loneliness that comes with being a single, religious Orthodox woman.

There are also times when her personal and professional life cannot be separated, such as when Herzl's 17-year-old niece was killed in a suicide attack in Jerusalem in 2002, while she was ambassador to South Africa, and she makes poignant comments.

Herzl devoted her life to the Israeli Foreign Service. Her book answers many of the questions she was asked while being a diplomat: "Oh, the enviable luxurious life of diplomats, right? Fabulous mansions in exclusive neighbourhoods, obedient staff to fulfil every whim, fancy cars with elegant drivers waiting to take them to fascinating encounters with glamorous celebrities, and fantastic salaries to top it all. Well, not exactly..."

In answering these questions, Herzl reflects not only on her life, but also provides rare and rich descriptions of daily life in the diplomatic corps. For South Africans, it resonates with our not too distant past.

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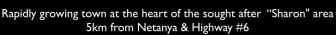


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'Mother of all protests' pledged by Galloway

LONDON - George Galloway, the notoriously anti-Israel British politician, said he has promised "the mother of all protests" when a cultural festival promoting Tel Aviv takes place in London next year.

In a series of tweets, he also criticised Labour's mayoral candidate Sadiq Khan for backing the festival.

Galloway, who intends to stand as the Respect Party candidate for mayor in May's election, asked: "Why @SadiqKhan are you promising to back a Tel Aviv festival? Have you no shame?" - Jewish Chronicle,

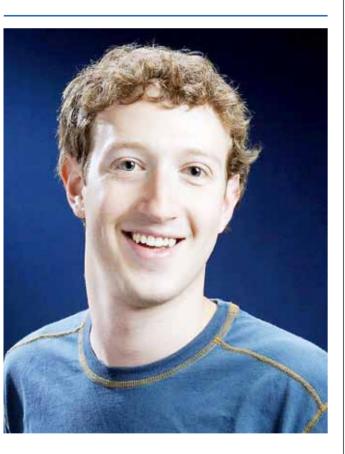
Majority of Israelis support negotiations

JERUSALEM - Most Israelis support negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, including a meeting between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, but are sceptical that talks will yield results, according to the Israel Democracy Institute and Tel Aviv University's monthly Peace Index poll, released last week Tuesday.

When asked for their stance about peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, 61,8 per cent expressed themselves in favour to some degree, while 32,8 per cent oppose negotiations to some degree. Israeli Arabs are far more likely to support talks, with 59,6 per cent very in favour and 27,1 per cent "somewhat" more than Israeli Jews, who are 26,3 per cent "very supportive" and 30,6 per cent "somewhat".

As for a meeting between Netanyahu and Abbas, 69,8 per cent support and 26,8 per cent oppose, though only 30,9 per cent of Israelis believed Abbas' comment in a briefing to Israeli press that he made it clear that he wants to meet with Netanyahu, and never received an

Despite their support for talks, most Israelis (67,7 per cent) do not believe that negotiations will bring peace in the coming years and less than a third (29,1 per cent) think it will. - Jerusalem Post



Facebook's Zuckerberg, richest Jew, sixth wealthiest person overall

LOS ANGELES - Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, the richest Jewish person in the world, has become the sixth-wealthiest overall.

Zuckerberg, 31, has a net worth of \$47,5 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, slightly ahead of the Koch brothers' fortune valued at \$4,.9 billion, Bloomberg Business reported last week.

Zuckerberg moved past the Kochs when his fortune rose \$6 billion in trading when Facebook reported record earnings. In October last year, Zuckerberg was listed Number 8 on the Bloomberg Index.

Bill Gates, Amancio Ortega, Warren Buffett, Jeff Bezos or Carlos Slim are the top five on the index.

Among Jews, Zuckerberg is ahead of Oracle's Larry Ellison, who is Number 10 overall.

In December 2015, Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, announced plans to donate 99 per cent of their Facebook shares to charity over their lifetimes. - Jewish Journal (Los Angeles)

Jewish driver beats Manchester bus lane camera

MANCHESTER - A Salford solicitor is hoping a successful appeal against a bus lane fine will have a positive affect for drivers in the UK.

Ari Kornbluth was taking his daughters to swimming lessons at King David High School when he was snapped by a bus lane camera.

No vehicles, except buses and taxis, are allowed in the bus lane between 16:00 and 19:00 from Monday to Friday.

Salford City Council issued Kornbluth with a £60 (about R1 380) penalty charge. But the 34-year-old disputed it, claiming that the fine was not proportionate to the offence.

He said, "... I needed to turn left and I strayed on to it just before the bus lane ended for possibly just two seconds. The way the junction is laid out means that in order to turn left at the end of the road, you need to merge into the inside lane, so I merged a little too early.

"There is a camera there and I am annoyed that the council had deliberately put it there just to catch people out who turn a second too early."

The father-of-five, who is a member of the Ohel Torah Congregation in Salford, did some research and realised that councils up and down the country had placed cameras at the end of bus lanes in a bid to catch

Kornbluth challenged the penalty on two counts: that it was a minor infringement and that the council was targeting drivers to raise revenue.

"The council just turned it down and told me that I drove in a bus lane," he recalled. "Therefore, I appealed through an independent adjudicator. I ran the risk of paying the full £60 if I lost. I guess that is why most people just pay the £30 and do not take it further."

Kornbluth's appeal was upheld, which meant he did not have to pay a single penny. - Jewish Telegraph

State-aided Orthodox school planned

LONDON - A new state-aided Orthodox Jewish secondary school is being planned to open in Barnet in September next year. Prospective parents have been invited to a meeting to discuss proposals to launch the Kedem High School. The projected school is in response to continuing pressure on places at mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London.

According to a website announcing the idea, Kedem would be under the auspices of the Chief Rabbi and run by a body called the Nekdama Trust. The project would be in partnership with Lilac Sky Outstanding Education Services, an educational agency which was called in to manage the Rosh Pinah Primary School in Edgware last year.

The plan would be to apply to the government for Kedem to become a free school. If successful, it would be the first Jewish secondary free school in London.

It would offer "a truly integrated and secular and Jewish curriculum which is rich, varied and challenging", according to the website.

Nekadma Trust has been set up by Andrew Rotenberg and Rabbi David Lister, respectively the chairman and principal of Rosh Pinah.

A spokesman for Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis said that while the Chief Rabbi was "instinctively supportive" of new education proposals, he urged "all those involved to ensure that a comprehensive consultation process is in place, which takes account of community-wide strategic planning on matters relating to education". - Jewish Chronicle, London



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SA Jewish Report (011) 430-1980

HOD - a very worthy South African export

SUZANNE BELLING

Ve'ahavta lerei'acha kamocha - love our neighbour as yourself - is the motto of the Hebrew Order of David (HOD) International, borne out by the camaraderie and spirit of goodwill at its 43rd biennial conference in Johannesburg from Thursday last week to Sunday.

The conference began with an installation and lodge dinner on Thursday night, followed by a shul service at the Sydenham-Highlands North Hebrew Congregation on Friday night, the opening and continuation of the conference the following night and Sunday, and culminated in a lunch at the HOD Centre on Sunday.

The HOD was founded in South Africa in 1904 and numbers swelled when, after the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902, "people were looking for a cause to support", Stan Klaff, immediate past grand president and master of ceremonies at the lunch, told the SA Jewish Report.

HOD was primarily in South Africa until, in 1990, numbers began to dwindle with increasing Jewish emigration from this country.

"This created a window of opportunity to start lodges overseas," Klaff said.

At present there are lodges in no fewer than five countries - South Africa, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and Israel.

Johannesburg has retained the head office, with lodges in this country in Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth, East London, Benoni and three in Johannesburg.

There are four lodges in London, eight in North America, four in Atlanta and one each in Boca Raton, Dallas, Houston and Toronto. The one lodge in Israel is in Ra'anana.

"This shows that not all emigration is negative," Klaff remarked.

The HOD supports various projects, without making cash donations to the causes, for example, in Israel an ambutractor - a small ambulance on a tractor that can travel over routes and terrain that would not be accessible to an ordinary ambulance - was provided by the HOD.

The HOD often combines its contributions with existing projects - usually Jewish charities, providing practical assistance to them or help in kind, such as supporting specific projects or even individuals in dire need of help.

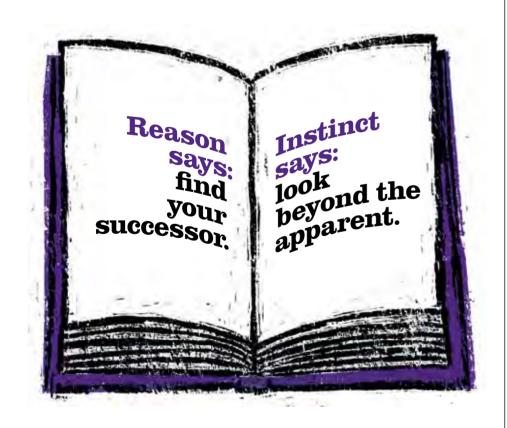
With the current rand/dollar exchange rate, the overseas lodges are able to facilitate more towards helping South Africa.

Incoming grand master for 2016 to 2018, Michael Margolis, who came out for the conference from London, paid tribute to Klaff's contribution during his eight years as grand master. Klaff will continue as grand secretary of the organisation.

In a lighter vein, Margolis thanked the wives and partners of all the HOD members, who are known as brothers.

He remarked on the matching maroon kippot worn by the delegates and suggested they also wear matching socks to the next convention, which he displayed to much amusement during his talk.

He ended with a quote from Rabbi Jonathan, Lord Sacks, that you do not make a life by what you get, but by what you give.



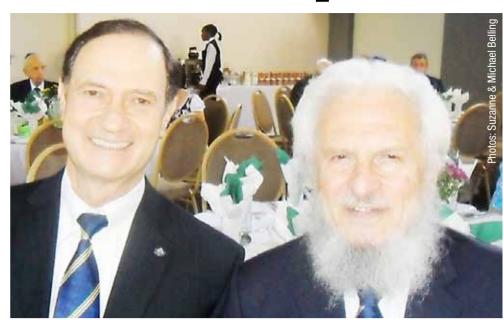
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David Joss, president of the Hebrew Order of David governing lodge of North America, from Atlanta, Georgia, shares a lighthearted moment at the HOD biennial conference with Bernard Shull, grand legal officer of the Hebrew Order of David International.



HOD office-bearers after the organisation's conference: Anton Teper, governing lodge president, London, UK; Michael Margolis, newly-inducted president of the Hebrew Order of David, from London; and Alan Rubenstein, deputy grand president of the Hebrew Order of David, from Atlanta, US.



Geraldine Klaff (Johannesburg); Joan Rubenstein (Atlanta); and Wendy Kraitzik (Atlanta) at the HOD conference lunch.



Con Travis, is congratulated by Stan Klaff on becoming only the second person in HOD history to be awarded honorary membership of the Hebrew Order of David International, after being active in the organisation for more than 40 years. He is in his 90th year.

Monday (February 8)

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Today, Friday (February 5)

• UZLC hosts Star Metro reporter Anna Cox on "Prospects for Johannesburg in 2016". Venue: Our Parents Home. Time: 12:45 - 14:00. Contact: Gloria (011) 485-4851 or 072-127-9421.

Saturday evening (February 6)

• WIZO Johannesburg hosts the performance of "Bad Jews". Only a few seats left! Venue: Auto & General Theatre on the Square, Sandton. Time: 29:15. Cost: R190. Booking: Batya: (011) 645-

2517/wizojhbaccounts@beyachad.co.za

• UJW adult education division hosts Anton Harber, professor of media studies at Wits, on "How the Media Impacts our Lives". Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 09:30. Donation: R35. Contact: (011) 648-1053.

Wednesday (February 10)

• UJW adult education division hosts Dr Lorraine

Chaskalson, formerly of Department of English at Wits, on "The Written Word Leaps off the Page" Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 09:30. Donation: R35. Contact: (011) 648-1053.

Thursday (February 11)

• JJAC invites Jewish singles between the ages of 27 and 49 to games evening at 19:00 at Sandton Shul. Play 30 Seconds, Pictionary, Scrabble, Backgammon, table tennis and pool. E-mail whatson@jjac.co.za to book. Cost:R25 (first time

Community Columns

------ A column of Maccabi South Africa -----

Maccabi Junior football trials a success

Sunday, January 31 saw the beginning of Maccabi SA's Junior football preparations for the 2017 Macca-

Just over 65 excited boys attended the trials which were held at Balfour Park FC in Johannesburg including six boys from Cape Town. The boys

and parents were briefed on the strategic direction for under-16 and under-18 football going forward - ultimately aiming for success at the Maccabiah.

The boys played in seven-a-side and 11-a-side formats and were evaluated by independent and professional selectors from various academies and clubs in South Africa. The level of football was strong and the boys and parents were positive and pleased about the way in which the trials were run.



Two training squads of approximately 25 players have now been chosen to take the process forward and form the basis for a competitive team that will fly the flag high for Maccabi and South Africa in 2017.

The squad will be run professionally going forward, which will

include the spheres of regular training and competitive matches, sports science and psychology, biokinetics and team-building activities.

Maccabi SA is also in the planning stages of making a football programme available to younger Jewish players who aren't yet eligible for the Maccabiah. Maccabi SA would like to thank Balfour Football Club, FORWARD-ZONE and Hatzolah for making the trials not only possible, but a success.



News

Rigid bail conditions for Shai Musli

ANT KATZ

Purported Israeli mob boss, Shai Musli, wanted for complicity in murder and numerous other charges by the Israeli government, appeared before the Randburg Magistrate's Court on January 18 and was granted bail of R100 000 on January 19.

Jewish Report was surprised that the SA security authorities had gone against their own policy of never granting bail in extradition cases and seldom in Schedule 6 offences, such as murder.

Musli, who has had his case remanded three times before, had arrived in court last November under unusually heavy police protection after police received a "credible tip-off" that there may have been a mob-plot to spring him. SAJR went to the top to find out what had changed.

Brigadier Vishnu Naidoo, head of media communication at the South African Police Service, confirmed that it is against normal procedure to release prisoners awaiting extradition hearings on bail, However, he said, "each case is dealt with on its own merits".

Naidoo confirmed that SAPS had laid on special

extra security at an earlier appearance by Musli, due to concerns for his safety. "At that time there were certain threats considered," he said.

Naidoo told SAJR that bail is "granted as a means to secure the attendance of an accused in court. A decision was taken that there was no real need to keep the accused in custody." He did not, however, offer any reason for the change.

The terms of Musli's bail require him to report at "a particular police station" every day between 07:00 and 19:00, said Naidoo. He was ordered not to leave Gauteng Province without the knowledge of the investigating officer.

Musli had met the conditions, added Naidoo, and is reporting every day at the police station.

Israeli security officials have for years been hunting around the world for Musli. However, he has allegedly been hiding out in SA since 2012 - lying low and moving often. He is said to head one of Israel's most feared crime families, who have waged a reign of terror in Tel Aviv and use their connections to the global criminal underworld, including South Africa's, to remove rivals and expand

One story dominates the news What's on the web this week

Needless to say, with a story we have been so closely covering for almost three years now - both the print newspaper and more so online - the travails of Rabbi Eliezer Berland is the main issue of the day.

Since the story broke last Sunday, first in the Sunday Times, then SA Jewish Report Online, and shortly after that, Ha'aretz, the myriad events and the fast-developing offshoots have dominated Israeli news and were the single top-trending story in that country on Monday.

It has now accelerated through Jewish media globally and every day has brought with it a surprise. See the illustrations and details on our website: www. sajr.co.za.

Stories on the website now, include: • Cops bungle third try to arrest Rabbi

Berland

 Did mistake lead to unintended death threat?

'They have the halachic status of "rodef"

• The Jewish communal statement that wasn't

· How we found Rav Berland and his band of merry men

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Medal for Maureen at Pan American Maccabi Games

JACK MILNER

The Pan American Maccabi Games, says 41-year-old Santiago lawyer Alvaro Rosenblut and chairman of the organising committee, will be the biggest Jewish-Zionist event outside Israel

Just this past summer, the European Maccabi Games, held in Berlin, drew about 2 100 Jewish athletes from 36 countries. Rosenblut proved to be spot on as more than 3000 athletes marched into the stadium for the Pan American Games in Santiago, Chile, which ran from December 28 until January 4.

First in line in the Parade of Nations was the Israeli team, which comprised about 140 members, followed by teams from more than 20 countries, including large delegations from Argentina, Brazil and Mexico and smaller contingents from Cuba and Venezuela.

The US sent around 500 athletes and as host, Chile, with 600 participants, was the last into the stadium.

The Pan American Maccabi Games have become a happy hunting ground for South Africans and although there was not a full team this year, Maccabi SA was represented by two tennis players - lifelong friends Maureen Joffe and Arona Katz.

Joffe and Katz competed in the Masters 60+ doubles event against Argentina, Chile and Peru. They came third but unfortunately did not receive bronze due to a tied ruling.

However, they managed to get late entry into the singles draw. Arona reached the quarterfinals and narrowly missed out on



Maureen Joffe (right) with her bronze medal in the women's Masters 60+ tennis event at the Pan American Maccabi Games in Santiago, Chile, last month.

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progressing to the semis where she would have met Maureen. However, Maureen did make it through and in a tough encounter against an Argentinian player, she managed to win bronze. This takes Team Maccabi SA's tally to 11 tennis medals at the Games.

The Pan American regional Maccabi Games are held every four years in a country in the Americas and it is organised by the Latin American Maccabi Confederation.

Arona explained that the conditions were very tough. "It was very, very hot but we persevered. They play on clay courts and I was a bit nervous having had a hip replacement operation, but I gave my best. I wish all the ladies from our 2013 Maccabi Games team could have joined us. We would have cleaned up!"

Maureen agreed. "The heat was incredible. The standard was good and I had a very tough first round singles match that lasted threeand-a-half hours and then the semifinal took another two-and-a-half hours. Arona and I had not intended on playing singles, as at our age, it's obviously a lot harder to run around the court alone!

"But in the end I am so glad that we did. I was really not expecting to win a medal. It turned out to be a very expensive medal given the exchange rate, but it was absolutely worth it. I would not have missed this experience for anything."

The South Africans were given the nickname "the Golden Girls" by their competitors, as they were the oldest competitors in the competition. Maureen is in her 60s and Arona in her 70s. "It was lovely," said Arona. "We shared the bus home after the game with the British Men's 45+ soccer team. They teased us that the Golden Girls had a medal while they were going home with nothing."

This was the two women's first visit to South America and they found it a "very

different and exciting adventure". Chile is a very beautiful country, especially all the snow-capped mountains in the distance," commented Arona.

"We arrived a week before the Games and spent time exploring Santiago and the surrounds by going on walking tours and catching buses and trains all over the show. We also did a tour up to the mountains where we enjoyed the hot springs."

Maureen added: "It is very beautiful but there is also a stark contrast between rich and poor. The mountain trip was wonderful and I enjoyed the hiking, although it was a bit exhausting and probably not the best idea before playing tennis. The hot springs were very primitive but delightful."

Maureen says she has been playing tennis since the age of 12 and the sport has played an important role in her life. "I love playing tennis. Sport in general makes an important contribution to your quality of life, and tennis has kept me healthy and happy - and outdoors.

"But also socially it has been wonderful. I have had such good times. As you can tell, I love to socialise and tennis provides the opportunity to meet all kinds of new people.

"Before the Pan Am Games I had just returned from visiting my daughter in Boca Raton, Florida. I regularly play tennis with her at her club which is geared towards older citizens who receive free coaching twice a week. Tennis is a very sociable, very big part of their lives there."

She and Arona have known each "since we were babies, so it was wonderful to share this

"I also met so many women from all over the world, and we shared stories and it was very special. We were also invited to lots of social events and it was a good opportunity to promote South Africa."

