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Jewish Report

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■ Volume 20 - Number 13

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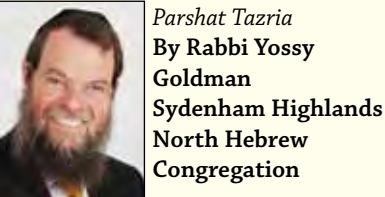
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The eternal covenant

Jewish community is well-catered for countrywide this Pesach



Parshat Tazria
By Rabbi Yossy Goldman
Sydenham Highlands North Hebrew Congregation

And on the eighth day the foreskin of his flesh shall be circumcised. The verse comes from the opening lines of this week’s parsha and, as they say in the classics, the rest is history.

A bris is a covenant and through the millennia, Jews have kept this mitzvah like no other and have thereby maintained their eternal covenant with G-d. There were times when giving one’s son a bris was punishable by death. Jewish parents still kept the covenant.

My wife’s grandfather, Reb Elchonon Shagalov, became a holy martyr for his faith because in Stalin’s Russia he dared to practise as a mohel, circumcising Jewish children in the town of Homil. One day he was taken by the KGB and never seen again. His wife and children struggled valiantly and eventually made it to the free world where they raised dedicated families of faithful Jews.

Today, so many young - and not so young - Jews throughout the Former Soviet Union are embracing the covenant knowing full well that it would have been far easier at eight days old.

And though we now hear voices from so-called enlightened quarters suggesting that circumcision is barbaric and an invasion of an infant’s human rights, it still remains the most widely practised mitzvah in the world. And, please G-d, it will retain that distinction forever.

I have no intention of getting into the health debate. I am a rabbi not a doctor. There are enough medical experts who can prove the physiological benefits and certainly justify it even were there no compelling religious motivation. Nor do I intend waxing philosophical here on the underlying symbolisms of circumcision.

Simply speaking, from a traditional Jewish point of view this is the way we connect to G-d. It is an indelible, eternal

connection between the Jew and His Creator. The fact that it is performed on a newborn child who wasn’t asked his opinion, only emphasises the idea that the covenant is not limited by our finite rationale, but transcends the boundaries of human understanding.

Our bond with G-d is not something that can be explained rationally. Were that the case we would have long ago ceased to be. The continuing saga of Jewish survival defies logic.

Logically we shouldn’t exist. The bris symbolises that transcendence and the Jewish people’s never-wavering commitment to the covenant has always been reciprocated by the G-dly miracles that have delivered us time and again.

Some years ago my wife and I were leading a discussion group with young couples. At one point in the evening a young man poured cold water on my arguments by declaring himself an agnostic. I asked him if he had any children. He said yes. I asked did he have a son. Again, he answered affirmatively. “Did you give your son a bris,” I asked. At which point he looked at me as if I had just arrived from another planet.

“What kind of ridiculous question is that?” he demanded.

I explained that if you’re really not sure that there is a G-d out there, then why subject your child to unnecessary surgery? Without religious motivation it might very well be considered barbaric. Through his son’s bris he realised he wasn’t such an agnostic after all.

I am not a mohel but as a rabbi, have attended hundreds of circumcision ceremonies. Personally, I find it very moving to see parents, including those who are not at all religiously observant, cry with emotion as they experience the continuing link of Jewish peoplehood being manifested in their very own family dynasty.

I guess most fathers would probably have trouble explaining why they gave their son a bris. But I imagine they’d have much more difficulty if they had to explain why they did not.

SUZANNE BELLING

There is no such thing as a Jewish genie, but if one were to rub a kosher lePesach wine becher at this time of the year and one would appear, nine out of 10 Jewish housewives would undoubtedly wish that their homes could be magically cleaned for Pesach, the chometz and daily dishes packed away, the Pesach cutlery and crockery unpacked and a seder table fit for Eliyahu would appear out of nowhere.

But while celebrating the Exodus from Egypt might not bring about this miracle, there are magical getaways for those wishing to relax, without the hassle of Pesach preparations.

For **Gautengers**, there is the Pesach retreat at the Bon Riviera Hotel on the Vaal River. Organised by Rabbi Ari and Batya Kievman - prices from R1 990 per day per person (children at R995 and tots at R190) - with meals prepared by executive chef Alan Bender, the hotel offers luxury rooms with views of the Vaal.

There will be special treats in a tea room and three meals daily, glatt kosher and under strict rabbinical supervision.

Guests may choose to be part of a community, a semi-private or a private seder. People also can participate in the seders or yomtov meals only, or the all-women’s seders led by Bronya Shaffer.

Speakers on various topics will offer intellectual stimulation and during Chol Hamoed, guests can enjoy golf, the spa, a riverboat cruise and activities for the children at the Kids’ Club. For more information, contact PesachSA@gmail.com or call Rabbi Kievman on 079 424 1203.

There are only three rooms left at the Fairmont Zimbali Resort in **Durban**, near Ballito, according to Yechiel Asseraf, of Cape Kosher.

The package starts on Friday, April 22 through to Sunday, May 1 and includes a shul, community and private seders, with all meals under the strict rabbinical supervision of the SA Beth Din.

There will be a tea room serving Pesachdike goodies, a bar with alcoholic and soft drinks, late night buffets and packed box lunches for Chol HaMoed.

Golf, sports, and water sports will be available as well as braais and theme nights, as the entire hotel will be kosher for Pesach.

Safaris can be arranged, as well as scholars’ lectures and chazzonim.

A Shabbos eruv and minyanim on site, programme for teens and play groups for tots are on offer.

For costs and further details, email info@capekosher.com or call (011) 643-2840.

Avron Almeleh, of Avron’s Place in **Sea Point**, expects to get maximum three hours sleep a night over the Pesach holidays.

Not only is his restaurant open during Pesach, he is catering for seders at the Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation, Morasha and the Gardens Shul, as well as all seders and meals for the Pesach holiday at the President Hotel in Bantry Bay!

Strictly kosher under the Cape Beth Din, the President is located within easy walking distance of five shuls and is close to beaches.

“We have mashgichim on duty 24/7 and kiddies’ programmes and music (during Chol HaMoed).” he said.

People who want glatt kosher, chalav Yisrael and bishul Yisrael will be provided for and there will be an in-house shul.

Rabbi David Raphaeli, of Herzlia School, will be in attendance, as well as guest lecturers.

The getaway starts from 11:00 on Friday, April 22, with check-out at 10:00 on Sunday, May 1.

Lunch boxes will be provided for those who want to explore the Cape Peninsula during Chol HaMoed. The hotel offers all facilities.



Fairmont Zimbali Resort.

Prices are from R2 975 to R5 640 per person per day (depending on the type of accommodation.) For further information, call Leigh on 072-595-6596 or go to avronsplace@mwweb.co.za

In **Umhlanga**, ten days of Pesach is being organised by Shlomo Wainer, of Chabad of the North Coast.

“All meals, Shabbos and yomtov, including the seders and accommodation, are being organised. Or one can just book for the seders.” said Wainer.

There is a shul next door to the guest house and all services will be held.

The cost for the full Pesach package is R1 900 per adult per day (sharing), with reduced prices for children. For further information, call Orit on (031) 561-2487.

Plettenberg Bay offers a full Pesach programme at the Beacon Isle Hotel and includes services at the shul and both seders.

Meals will be served in the Island Diner and non-residents are welcome to attend the seders. All operations are under supervision of mashgicha Joan Estrin.

Plettenberg Bay Shul will be hosting a rabbi for the entire period, and shiurim will be announced. There will be entertainment, including a braai on Chol HaMoed.

For further information and prices call cell phone 083-327-6724 or e-mail jorge@islanddiner.co.za



Bon Riviera Hotel.

Shabbat Times		
April 8 / 29 Adar II		
April 9 / 1 Nisan		
Parshat Tazria		
Starts	Ends	
17:40	18:28	Johannesburg
18:14	19:04	Cape Town
17:26	18:15	Durban
17:46	18:35	Bloemfontein
17:45	18:35	Port Elizabeth
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Sad tales of woe from former Bobroff clients

ANT KATZ

The scandal around the flight of father and son attorneys Ronald and Darren Bobroff escalates on a daily basis. New claimants come forward all the time and several forensic, criminal and civil investigations are underway, while the legal firm has been placed under curatorship by the Law Society.

Hawks spokesman Major Robert Netshiunda told SA Jewish Report that the extradition process, facilitated by Interpol's issuing red notices for the Bobroffs - who two weeks ago skipped the country for Australia, with Bobroff junior's wife Lisa - is underway. They will face justice in South Africa, the Hawks insist.

"Hundreds of millions of rand" have already been identified. "We are still investigating," says Netshiunda.

Two weeks ago, the Bobroffs had pleaded guilty to overcharging two clients and agreed to hand themselves over to police the following Tuesday. They didn't; they skipped the country instead.



Ronald Bobroff and Darren and his family are hiding in Australia hoping to escape justice. Just prior to legging it, Jewish Report understands they had deposited millions in a bank account of Elaine (68), Ronald's wife, who was left behind, carrying the can. Elaine last week Tuesday found herself in the dock on charges of fraud of R26 million and money laundering. She insists that she is innocent of any wrongdoing.

The Bobroffs sold their active files to another attorney, Rael Zimmerman, who told SAJR last week that he had also employed all of the Bobroff staff, but had not bought the business, debts or obligations of RBP Inc (Robert Bobroff and Partners).

The Law Society of the Northern Provinces (LSNP) has placed RBP and its accounts under the curatorship of Johan van Staden, who says there is about R27 million in the firm's trust funds.

Among the most common charges against the Bobroffs is that they overcharged Road Accident Fund (RAF) victims who elected to go the contingency fee route. In these cases, attorneys

are legally allowed to charge "twice the normal attorney-client fees, or take 25 per cent of the settlement, whichever is the lesser amount". Numerous cases have been brought against the Bobroffs in the past for exceeding these amounts, sometimes by a large margin.

Jewish Report has had calls from angry community members seeking information or simply wanting to share their own experiences. One was Shirley Katz, whose then-18-year-old son, Lance, was involved in a horrendous road accident 14 years ago. He has since fully recovered. Darren Bobroff got Lance a R300 000 settlement from the RAF and RBP paid him only R120 000 - retaining 60 per cent for themselves.

Shirley is livid: "Darren called me a few years ago," she says, "and said that if Discovery (Health) queries anything with me I must not give them any information." This relates to a long-standing legal battle between the medical aid and the Bobroffs who, says Discovery, tell clients who receive pay-outs for medical expenses claims, not to return the money to Discovery. The Bobroffs have always denied this.



Another community caller, Sheila (67), who asked SAJR only to use her first name, was involved in a collision 12 years ago in which she and her husband (73) were seriously injured. Also represented by RBP, Sheila says her husband received just R48 000 of the R100 000 RAF pay-out, while she was awarded R300 000 - but received just R198 000 from RBP.

Sheila was sent to four doctors. One single 2004 consultation and examination was reflected on her legal charges bill at R25 000. "I was none the wiser that I'd been ripped off," she says, and claims that she was also told other "lies" which have resulted in her living in agony and with no recourse..

RAF spokesman Linda Rulashe said this week that, on hearing of the charges, RAF began their own forensic audit of the Bobroffs' legal fee accounts. RAF had already referred 18 matters to the police by the weekend, where monies had been claimed by RBP for meetings which their clients say never took place. "Ongoing investigations may lead to other referrals," she said.

Read more on our website.

Cape Board sued in Equality Court over 'Kol Isha'

ANT KATZ

The Cape Council of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies is being sued by two Jewish Cape Town residents and joined by inter-faith group SACRED, for "discrimination of women on the basis of gender". The claimants say that the Board has placed a ban on women singing at Jewish secular communal events.

Papers were lodged last week Friday in the Equality Court of the Western Cape High Court by Advocate Anton Katz SC.

The original claimants are Gilad Stern and Sarah Goldstein and the respondent is the Cape Board. Stern and Goldstein were subsequently joined in the matter by The South African Centre for Religious Equality and Diversity (SACRED) which is chaired by Progressive Rabbi Julia Margolis.

The specific challenge comes ahead of Yom Hashoah - Holocaust Memorial Day - which takes place in just under a month, says James Lomberg, executive director of SACRED. For the last decade the Board has not permitted women to sing at the ceremony which usually takes place at the Pinelands Cemetery in the southern suburbs of Cape Town.

"It is particularly upsetting where such a ban is put in place (on Yom Hashoah), which should stand for all time as a warning against the perils of discrimination," he says. It is an affront to the memory of the victims of the Shoah to exclude women, he posits.

The issue has been simmering for several years as both the Board and the SA Zionist Federation have not allowed women to sing at secular events as the widely held Orthodox religious practice on the prohi-

bition against men hearing a woman's singing voice - termed 'Kol Isha' - has become commonplace.

This is "correct according to halacha", a respected local rabbi who asked not to be named, told Jewish Report this week. "There are a number of dispensations," he explained, that Orthodoxy had relied on in the past to exclude certain events.

However, the current trend among Orthodox Jewry worldwide reflects a "general shift to the right", he explained, adding that no Orthodox rabbi in this community would support the perception of applying dispensations to bypass halacha on an issue such as this.

Jewish Report contacted Gilad Stern who would not comment "at this stage" or provide contact details for Sarah Goldstein. Stern is understood to be Orthodox. Advocate Katz told SAJR that his instructions were to refer questions to Stern.

Chairman of the Cape Council of the Board, Eric Marx, told Jewish Report that a compromise had been proposed and that he hoped an accommodation would be reached. He did not want to jeopardise current attempts to settle the impasse by commenting further.

Rabbi Julia Margolis, SACRED's chairman, said the organisation's reasons for joining the action were that SACRED felt it was their "right, moral obligation and duty, as concerned South African Jews, to challenge this unacceptable gender discrimination by the SAJBD".

SACRED had, she said, attempted to engage with the Board and suggest compromises. But the Board has, she said, "refused to allow women to sing memorial prayers and liturgy" since 2005.

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X-treme Torah

SIMON APFEL

This past Sunday, Sinai-X drew a capacity crowd to the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg for an interactive and fully immersive learning experience. It also served as a big bang launch for the latest Jewish unity/identity project from the Office of the Chief Rabbi - Avot 101. Sinai-X moved to Durban this Thursday, before finishing up in Cape Town on Sunday.

Striking. That seems the best way to describe Sinai-X.

The shocking pink motif. The pulsing laser-light headsets. The row upon row of lamp-lit tables that filled the cavernous venue, and in the eerie solitude that preceded the flood of arrivals, seemed oddly reminiscent of that human pod scene from the Matrix.

The roving Spidercam lunging and lurching around the room. The enormous X-shaped stage that looked like something from a U2 tour set. The manic Chasidic violinist, flailing coat tails and sidelocks, stomping around like a man possessed.

And perhaps most striking of all, the sheer spectacle of what founder and event architect Chief Rabbi

Warren Goldstein described as “the world’s biggest beit midrash”.

“Just look around you,” said Rabbi Goldstein. “There are

over 2 000 people gathered here together in one room to

learn one of our sacred Jewish texts - to discuss and debate and share their opinions, just as Jews have been doing for millennia.

“This afternoon we are continuing an age-old tradition, joining a conversation that has taken place across and between the generations, and we can all take great pride in being a part of it.”

The speakers were as struck as anyone. Rabbi Zev Leff called it a “grand and awesome occasion”. Rabbi David Milston marvelled that “no cross-section of people anywhere in the world could emulate what you are doing here this afternoon - it’s unparalleled, unbelievable.”

YY Jacobson, who along with Milston appeared at the first Sinai Indaba in 2011, noted how “the Chief Rabbi and the entire South African community have taken the learning of Torah to a new level, with such beauty, such grandeur, such technological acuteness...”

Sinai-X was dubbed “The Experience”, and while Sinai Indaba has always been a lively affair, the idea this year was to try out something more immersive, interactive and participative.

Aside from the three headline speakers, other past Sinai indaba luminaries - including Lori Palatnick, Rabbi Dr Akiva Tatz, David Sacks (of The Simpsons fame) and Rabbi David Aaron - had prerecorded 10-minute talks to complement and enrich the material explored by the live speakers. These were accessed via wireless headsets.

The most noticeable difference was the audacious attempt to recreate traditional yeshiva chabura (group) learning, with participants seated in groups around tables rather than facing the stage, thea-



Cheftivah Kruger and Mandy Botha.

Photos: Jason Crouse

tre-style, and invited to discuss and debate the material.

There was also a virtuoso violinist, Daniel Ahaviel, who somehow summoned up more energy than an entire band, and even a post-event set from local DJ Jevan Binder (of electro-house duo SauBomb fame) as the brave new world of “silent disco” was unveiled at a Jewish event for the first time.

In the build-up, there were reservations. Yet by 13:55 the room was full to capacity, and by 14:00, they were turning people away.

“The message of Sinai-X is that in life it’s so important to innovate, reinvent and renew ourselves; to never become complacent,” says Rabbi Goldstein.

“This was partly the thinking behind changing the formula this year (the traditional Sinai Indaba format will return in 2017) - we saw this as an exciting opportunity to do something that hasn’t really ever been done before. And once again, our incredible community have turned up in their numbers, opening themselves up to the experience, just as we did with the Shabbos Project.”

The entire event revolved around the famous first Mishnah in Pirkei Avot (“Ethics of the Fathers”), with the line-up of live and recorded speakers conveying profound ideas and practical lessons on the art of decision-making (“Be patient in judgement”); Torah learning (“Establish many students); and the notion of boundaries (“Make a fence for the Torah”).

Of the live speakers, Rabbi Leff’s trademark thought experiments spawned insights that landed with the force and accuracy of laser-guided missiles; Rabbi Milston’s impish humour and classic British self-deprecation accompanied perhaps the most inspiring and certainly the most empowering message of the event; and YY Jacobson leapt up and down, one hand on his head holding his kippah in place, the other gesticulating wildly, his rasping tenor shaking the room, every inch the archetypal fire-and-brimstone sermoniser of old - except his words were those not of rebuke but of pure love and joy.

The crowd was a diverse one, and included people of all backgrounds (there was even a party of 12 farmers that had travelled up from the Free State) and all ages. School kids and university students were especially prevalent..

The Sandton Convention Centre hummed with energy as people soaked up a unique uplifting learning experience.

Finally, as the headsets were put down and last remnants of animated discussion ebbed away, South Africa’s Chief Rabbi had his long-awaited Oprah Winfrey moment.

“I’d like to invite everyone to take a look under your tables.”

But it wasn’t a BMW or a bouquet of beauty products. It was a booklet with the inscription, “Avot 101”.

First unveiled as a concept in 2013 and a full two years in the making, Avot 101 is a multifaceted learning programme centred on one of the most important, accessible and treasured of all Jewish works - Pirkei Avot. The multimedia curriculum includes podcasts, e-mails and essays, as well as original commentaries from some of the great Jewish sages of the past 2 000 years, many translated into English for the first time.

Goldstein explains that the Avot 101 tagline, “Bring it home”, is about this being something people can learn by themselves, or with their friends and families.

“Today has been about inspiration, but we need to make inspiration a way of life, something that happens not only once a year, but which we take with us wherever we go.”

“This is what Avot 101 is all about; it’s a journey of personal growth, of becoming a better person through the wisdom of the Torah - G-d’s own wisdom - in areas such as marriage, family, faith, friendship, character, business, leadership, community, society and absolutely everything else.

It is Divine wisdom on how to approach the real life questions and conundrums that we all face everyday.

“And it’s a journey that Jews have traversed for thousands of years.”

The theme of Sinai-X was “Think Again”. Ultimately though, this wasn’t just a rethinking, it was a *reimagining* - of what a Jewish event could be, of what a beit midrash could look like. Sinai-X may only be the spiritual cousin of its more established antecedent, but Sinai Indaba’s mission statement was very much in effect.

This was Torah talking to - and through - a modern world.



The genius of violin virtuoso Daniel Ahaviel.



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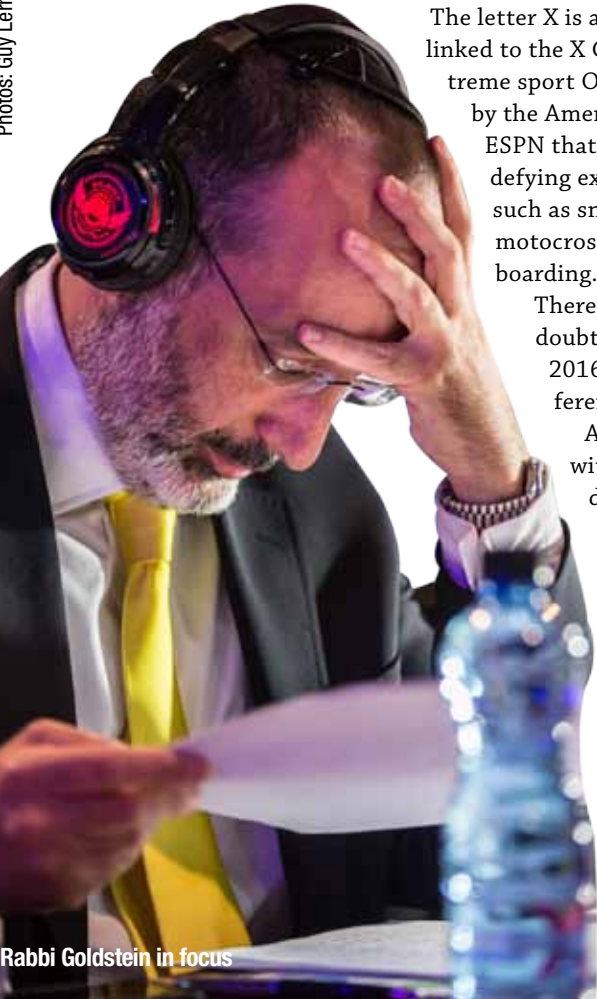
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The X Games of a new halachic generation

HOWARD SACKSTEIN

It may have started with the Sinai Indaba, but how does one replicate, package, universalise and roll-out such a South African concept to the world? Arise Sinai X! The X in the newly re-branded

Photos: Guy Lerner



Rabbi Goldstein in focus

Sinai X learning festival portended a clue.

X has traditionally been associated with Generation X, those people born during the peak of the Cold War, a generation with short attention spans searching for quick meaning in the post-drug crazed years of the 1960s.

The letter X is also closely linked to the X Games, the extreme sport Olympics owned by the American TV station ESPN that covers death-defying exhibition sports such as snowboarding, motocross and skateboarding.

There was little doubt that Sinai X 2016 would be different.

And it began with a lone fiddler dressed in a Charedi black coat and flying tzitzit duelling himself on the strings.

Although first envisioned in a science fiction movie, the idea of a silent disco found its home in

the picturesque seaside resort of Palolem in South Goa, India. Revellers, tripping on drugs, would dance the night away to thumping beats in the forests next to the beach, making the village almost uninhabitable to locals.

And so the idea of a silent disco was born. Wearing wireless headsets, tourists could dance through the night without disturbing anyone and without the thudding sounds of electronic music pulsating through the air.

By 2015, technology had advanced to such an extent that multichannel wireless headsets were commonly available. Each reveller could select their preferred genre of music and dance silently to their beats of choice. How awkward to watch a group of people - some listening to deep

house, others to trance and some to hip-hop - all dancing together in complete silence in an Indian forest.

The silent disco craze hit South Africa in the beginning of 2016 in a big way. Weddings with silent discos in the forests and secret sunrises are now common place in Johannesburg and Cape Town, where those awake at the unholy hours of the morning can don wireless headsets and, communally, dance or practise yoga to the rising sun.



Yaakov Ben Moshe; Hannah Ben Moshe; Efrat Wagner; and Tammy Lerner.

Where there is innovation, there is often Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein. It was Goldstein, the driving force behind the CAP project, the Sinai Indaba and the Shabbos Project, that would bring the idea of wireless headsets into the mainstream of communal Jewish conferencing.

Sinai X boasted an array of live speakers presenting from the stage as well as pre-recorded, “fast food”, 10-minute talks on an array of topics. Each participant selected their preferred shiur via the channel selector on their wireless headsets, thus alleviating the need to change rooms to follow different streams or topics.

A 10-minute shiur is the perfect pre-packaged time for the ADHD Generation X and their even less focused Generation Y offspring; one big idea delivered in an intense, well thought-out way, in a to-the-point drosha.

And so it is not often that one uses the words “religion” and “innovation” in the same sentence but the Chief Rabbi’s Sinai X once again proved itself to be on the cutting edge of innovation.

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Jonathan Kaplan – Interview with the editor

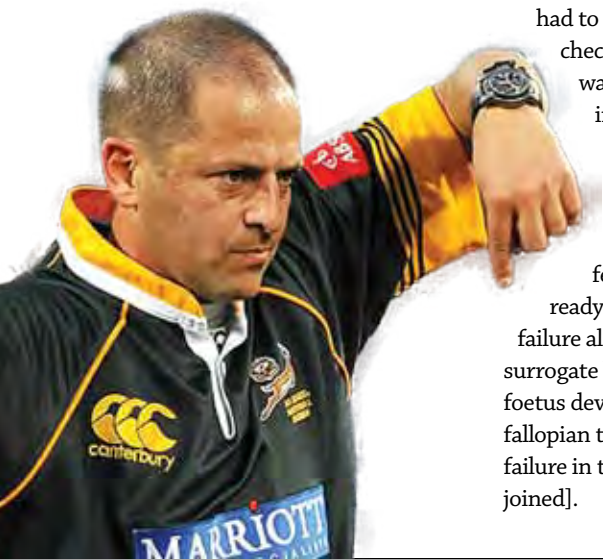
VANESSA VALKIN

Jonathan Kaplan, former 2010 Achiever Award Winner for Arts, Science, Culture and Sports, and world record holder for refereeing the most number of rugby test matches, is expecting a baby boy at the end of May, just a few months before he turns 50. Ordinary enough except that Kaplan, who is not married but in a relationship, is doing this on his own, using both an egg donor and a surrogate.

What has prompted you to have a baby now?

From about my mid-30s I was ready to have a child. And for one or another reason it never worked out in the conventional sense so I took a decision that you can't wait until you find the perfect partner. Of course, it's unconventional and stranger things have happened to people but it was the perfect time for me.

My life before that was centred on travel and being able to leave at the drop of a hat [to referee rugby matches around the globe]. When my life normalised, it became more of a pressing thing that I really wanted to do.



How do you feel about what lies ahead?
I'm a guy. I don't know about sterilisers and bottles and so I really have to rely on the goodwill of others and helpers. But I am excited about being with one of my creations and it is my creation. I am excited about the challenge of parenting. I'm probably almost as excited about the unknown as well, and the fact that I know so little and that I'm going into it so green, but with my eyes wide open.

What has been the reaction of people around you?

I have received so many wishes of goodwill and people coming out of the woodwork and wanting to help... I'm not the first person to do it and I have already had a lot of people contacting me and asking how I went about it - a variety of people with different issues but all of them wanting a similar result. And it's quite uplifting that I have inspired people that they have options.

What has been the process to get to this point?

It's been quite a long process. I used an egg donor programme called Nurture. I obviously had to go through psychological tests to check that I was emotionally capable. This wasn't a snap decision. I have been toying with this for a long time and it did take much longer than I thought.

Why?

Finding the right surrogate and feeling confident that I would be ready and the legal formalities, and I had failure along the way for a lot of reasons. The surrogate had an ectopic pregnancy [where the foetus develops outside the womb, often in the fallopian tubes] and sometimes there was a failure in the lab [where the egg and sperm are joined].

Most men would wait till they met the right person and then have a baby, especially since men have less of a biological clock ticking. What does your decision say about your belief in relationships and marriage?

I have seen successful marriages and I would be happy to get married. For me, the decision is about being in the right space in your life and if you are in the wrong space in our life, you won't make a good decision. You have to ask yourself: are you in touch with your dreams and your goals and what kind of person are you looking for?



There is no consensus from a halachic standpoint about using an egg donor and surrogate as it is a relatively new phenomenon. Certain rabbinic views are that one should use a Jewish egg donor (who should be single and unrelated to either spouse) so that the baby is Jewish, while others believe that it is safer to use a non-Jewish egg or surrogate mother due to concerns about the possibility of a future marriage between genetic siblings. What are your views on your baby's religion?

The baby will be a Reform Jew as that is the community that is prepared to accept him. If he wants to belong to a different club, then we can discuss that later. He is going to be having a conversion to Judaism of sorts. The egg is not Jewish and nor is the surrogate. Rabbi Greg Alexander has really helped me. I am an Orthodox Jew and from that perspective it is quite difficult to align yourself with your religion when it wants to reject you because you don't have this badge or that sticker... but the Orthodox approach is quite understandable.

I believe your baby is due at the end of May just when you will be running the Comrades Marathon. Tell us about your love of running.

I started running in my first year in the army and that was the first time I attempted anything over five kilometres and I loved it. I did about 50 marathons in a short pace of time and I achieved my goals of doing a few Comrades and a few Two Oceans. I then had a career threatening injury in 1998 and I had to try and save my refereeing career. The surgeons told me that I wouldn't run on the road again. I began running again in 2010-11. I love the feeling of running and the camaraderie that is attached to the sport. My target is 100 marathons and I am well on my way. This will be my eighth Comrades and by that point it will be my 77th marathon.

Nkandla: Constitutional Court asserts its moral authority

DAVID BILCHITZ

Living in South Africa is like being on a rollercoaster. We feel ourselves rushing downwards towards disaster only suddenly to feel ourselves jerked forcefully upwards towards becoming a land committed to achieving the highest ideals.

The Nkandla judgment issued by the Constitutional Court last week was one of those historic moments of joy in which the whole South African community exhaled together in a sense of relief, but also elation.

In its 20th year of operation, it became evident to us all that the Constitution, the document that binds our whole society together collectively, works. The Constitutional Court, the highest court and institution tasked with interpreting the constitution and adjudicating upon its disputes, in a mere 53 pages, asserted its moral authority and affirmed all that is best about our country.

The Court told us that those who occupy public office are in a position of trust and must exercise their duties with great integrity. Far from undermining the democratic organs of our society, the Court emphasised their importance. The President, Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng wrote poetically that it is "a constitutional being by design, a national pathfinder, the quintessential commander-in-chief of State affairs and the personification of this nation's constitutional project".

In so describing his role, the court was

clearly articulating the high moral standards required of his office.

The National Assembly is the representative organ which the Chief Justice described as the "mouthpiece, the eyes and service-delivery-ensuring machinery of the people". Instead of being simply the lapdog of the executive, the court was setting the standard for how our parliament should operate. In a sense, it was a call to duty, a plea for this key institution in our society to do its job.

The legislature

and executive were put to the test when non-security upgrades were made to the President's private homestead in Nkandla. And, unfortunately, the court found they did not meet the standards required of them.

In the face of this failure, it was necessary to recognise that the watchdog institution of the public - the Public Protector - needed enhanced powers so as effectively to exercise her functions. The court thus fortified this key institution and enabled her office to issue binding orders which could only be overturned if challenged in court.

The judgment thus articulated a very

clear set of functions and roles that different institutions must play. The court of course was the major arbiter of these disputes and so enhanced its own reputation and key functions in the process.

Indeed, when the case was heard on February 9, 2016, I left my office at Constitution Hill to watch the sea of protesters in red (the EFF) together with a small group in blue (the DA) in very good spirits peacefully protesting

The National Assembly is the representative organ which the Chief Justice described as the "mouthpiece, the eyes and service-delivery-ensuring machinery of the people".

for the President "to pay back the money". It was as if the Constitutional Court had become the focus of attention with all parties placing their trust in this august institution to come up with a just solution.

That is constitutional democracy at work and it really demonstrates that we have come a long way since 1994. Parties from opposite sides of the spectrum could peacefully converge in protest and respect for a key constitutional institution.

The ANC and the President have also importantly recognised the power of the court to resolve this dispute and accepted the judgment, despite its harsh criticism of their behaviour in the Nkandla matter.

Let us recognise how remarkable and im-

portant that is. In the 1950s, the apartheid government refused to recognise the right of courts to overturn laws of Parliament even when they were passed according to a blatantly unlawful procedure.

All sorts of machinations were employed to achieve the warped ends of the government at the time: to remove coloured people from the common voters roll. More recently, Hungary and now Poland which became democracies around the time that we did in South Africa, have sought to clip the wings of their Constitutional Courts which placed constraints on totalitarian behaviour by their democratic branches.

The health of our constitutional democracy can be measured by the strength of our institutions and the respect they afford each other.

By that measure, last week's judgment is momentous and the reaction to it indicates we are in relatively good shape.

That is no reason for citizens to rest on their laurels. Constitutional democracy is precious and can easily be undermined: we need to remain vigilant and ensure that the ideals we committed to collectively in 1996 are upheld by all the vital institutions that make up the fabric of our political community.

• David Bilchitz is a professor of Fundamental Rights and Constitutional Law at the University of Johannesburg; Director of SAIFAC and Secretary-General of the International Association of Constitutional Law.

Is it time for Jews collectively to demand that Zuma go?



With the Constitutional Court having confronted President Jacob Zuma’s contemptible behaviour head-on, leading to outraged South Africans increasingly speaking against him, Jews must ask whether a collective Jewish voice should be heard.

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa set an example last week in their statement calling for Zuma to go, which was reported in Times Live: “...President Zuma [should] do the honourable thing and resign to save himself, the ANC and the nation as a whole from further embarrassment and ruin... We the people of South Africa must put pressure on the ANC and Parliament to ‘assist’ the president to vacate office peacefully and constitutionally.”

Struggle stalwart Ahmed Kathrada wrote an open letter calling on Zuma to step down. The New York Times in an editorial did the same.

Is there a formally representative Jewish voice that can speak on this, or must it remain an individual choice for Jews? Major Jewish organisations define their goals as safeguarding the Jewish way of life, combating anti-Semitism, lobbying for Israel, taking care of Jewish elderly and needy and so on. They are not mandated to get involved directly in politics.

Looking after Jewish interests is essential. However, when the focus is too narrow, it may carry a broader moral cost. During apartheid, for example, for the sake of Jewish interests and fear of provoking government anti-Semitism, Jewish organisations kept their heads low politically.

The SAJBD refrained from criticising the racist system for decades, although many Jews were morally repulsed by it. Only in 1985 - when it was already safe to do so - did it unequivocally condemn apartheid.

Jewish interests play a role in the current dilemma. Jewish leaders have often said Zuma is not anti-Israel,

and has helped resolve problems between South Africa and Israel. There is no hint of anti-Semitism from him. Indeed, he was a keynote speaker at the SAJBD’s national conference last year, along with WJC President Ronald Lauder and French Jewish philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy.

But Zuma is a master at cultivating relationships that keep people beholden to him. That’s how he survives politically. Individuals remain silent about his corrupt behaviour because their interests are at stake, although their consciences demand otherwise. Jewish leaders have for years carefully cultivated government links, so when help is needed in a Jewish-related matter, doors will open.

What is the right thing to do now, as the Zuma wrecking ball continues pummelling the country? Would a Jewish organisation publish something like the Sunday Times did last weekend on its front page, which declared in huge letters: “For the sake of your country, Mr President, GO NOW!”

In recent decades Jews have largely withdrawn from national politics. There is no equivalent personality today like Helen Suzman - a Jewish parliamentarian eloquently addressing the country’s moral condition. But Jews are as concerned as anyone. Each day Zuma and his lackeys remain in power, is another day of disaster.

Could Jews step into their other shoes - the patriotic South African ones - and ask what is good for the whole country? The community is a tiny minority of 70 000 in a national population of 54 million. Would it be wise for it to stick its neck out and risk provoking a backlash from the ANC or other quarters?

This Jewish community has had giants for leaders in the past, whose gravitas enabled them to speak truth to power. Does the community have what it takes to stand for what is right today?

Informal discussions between individual Jews, ANC politicians and others are to be encouraged. But is it perhaps time for a formally constituted Jewish body to demand Zuma’s resignation for the good of the country, as the Methodists did?

• *Read Geoff Sifrin’s regular columns on his blog sifrintakingissue.wordpress.com*

World News in Brief

Panama Papers: Israel to investigate those mentioned

JERUSALEM - Israel's Tax Authority will investigate the Israeli companies and individuals that were identified as having offshore accounts in a dump of leaked documents known as the Panama Papers.

The Tax Authority said it will look into whether the ownership of the companies and the assets held abroad were reported to the authority and if the appropriate taxes were paid.

Its director, Moshe Asher, told the daily newspaper Israel Hayom that some of the names on the accounts have not reported overseas assets. Asher said all the information in the newly leaked documents would be crosschecked.

Some 600 Israeli companies and 850 Israeli shareholders are listed in the Panama Papers as having offshore accounts. Among the companies are Bank Leumi and Bank Hapoalim.

The 11,5 million documents were published last Sunday following a yearlong investigation of their contents led by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and the German daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung.

It is not illegal to use offshore accounts.

The leaked data, which go back as far as 1975, came from the Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca, which is known for creating shell companies that often conceal the ownership of assets in the accounts.

Journalists from 76 countries reviewed the documents. (JTA)

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The IUA -UCF is the ‘Iron Dome’ of our Jewish community in SA

– Avrom Krengel Co-Chairman IUA-UCF



Naomi Hadar
Executive Director
Gauteng



Our top priority remains to provide for the safety and security of our local Jewish community with a strong Israel in our hearts.

We have lived to see history repeating itself over and over and it is our responsibility as a community to ensure that the necessary resources

are available to secure our Jewish community and Israel for the next generation.

Former President Shimon Peres emphasised in his recent visit to South Africa: “I am overwhelmed by the warmth and friendship that I received from the Jewish community and country. The work the community carries out is outstanding, truly inspiring and greatly contributes to strengthening the relations between Israel and South Africa. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting the Jewish community and learning about the



excellent work that the IUA-UCF does in South Africa. It is inspiring to see how the community dedicates time and efforts in representing Israel in often challenging forums and how the



Ivor Ichikowitz, Natie Kirsh, Shimon Peres and Stephen Koseff

IUA-UCF looks after the safety and security of its community. I salute your work and wish the South African community much success and blessings in all its endeavours.” Shimon Peres

Healthy dollop of scepticism over whether Zuma will leave

President Jacob Zuma faces the unanimous judgment of the Constitutional Court where a full bench of 11 judges found he had failed to uphold his constitutional mandate and ordered him to pay back a portion of taxpayers’ money on non-security-related items which he used to upgrade his Nkandla homestead. This includes a cattle kraal, chicken run, amphitheatre, visitors’ centre and swimming pool. As part of her remedial actions, Public Protector Thuli Madonsela had asked Zuma nearly two years ago to pay for the costs of the non-security upgrades.

SUZANNE BELLING



DA MP Michael Bagraim said the judiciary has proved to be completely independent. “This judgment from the highest court in the land speaks volumes for the independence of the judiciary and indeed the legal profession. It is a common refrain that it is very difficult to ‘speak truth to power’ but in this instance our system has done us proud.” He describes the judgment as both concise and clear, leaving nothing to interpretation.

“It is important to understand that there is no appeal and no going back. The only way for a system to redeem itself after a death blow of this nature is for resignations or impeachment. “Although one tends to focus on President Zuma, it should be noted that he was strongly aided and abetted by every single member of the ANC caucus. The Hansard records are loud and clear; the support for President Zuma’s actions were strongly voiced by the ANC leadership and certainly underlined by the vote. “Our Constitutional Court has condemned Parliament for this support and has stated openly that Parliament itself has breached the Constitution. This state of affairs has evidenced a constitutional crisis of enormous proportions. For our government to continue with ‘business as usual’ would show a

disdain for not only the Constitution but also morality. Every thinking citizen of this country needs to express their shock not only through the civil voices open to them but through the ballot box,” Bagraim said.



Capetonian **Jen Karabus**, who was following the newspaper reports regularly and with great interest, said she would be delighted to see any sign of remorse on Zuma’s “smiling face”. “I wonder how he will wiggle out of this one - but he will get out of it by hook or by crook.” Karabus said she was pleased with the Constitutional Court findings and that all 11 justices concurred with the judgment after the evidence was presented.



Businessman, radio presenter and blogger **Howard Feldman** described the Concourt judgment as “a victory for all South Africans, no matter which political party you associate with. “It gives us hope at a time where hope is what we need. What matters now is how the ANC chooses to deal with the ruling because the buck has finally stopped with the Constitutional Court.”

Angela Lurie, of Waverley, thought the Constitutional Court decision was “quite right”. “I applaud it. It gives me confidence back. It makes me proud to be a South African, but I think it’s going to be water off a duck’s back. If he doesn’t pay, somebody will pay for him.” Independently, using the same terminology as Jen Karabus, she said: “He’s going to wiggle out of it. The ANC is going to find some way for him to do so. He has wiggled out of everything he has ever been accused of. “There is no doubt about it, he will remain president, because they are a law unto themselves. I don’t think the ruling will make much of a difference, because they have a majority in Parliament.” She said they (the ANC) feel they had given South Africans their freedom and therefore they must have our vote.



Darren Bergman, DA MP, described the ruling on Nkandla as “a great victory for the most important foundation of our new democracy and the Constitution. “It shows that no one is above the law and that no matter how far the executive may stray from the Constitution, while there is a

separate power within the judiciary, we still have hope.” He said he was not certain whether President Zuma would be recalled, in terms of what the ruling might mean for the ANC and the people who have put their full support behind the action of the President. “This could be a painful mistake for the ANC. However, recalling the President now might seem just as painful for those invested in the patronage system. “The next few weeks will be very telling. We need to watch how the ANC, executive and national assembly treat the judgment and what actions come from the ruling. As a proud South-African and a person who wants to see South-Africa rise, I am hoping that the President and the ministers who protected his actions, will do the honourable thing and resign.”



Johannesburger **Jenny Baard** is very impressed that Public Protector Thuli Madonsela has been vindicated. “She should be the next president of South Africa. I think it’s incredible that the judges stood up for the country.” Baard said the problem was what she originally took as an April Fool’s statement - President Zuma’s public “apology” - was in fact serious. “It looks as if he is going to get away unscathed again,” she said, “which is a tragedy for this beautiful country.”

Business icon Brian Joffe gets Wits honorary doctorate

South African business icon Brian Joffe fittingly has been awarded an honorary doctorate in commerce by his old alma mater, Wits University. Wits’ Chancellor Mr Justice Dikgang Moseneke, bestowed the trappings of his honorary doctorate on Joffe. Here Joffe is being assisted with the regalia.



Photo: Wits University

ANT KATZ

Brian Joffe, who graduated from Wits University as a chartered accountant in 1971, received an honorary doctorate in commerce from his alma mater last month. Joffe who heads the multi-billion rand Bidvest Group has, also recently announced his impending partial retirement as CEO. Wits Chancellor, Mr Justice Dikgang Moseneke said at the graduation ceremony that Joffe, “who started the Bidvest Group from somewhat humble beginnings”, had turned it “into one of the leading corporations in South Africa, with a turnover of

over R204 billion”. At the graduation ceremony, the story was retold how Joffe had famously launched his entrepreneurial career in 1978 by borrowing R49 000 and purchasing an interest in a small pet food manufacturer. A year later, he borrowed again, to acquire full ownership of the company and to expand it. Within six months his business - using largely discarded machinery on a makeshift production line - held 15 per cent of South Africa’s canned dog food market. He subsequently sold this business to a major industrial group. Joffe launched Bidvest in 1989 and built it into the colossus it is today. Bidvest employs more than 145 000, with the bulk - over 125 000 - in South Africa. Moseneke said that Joffe managed to look beyond apartheid to a democratic future in which South Africa would again be integrated into the global economy, Joffe bought businesses that others were eager to sell, consistently expressing his faith in South Africa’s ability to transform and grow. In the process, he developed a uniquely empowered business model driven by autonomous entrepreneurs, each responsible for growing their own operations. Joffe is also a past-winner of an SA Jewish Report Absa Jewish Business Achiever award. Instead, said the Chancellor, Joffe had built a diversified group with interests in sectors as diverse as food services, travel services and pharmaceuticals. “Rather than focusing on one market, Joffe built his group of companies on consolidating diverse markets,” Moseneke told the assembly. The business Joffe leads, added the

Within six months his business - using largely discarded machinery on a makeshift production line - held 15 per cent of South Africa’s canned dog food market.

Chancellor, makes a sustained contribution to communities and worthy causes, locally and in all markets where its subsidiaries are active. “It is estimated that over the past decade, Bidvest’s social investment has topped R540 million. The contribution of the Johannesburg corporate office alone tops R120 million.” Moseneke highlighted the Johannesburg Chevrah Kadisha and ORT SA, as well as other corporate projects such as Reach for a Dream, QuadPara (to develop the potential of quadriplegics and paraplegics), Sagda (graduate development), Hear for Life, the Chefs Association, Wits University, Hospice, Bethany House, the Nkosi Haven and PinkDrive.” Addressing the graduates, Joffe urged them to strive to make South Africa a better place for their children and grandchildren. “We need to create South Africa for tomorrow - every one of us. And, if we manage to do that, we would be able to come back and stand up here. And, instead of you listening to me talk, you can do the talking, and tell everybody what you’ve done over the last 45 years,” he said.

• Listen to or download a podcast of the ceremony and speeches on our website: www.sajr.co.za/ achievers where you will also find more pictures.

A column of the Chevrah Kadisha

Homeowners’ lament

We’ve had a lot of rain lately, for which we’re all thankful, but I was chatting to a neighbour who was having a problem with a leaking roof due to the wet weather. He said something that resonated with me: “When you own a home there’s always something that needs fixing.”

At the Chev where we own several very large (and some very old) homes, and shelter close to 1 000 people, there certainly is always something that needs fixing - and often several things simultaneously.

Maintaining the Sandringham Gardens campus, Our Parents Home, Selwyn Segal and Arcadia, is more than a fulltime job for our facilities team. Keeping ahead of leaking roofs (yes, we’re having our own issues with those), plumbing and electrical repairs, repainting, redecorating and replacing furniture, is a massive feat that requires miraculous intervention.

Fortunately, we have that.

Our Chief Operations Officer, Corene Breedt, has a Facilities Maintenance Programme in place through which donors commit to refurbishment and repair projects even before we embark on them - unless they are emergencies and present a security or safety risk to our residents.

Several years ago, a father and son team, Norman and Michael Stein, set out to use their formidable contacts in the world of contractors



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Group CEO

to establish a group of people willing to step up when the Chev needs help. They do this by offering their services at reduced rates or entirely free of charge; act as consultants, and donate funds to meet these very essential needs.

The Stein family themselves are incredibly generous and give of their time, expertise and resources to assist Corene and her team at every turn in the road.

In addition to all this wonderful support, there are many remarkable families in our community and abroad who are happy to commit to refurbishing a garden at Our Parents Home, a room at Selwyn Segal and even a wing at San-

dringham Gardens in memory of a loved one.

Our Facilities Maintenance Programme is a lifeline to the Chev because these are repairs that would need to be done regardless. They would add considerable strain to our already overburdened budget, and to be honest, they sometimes still do. Our aim is to get ahead of the game and be proactive rather than reactive.

Winter is just around the corner and that presents its own set of challenges, so good luck to all homeowners and grateful thanks to our concerned community. It’s because of you that we deal in miracles daily!

May our partnership continue to thrive.
feedback@jhbchev.co.za

This column is paid for by the Chevrah Kadisha

News

Wits student violence also has a dollop of anti-Semitism

SUZANNE BELLING

The SA Jewish Board of Deputies is looking into reports of violence, intimidation and hate speech directed against lesbians, Jews and whites in general during renewed protests at the University of the Witwatersrand this week.

According to the chairman of the SA Union of Jewish Students, Dani Hovsha, this originated through a split between the #FeesMustFall campaign, which led to infighting “as far as we understand”.

People brought in others to protest and a building was set alight on the West Campus on Monday evening, Hovsha said. Damage was minimal.

In a statement from the Board of Deputies, National Director Wendy Kahn said: “While the

Board is sensitive to the myriad serious issues facing students in this country, it is never acceptable to target minority groups and inflame hatred.”

Comments on Twitter included claims by a student: “They strangled me, choke slammed me, threatened me, after they said ‘queer bodies and feminists not welcome’.”

Another tweet noted that students were ushered out of buildings by protesters shouting: “Whites must die! Jews must die!”

Kahn says universities offer more than formal education. “They also provide opportunities for students to learn more about pluralism, tolerance, diversity and respect. The current behaviour of the protesters is dangerous, and we call on them to desist from this unacceptable prejudiced action.”

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Gym setting a unique shape for enthralling theatre

Show: *Shape*
Cast: Craig Hawks, Camilla Waldman, Nyaniso Dzedze and Zimkitha Kumbaca
Director: Greg Homann
Venue: Auto & General Theatre on the Square (until April 16)

REVIEWED BY PETER FELDMAN

“Shape” is a fascinating theatrical mix with Jewish arts practitioners giving it form and tone. It is written by husband-and-wife team Steven Boykey Sidley and Kate Sidley who have established themselves over the years in the literary field, with books and countless news-



paper and magazine columns to their collective credit. This is their first excursion into theatre - and it is a lively and perceptive exercise. The lead actress is Camilla Waldman, who has made a sterling contribution to the arts over the years and is returning to the stage after a hiatus of seven years. She is wonderful. The fourth contributor to the Jewish team is award-winning producer Daphne Kuhn, whose productions at her Sandton theatre have this year been honoured with no fewer than 22 Naledi Theatre Award nominations. “Shape” is a play that blends commentary and satire in equal measure. It is set in an upmarket Sandton gym where sweaty souls go for various reasons, whether to meet slinky “birds” or to simply keep fit and retain their sanity in the process.

The three characters we meet all reveal something about themselves over a short period of time as they furiously pedal away on their bicycles that go nowhere. Stewart (Craig Hawks) is an advertising type who seems to be fanatical about staying healthy and developing his body and mind. He sweats through the routines and seems to be straining every muscle, while listening to music on his headphones. He also takes time to chat to a more mature member of the gym, the waspy, straight-talking Stella (Camilla Waldman), a divorcee, who has had some cosmetic work done to her face and is determined to keep her life on the move. A third character is Vusi (Nyaniso Dzedze), the seemingly arrogant and confident personal trainer who struts around the gym like a proud peacock, offering sage advice to those who have the time to listen. Adding to the proceedings is an intrusive and unsettling element; an “invisible” entity called the “loudspeaker” (Zimkitha Kumbaca), who serves as the voice of conscience. She sits in the audience and barks out her commentary. The sharply etched performances are welded together under the adroit direction of veteran Greg Homann who brings out the facets of commentary and comedy. The intellectual mix touches on vanity, politics, race, sex and social standing with enough meat on the bone to stimulate conversation about where South African society, with all its ills, stands today. The set reflects a modern gym with spanking new equipment ready to be used, and observing the players go through their routines, may trigger a response in certain circles to get up and get fit.

Gem of a book of Jewish girls’ coming of age

SHIRA DRUION

Daniella Jaff-Klein is not just a wife and mother of three, but a community activist and maverick - in the good sense of the word - tackling sensitive areas of Judaism with extraordinary wisdom, pizzazz and a passionate desire to create a space for more meaningful, relevant and resonant engagement with Judaism. The evidence of this is her book titled: “My Own Bat Mitzvah Book: MADE BY ME”. Jaff-Klein who grew up in Johannesburg and attended King David Victory Park, is a member of an Orthodox synagogue in London. She later practised law, specialising in human rights. Her thirst for Judaism motivated her to study further at Pardes Seminary and the Yakar Centre for Tradition and Creativity. “When I think back to my batmitzvah at Temple Emanuel, it is not a time I recall with great fondness. It did not really offer me the chance to deeply engage with what I was going through as a young teenager.” She speaks about a young woman’s Jewish journey with emotion and an outlook that is fresh and clearly on par with cutting-edge pedagogy. “Although I read from the Torah, which can be an incredible spiritual experience, at that time, the overall learnin and experience was sorely lacking in providing me with the kind of spiritual awakening that a batmitzvah celebration should bring with it. This became a driving force for the creation of the book in which I wanted to echo the beauty of this pivotal milestone in a young girl’s life. “A few years ago my family was living in Israel and attending a synagogue near our home. One Shabbat, our [then] four-year-old daughter came running up to me in tears. Apparently she was not allowed on the bima with her big brother and his friends. Why? Well, because she was a girl, of course. I was amazed



Sarah Chesler, Linda Simon, and author Daniella Jaff-Klein.

that she should be exposed to such blatant discrimination at the tender age of four. I immediately vented my displeasure on our rabbi friend with whom I regularly studied: How could we allow our daughter to feel so excluded? What would we do about her batmitzvah? How was I to explain to her that she couldn’t read from the Torah in front of men? Her batmitzvah would be just a few months after her brother’s barmitzvah and the juxtaposition would be so blatant! “When I calmed down, our rabbi gently asked me to remind him of my daughter’s age. “Um, four.” “Right,” he responded, “you have a few years to figure it out before panicking!” He also offered me some other crucial advice: “Don’t try to emulate the barmitzvah ceremony just for the sake of it. There are lots of things wrong with barmitzvahs. If you want to make the batmitzvah ceremony meaningful, I suggest you go back to first principles and innovate ways to make a coming-of-age milestone meaningful.” So that is precisely what I did.” The book is a compilation of 15 beautifully illustrated chapters. Jaff-Klein co-edited the book alongside Juliet Simmons, a creative marketing consultant and active member of the community. The content ranges from delving into the meaning behind a name, to body

awareness, the history of one’s roots, culture, tik-kun olam, modesty and more. Each chapter has been written by different women who share Jaff-Klein’s vision for embracing authentic Jewish femininity that will encourage the next generation of young women to assume their place in the Jewish narrative with a balance of grace and strength. “The editors of the book - Jaff- Klein and Simmons - had a very soulful, spiritual and artistic vision for this batmitzvah book,” says Johannesburg-based clinical psychologist Adina Roth who runs her own batmitzvah programme and is a significant contributor to the book. “They wanted it to look really beautiful and to engage the girls in an honest way through the heart and mind. They aimed for it to appeal to girls across the spectrum, ranging from observant to less observant, from ‘Jewishly’ literate to less ‘Jewishly’ educated. “Mostly, the book invites the girls to be introspective, to reflect on their lives, on where they come from and what their values are, on what the problems are in the world around them and to think about what they want from their lives. It’s fun, deep and thoughtful. I really resonated with their vision and wanted to be a part of it. “



Jews will never again be silenced, Lauder tells WJC in Buenos Aires

DAVID SAKS

Held against a backdrop of escalating global terrorism, it was fitting, if sobering, that part of last month’s meeting of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) in Buenos Aires, was devoted to remembering the victims of two horrendous terrorist attacks against the Argentinian Jewish community during the early 1990s. Delegates attended a commemorative event at the Israel Embassy marking the 24th anniversary of the bombing that took place there on March 18, 1992. Afterwards, they visited the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) building, the communal headquarters of Argentinian Jewry, where an even deadlier terrorist bombing took place just over two years later, on July 18, 1994. A total of 114 were killed and 540 injured in the two attacks, the worst ever to have occurred in Argentina. The WJC meeting, the first held in Latin America, was attended by over 400 delegates and observers from 67 Jewish communities. SAJBD representatives played an active part in the programme. National President Mary Kluk presented a resolution at a plenary session and Gauteng Council member Marc Pozniak presided

over the session of the WJC Jewish Diplomatic Corps, of which he is chairman. African Jewish Congress (AJC) President Ann Harris chaired the AJC meeting, which was attended by, among others, AJC CEO Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft and representatives of Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Mauritius, Kenya, Swaziland and Lesotho. The AJC also participated in meetings with smaller Jewish communities held during the conference. Simultaneously, in Geneva, SAJBD (KZN) Vice-President Alana Baranov was representing the WJC Diplomatic Corps at the 31st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, where she presented statements on the incompatibility of racism and democracy, racial discrimination, countering religious extremism and minority issues. The gala dinner was addressed by Argentinian President Mauricio Macri and attended by, among others, SA Ambassador Zenani Mandela and the president of Paraguay. Macri promised to “make headway” in investigating the 1994 bombing which, like the preceding attack on the Israeli Embassy, remains unresolved. WJC President Ronald Lauder described the bombings as hav-

ing been attacks not just on Jews, but on Argentina, while the subsequent assassination of Alberto Nisman, the prosecutor in charge of investigating the AMIA bombing, had been an attack not just on a Jewish lawyer, but on “Argentina’s entire system of justice”. Among the resolutions adopted at the WJC was one calling the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel a manifestation of anti-Semitism and commending those countries that had taken steps to confront it. BDS, along with all other attempts to delegitimise Israel, was held to be “manifestations of anti-Semitic discrimination against the only truly democratic country in the Middle East and damaging to any genuine efforts for peace in the region”. In his keynote address, Lauder vowed that the Jewish world would answer the lies about Israel on the Internet and in the media with the truth. “We are not the Jews of the 1930s. We have influence; we have great power, we have tremendous resources, and we have creativity that is the envy of the world. We will not be silent. The world will hear our voice,” he declared.



SAJBD President Mary Kluk and National Director Wendy Kahn at the AMIA Jewish Centre in Buenos Aires.

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ISRAEL, OUR JEWISH HOMELAND, CAN ONLY RELY ON ITSELF

My recent letter titled: “Let Jews of different persuasions learn to respect each other” should actually have read: “We are on the ‘same team”” because I can “respect” Pulitzer Prize-winners but they aren’t necessarily on “my team”.

If someone’s on “my team” then there is camaraderie; even if there are differences, there is a common goal. That’s what Jews are to each other. When one travels and finds another Jew, there is a bond.

Then I wrote that Israel’s leaders are trying to navigate the roughest part of the globe. They are NOT acting in anyone’s “name”, as Jacob Zuma is not acting in my “name”. To consider oneself “complicit” even while being so distant from the situation is unrealistic.

In a recent letter it is stated: “Jews... know what it feels like to be unwanted by a host country while... needing a place of safety.”

This is true. This is why Israel is so important to most Jews. There are over 45 Muslim countries (plus 17 with over 20 per cent Muslim populations), 126 countries with Christian majority and one lone Jewish country. Ironic, since we are older than both Christianity and Islam!

With all the horrible persecutions in our past, the one glaring truth is that Jews need our own country, with an army. We cannot rely on the whims of a host country: sometimes they welcome Jews (for ulterior motives) and on a whim they can expel us, or murder us.

Both Purim and Pesach commemorate Jews being persecuted in a host country and then going to the Promised Land - Israel - to set up a state. Jews are the only people to have ever had an exclusive “state” in the Land of Israel. The modern State of

Israel is our third. No-one else established a state there.

Many Jews are sympathetic to Palestinian refugees, but their situation is not Israel’s fault. Their host countries should have absorbed them, like Israel absorbed Jewish refugees. Perhaps the UN should have intervened long ago to offer incentive for the absorption.

Actually, this attitude (of these Arab host countries) toward refugees is a key component to why Muslim countries have remained backwards for centuries. Imagine if they absorbed Palestinian refugees (as Israel absorbed Jewish refugees).

Imagine if they declared that all people within their borders could have equal rights: to education, to all professions. What would these countries look like if discrimination ceased?

Imagine if all people (where practically possible) had access to better themselves? What would happen? The whole country would be uplifted! The whole region would prosper! Why? Because when you give people wings, they fly! If left to rot in refugee camps for decades they become bitter and warped.

This has happened to the Palestinians who live in Muslim countries. Ironically, Palestinians who are Israeli citizens enjoy education and equal political rights to their Jewish counterparts.

Finally, on “Israeli computer games have Palestinians as targets”. Perhaps they’re not meant to represent general Palestinians. Perhaps they’re meant to represent terrorists?

Michele Engelberg
Johannesburg

ISLAM HAS HAD A LONG HISTORY OF JEW-HATRED, KNOWN AS DHIMNITUDE

I would like to correct the falsehood spread by anti-Zionists (including Israel-hating Jewish pseudo-intellectuals) that “Jews and Muslims lived in peace in the Middle East and the Holy Land before the Zionists proclaimed the State of Israel and caused the Nakba”.

Islam had a long history of hatred and subjugation of the Jews, known as dhimnitude. The Jews in Islamic countries were reduced to the status of humiliated and subjugated second class citizens, with a variety of laws to ensure this.

Jews had to wear yellow, and the mandatory yellow patch which was forced upon the Jews by the Nazis, had its origins in Baghdad and not in Mediaeval Europe as commonly believed. Under Ottoman rule, Jews in Jerusalem and the Levant were prohibited from wearing white on their Sabbath or Muslim headgear or to wear nails in their shoes. Christian lived under similar ordinances. Both had to make way for Muslims in the streets. Oppressive fees were enforced with cruel violence.

In the 19th century the plight of the Jews under Ottoman rule was made worse. In April 1854 Karl Marx wrote in the New York Daily Tribune after a visit to Jerusalem: “None equals the misery and suffering of the Jews of Jerusalem, inhabiting the most filthy quarter.”

The idea of Jews in the Middle East being sovereign in an independent state and not subjugated to Muslim rule and humiliated under dhimni status is what was intolerable to the Arabs and the roots of the violent Arab rejection of the State of Israel

and before that of migration of Jews into the Land of Israel. This was anathema to the demand for Arab supremacy and dhimnitude. With the coming of the Zionist movement, Arabs were enraged by the prospect of having to live with the Jews as equals after centuries of being their masters. This is one of the roots of the Arab-Israeli conflict which continues to this day.

The bloody 1929 pogroms and massacres of Jews that spread throughout the Land of Israel in 1929, were sparked in September 1928, by Jews at the Western Wall contravening the dhimni laws by erecting benches to sit on at the Wall, and partitions to separate men from women.

Jews were first massacred in Jerusalem and then the horrific massacres of Jews by Arabs, took place in the ancient Jewish community of Hebron.

This was followed by the Arab pogroms against Jews of 1936, the Arab-Nazi Alliance and the spread of the Holocaust to Iraq where Jews were massacred in Baghdad by pro-Nazi Arab mobs in what is known as the Farhud.

Today the Islamists and hard left scream that the Palestinians are the victims, whereas it is the Palestinians who are the aggressors and not the victims. Palestinians are not trying to survive on their own land, they’re Muslims trying to invade yet another country and force everyone else to leave or to die.

Gary Selikow
Johannesburg

POLICE MINISTER NATHI NHLEKO’S CREDIBILITY QUESTIONED

Minister of Police Nathi Nhleko asserted that Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan was not above the law and was obliged to respond to the Hawks’ investigation (into a so-called “rogue unit” in SARS). This from a man who ignored Public Protector Thuli Madonsela’s findings on Nkandla and maintained that Pres Jacob Zuma was not obliged to comply with the Public Protector’s findings on Zuma’s homestead; this from the man who stated that Zuma’s cattle kraal and chicken run were perfectly reasonable security measures.

Also, just an aside: Why does MP Julius Malema wear a red boiler suit to Parliament but a tailored suit to his university graduation? Talk about double standards!

Jack Miller
Gresswold, Johannesburg

MERLYNN EDELSTEIN IS VERY SELECTIVE IN TELLING THE ‘WHOLE TRUTH’

I refer to Merlynn Edelstein of Jews for a Free Palestine’s letter in Jewish Report, “No favours are done through the distortion of facts”.

There is merit in speaking up for the fallen and the weak. There is also merit in telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Merlynn Edelstein, however, is highly selective with the latter.

She refers to the “ethnic cleansing” of the War of Independence in Israel. Not one word about this totally unprovoked attack on Israel’s plus-minus 600 000 Jewish men, women and children by the local Palestinians and five neighbouring Arab armies.

According to page 142 of the British Encyclopaedia, 6 000 Jews died and 30 000 were wounded in the unequal fighting. She writes of the 700 000 Palestinians who were “forcibly expelled”. Once again, no mention of the approximately 800 000 Jews attacked, expropriated and expelled by the surrounding Arab countries for having the chutzpah to defeat Muslims.

She writes that these so-called refugees were not allowed to return to their homes. Quite so. Arabs and Palestinians have forced at least five wars on Israel. Their terrorist attacks and suicide bombings by a certain date had caused 3 817 Jewish dead and 25 000 wounded.

Hardly a day goes by without an attempted

murder of Israelis. And now Edelstein laments that after 1948 a further 700 000 probably hostile Palestinians were not welcomed with open arms?

She claims to be quoting “high profile Jewish academics” as her sources. I notice that one is Ilan Pappé, notorious for stating that the only facts that he is prepared to consider are ones that support his notions.

She criticises Israel’s “hegemonic Zionist narrative”. Hegemony implies political domination. And after the loss of one third of the world’s Jews, Edelstein would recommend a state where Jews would not have such domination? Or after the Palestinian attack of 1948 in which the country lost one per cent of her Jewish population?

See how Europeans feel about their impending loss of hegemony! To the Jews of Israel it would have seemed like the opening of a gate with “Arbeit Macht Frei” written above it.

I find it a strange coincidence that on the day that her letter appeared there were also demands from (PA President Mahmoud) Abbas and the parents of the killed terrorist that they had apologies due to them from Israel. Tunnel vision!

Don Krausz
Killarney, Johannesburg

BE CAREFUL WHEN CRITICISING DEMOCRATICALLY-ELECTED PRESIDENTS

I would like to respond to the mentioning of Russian President Vladimir Putin by Geoff Sifrin in his Taking Issue column, headlined “In our era of doublespeak dictators receive peace prizes”, by reminding anyone who has to be reminded, that Putin had been democratically elected as Russia’s president or prime minister in a few free and fair elections.

I would like to add that Putin was elected without threatening people with voodoo or witchcraft, etc. Furthermore, as far as I know, he always follows court orders and never sang about bringing his machine gun or about killing members of any ethnic group.

So I really don’t understand what some people have against Putin. In fact, talking about democratically elected presidents, I should also mention that the violently deposed President Viktor Yanukovich of Ukraine was democratically elected too, while the present so-called “president” of that country was “elected” while people in the east of the country were unable to vote, and while people made handwritten comments on the ballot papers, protesting those “elections” and the civil war in Ukraine.

Avner Eliyahu Romm
Jerusalem, Israel

ISRAEL MUST COME CLEAN ON ARGENTINA’S ‘DIRTY WAR’

We of Jewish Voices for a Just Peace welcome the debate and questions being raised on the letters page of Jewish Report about Israel’s role and South African Jews’ relationship to the Israeli state.

In this regard, JVJP therefore wishes to highlight Israel’s involvement in Argentina’s “Dirty War” which took place between 1976 and 1983. An estimated 30 000 people disappeared and/or were killed over eight years by the brutal military dictatorship.

The junta operated over 300 detention sites where torture was routine, including beatings and electric shocks. After being tortured, many were shot and killed or thrown out of helicopters into the sea.

Acknowledging the 40-year anniversary of the “Dirty War” last month, US President Barack Obama paid homage to the victims and admitted the US had been slow to condemn human rights atrocities.

Jews were disproportionately targeted by the junta with 2 000 of them, mainly social justice activists and trade unionists, disappearing. Increasing evidence has come to light of Israel’s role in supplying military equipment to the regime, which the Israeli government has not acknowledged.

This has forced the families of the Jewish activists to file a Freedom of Information Law

request with Israel’s defence and foreign ministries for information on Israel’s links with the dictatorship.

This request for information differs to others asking about Israel’s military ties to Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan and apartheid South Africa.

Israel argues that it represents and protects Jews globally. Families of the Jewish Argentine activists, who were persecuted, detained and disappeared, want to know if Israel and its embassy did enough to save them or did they help the dictatorship instead.

It is this dark period of history which shows that Israel is prepared to sell arms to any country, regardless of their involvement in human rights violations, including where Jews are the victims of these violations. These Jews appear to be easily disposable - contrary to Israel’s claims that it acts in the best interests of Jews worldwide.

In letters to Jewish Report last week by Alan Wolman and Eli Knight, they both claim Israel’s actions against Palestinians are in self-defence. The case of selling arms to a brutal dictatorship in Argentina and the Jewish “Desaparecidos” (Disappeared) show this isn’t always the case.

Jessica Sherman and Rina King
Jewish Voices for a Just Peace (JVJP)

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Life is sweet when you follow your passion



Shana Sassen; Raelene Tradonsky (both from King David Schools’ Foundation); Karen Schneid Lieberman and Angelique Levin (both from Ooh La La) at the KDSF “Dynamic Davidian” event held at King David Linksfield, last Friday.

GABY COHEN AND SHANA SASSEN

King David parents and alumni were treated to an inspiring talk at King David Linksfield by “Dynamic Davidian” Karen Schneid Lieberman (KDHSVP 1985), an advocate turned artisanal confectioner.

The event was hosted by the King David Schools’Foundation.

Lieberman, inspired by her parents to follow her dreams, was always in wonder of travelling the world and specifically everything French. She shared how she could have been content with her career as a lawyer at the Bar, but while travelling with her husband in Provence, she tasted a French delicacy known as “calisson”. From the first bite she decided to apply her pursuit of all things excellent to designer French sweets and confectionery.

Back home she expressed her passion by creating masterfully themed birthday parties for her daughters, but experienced an “aha” moment while in the High Court in Bloemfontein, dreaming of her next flavoured marshmallow.

She gave up the Bar and created her own business, making high-end artisanal confections, which has been incredibly satisfying. Ooh La La confectionery now sells its products in stores both locally and internationally.

Karen’s message was clear: Find your passion, follow it and make it happen.

The event was hosted by the King David Schools’ Foundation who fundraise to ensure the future of King Schools and Jewish education, and profile former Davidians who have excelled in their chosen careers.

KDVP’s Fiddler on the Roof promises to be great fun



BARBARA WOLF

King David High School Victory Park’s performance of the ever-green Fiddler on the Roof, one of the most poignant and enduring shows in musical theatre, opens this Sunday and runs until next Wednesday, at the school.

It is especially significant as it portrays many traditions that are specifically Jewish, but appeals also to a wider audience with its themes of young love, the defiance of parents, an ever-changing world, religious intolerance and sadly just as today, the dislocation of an entire population.

Tevey, the milkman, with his healthy sense of Jewish humour, is a symbol of us all who are “trying to scratch out a pleasant simple tune without breaking his neck”. His journey, like ours, is filled with both joy and sorrow.

• For further details contact Jean Burkimsher on (011) 446-7863 or burkimsherj@sabje.co.za

Torah learning programme for young Yeshiva learners



OWN CORRESPONDENT

Mishnah, Milk and Mezonot is a new Torah learning programme aimed at extending the Yeshiva College Primary School learners.

It provides them with a cool, feel-good experience of coming to school early to learn additional Torah, giving them a taste of what they have to look forward to in the Yeshiva High Schools with the Mesivta and Shalhevet programmes.

King David kids learn about their Jewish heritage

GABY COHEN

The grade 5 learners of King David Senior Primary School Linksfield recently embarked on an exciting journey in exploring their family’s Jewish roots as part of the My Family Story project. This was in collaboration with Partnership2gether and the Israel Centre South Africa.

This initiative is a journey that connects learners to their personal stories, their family stories, and to their story within the greater tale of the Jewish People.

My Family Story is the flagship project of Beit Hatfutsot, the Museum of the Jewish People in Israel. The culminating event of this project is an international competition of family roots artworks which will be sent into the museum from around the world.

This is the first year that King David Schools have participated and each learner was encouraged to become a family “anthropologist”. With the help of relatives and friends, the aim was to uncover the story of their family’s origins. On Wednesday March 30, an art exhibition was held at King David Linksfield to showcase the children’s artworks. Nicci Raz, national director of the SAZE, and Aviad Sela, director of the Israel Centre SA, had a very difficult task judging the artworks. The projects were not only beautiful and creative, but also



Twins Sera and Levi Marks proudly displaying their beautiful artwork.

educational in that the children learned about where they came from and about their Jewish roots.

Yaakov Asefovitz, one of the winning entrants said: “I loved doing this project because one day my children can use this project to learn about their great-great-great-grandfather.”

He told how close he felt to his grandfather, a tailor in Lithuania, about whom he did the project. Jessica Hirschowitz, another winner said: “I love being Jewish and learning that my Jewish heritage is very important to me. My great-grandfather who was a chazzan at the Gardens Shul in Cape Town, would be very proud of me.”

Sydenham Nursery School all about leaves and Pesach

JENNY MILLER

As autumn is fast approaching and the deciduous trees are losing their leaves, Sydenham Pre-Primary School decided it would be an opportune time to teach the children how leaves breathe.

A green leaf was placed in a bowl and left in the sun for a few hours. After a while the learners observed small bubbles forming around the leaf and the edges of the bowl.

They were fascinated with this process and intrigued by the supremacy of nature. In keeping with the theme of Pesach, everyone experimented with the marvel of the burning bush!

What would burn more easily, a green leaf or a dry one? Watching and waiting eagerly for the result are Kaylee Kushner; Sami Levin; Samuel Berger; Gabriela Wilson; and Chase Goodman.



South african
Jewish Report

OMG... I don't believe you aren't advertising in the Jewish Report



Maccabi SA with Afrika Tikkun assist community sport

A key objective of Maccabi SA is to assist those in need through outreach and upliftment projects. In 2015, Maccabi began to build a meaningful programme to help the community. It established the Maccabiah Youth Fund to assist Jewish youth to attend the Games and experience Israel; it collects and delivers sports equipment to those in need and provides knowledge and skills to community coaches.

In the next phase of the programme, Maccabi SA has partnered with outreach organisation Afrika Tikkun, it said in a media release. Afrika Tikkun implements development programmes to assist disadvantaged youth to realise their full potential by supporting them from infancy into adulthood and employment, so they become the next generation of productive South African citizens.

Afrika Tikkun’s sports programmes, which form part of their holistic developmental approach, play a vital role in helping children develop their skills and talents. To kick off the relationship, Maccabi SA arranged a sports equipment and clothing handover on March 4 at the Afrika Tikkun Centre in Braamfontein.

Chairman of Maccabi SA Clifford Garrun and executive committee members delivered boxes of new and second-hand sports gear and equipment.

Following Maccabi SA’s 2016 launch on March 13, an additional 30 new donated soccer, netball and volleyballs, were accepted and will be used to support Afrika Tikkun’s programmes at their five community centres.

“The platform of sport provides Maccabi SA with the ability to effectively engage with communities and importantly contribute to increased health and wellness. In a very small way, we are delighted to be able to assist the outstanding efforts of Afrika Tikkun,” said Garrun.

Maccabi SA is working closely with Afrika Tikkun to identify requirements and develop a successful relationship going forward. Maccabi SA is facilitating the participation of eight Afrika Tikkun coaches at an upcoming professional football coaching seminar, thus ensuring more South African youth receive the latest coaching methods.



Broadcaster Najma Khota - a trailblazer for women’s rights

Last week Wednesday SACRED (South African Centre for Religious Equality and Diversity) hosted Najma Khota, a broadcast journalist, radio and TV presenter, who is also a therapist and trauma counsellor.

In contemporary South Africa, the promotion of equal rights for women has created conflicts with those who argue that such rights violate religious beliefs and cultural traditions. Potential tensions between religion and culture present multiple daily dilemmas for women.

SACRED said in a media release that Khota discussed questions such as: Is it possible for women to hold together their identities in a liberating way? Can women be true to their

ethnic racial identity, or faith and tradition without confusion?

She started her journey 20 years ago as a radio presenter. Against all odds she founded a community radio station and later co-founded two others. All were unique to the country at the time.

Khota was told that according to Islamic teachings women were not allowed to be heard “on air”. She did her own research into this “male-dominated assumption” and gained support from the community - proving that there was no basis for what some claimed as an Islamic rule.

She became a voice for women through her platform on radio and television, a household name locally, and a “go-to person” in her community for many women seeking advice on all fronts.

Khota pursued her career as a counselling therapist concurrently with being a radio talk show host and television presenter. She is also the director of “Forever Blooming”, a stress and trauma centre which offers counselling services for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

She lives by the adage: “What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters, compared to what lies within us,” quoting R W Emerson.



Najma Khota and Rabbi Julia Margolis.

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Shlichim seminar looks at greater relevancy



Shlichim back: Habonim Dror; Betar; Netzer; Bnei Akiva; Cape Town shaliach - Hagai Dagan
Middle: Shinshinot. Front: Aviad Sela - Israel Centre's director.

The Jewish Agency’s shlichim in South Africa recently attended a three-day seminar in Cape Town under the auspices of the Agency and Israel Centre. The organisers said in a media release that the focus was on how the shlichim’s work can be more relevant to the Jewish community.

The shlichim discussed various programmes for the year, and how to build relationships in cultural, educational and social spheres.

All the shlichim emphasised how fortunate they are to be posted here and to be part of “the warmest Jewish community of South Africa”.

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Torah Academy leads concerted effort to combat child abuse

SUZANNE BELLING

“You can play a vital role in ensuring your child’s safety,” Luke Lamprecht, director of the Johannesburg Parent and Child Centre, told the parent body of Torah Academy (TA) on Monday night.

He was speaking as part of an ongoing proactive programme at TA in training to maintain a safe environment, complying with acceptable standards of halacha and South African legislation in relation to matters regarding the abuse of children.

“Parents need to be proactive and have a preventive approach to abuse,” Lamprecht said.

Dalya Erster, who heads up the social work department at TA, revealed that 95 per cent of abuse is committed with the child knowing the person committing the act. Other statistics show that 60 per cent of abuse is committed by a person the child trusts; 50 per cent of abused children are under the age of 12 and the same percentage occurs in a one-on-one setting.

The most vulnerable ages are between seven and 13.

“Abuse transcends all socio-economic, educational, racial and cultural groups in South Africa,” she said.



A policy document issued by the schools on safety and security states: “The Torah Academy schools recognise that effective education requires a healthy use of connection and warmth. However, while the majority of interaction between staff and students falls well within the range of normal healthy relationships, certain behaviour could be regarded as incompatible with the goals and standards of the school.”

Erster told parents that they had to work together with the school to ensure the success of the ongoing programme. She gave credit to Kid Safe for raising awareness and for bringing their protective behaviour course to South Africa.

Lamprecht emphasised the unique role that parents can play in monitoring the safety of their children alongside the efforts of the school.

He pointed out that there are three tiers of prevention: primary, secondary and tertiary.

“You are among your children’s primary caregivers and protectors; it starts in the home. Primary prevention is to say, ‘No’.”

In the secondary tier, if a child has been harmed, a parent should not add to the harm by panicking and reacting inappropriately. In the tertiary stage

the child is hiding abuse.

Parents must consult with the required professionals to know how best to respond.

Abuse can be by omission, through neglect, or commission, through assault, emotional or sexual abuse including contact or through cyberspace. Parents could also be negligent, increasing the chances of compromising the child.

There is an obvious difference between assault and disciplining children, Lamprecht said.

“We need to understand that sexual abuse is not only contact; it can be verbal or in cyberspace,” he said.

“We also need to be mindful of what we say to children, because words stick.”

He explained the relevant South African legislation with regard to mandatory reporting of abuse.

“It is not your job to decide the truthfulness of what the child says. You have to report verbatim” - and not in terms of an adult understanding.

“Your job is to get some professional to assist to open up a basket of services to protect the child and do what is in the best interests of the child.”

Abusers use force, coercion and “grooming” to overcome the resistance of the child. Social and religious

“It is not your job to decide the truthfulness of what the child says. You have to report verbatim”

norms and values can help counteract the plans of a would-be abuser.

In his introduction, Rabbi Dovid Hazdan, dean of Torah Academy, said: “In education we need scruples and moral values. There needs to be an absolute commitment to the safety of children.”

The presentation of a short video included learners between the ages of three and 17 expressing their personal thoughts on safety and their appreciation for the process of training and education in this regard.

The Torah Academy has already trained all members of staff as well as all learners from play school to matric in its Protective Behaviour Programme. The presentation to the well-attended parent meeting secured the involvement of this third vital dimension.

Feature

Reminiscing about tropical life in Mozambique of days gone by

MARGOT COHEN

Jewish life in a tropical paradise was vastly different to the fog and cold of Whitechapel, London in the 1800s, said Vivienne Pivo at a recent meeting of the Jewish Genealogical Society of SA.

Pivo, born in Johannesburg, became passionate about tracing the footsteps of her great-grandparents, Reuben and Rachel Morris Barnett, who immigrated to Lourenco Marques (LM) in Mozambique in 1900 from the UK with their eight children.

Despite the joys of wide open spaces, warm waters, and coconut palms, were the challenges of heat, humidity and the fear of mosquitoes, crocodiles and hippos.

Reuben established himself as a butcher and, among the small but growing Jewish community, the family learnt to speak Portuguese.

Four of the couple’s children married in LM where weddings took place in private homes, under a chuppah officiated by a rabbi from South Africa. Subsequently, their children, including Vivienne’s mother Jessie, became the first generation of Mozambican Jews.

The husband of their youngest daughter, supposedly owned the land on which a quaint synagogue was eventually built. It was consecrated by Rabbi Yehuda Landau in 1926 who came from Johannesburg for the occasion. The shul which was built by a

Portuguese construction firm, has been restored and is still in operation today.

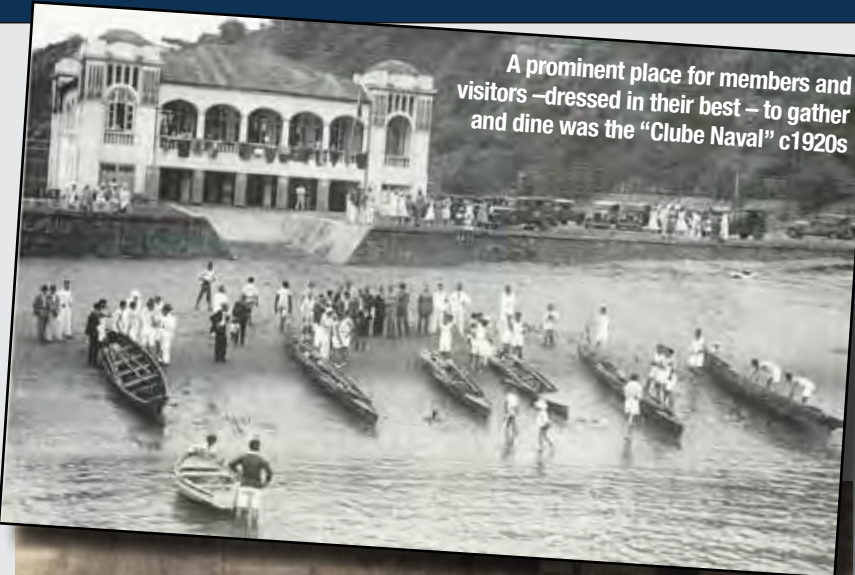
In 1928, Pivo’s South African-born father, Henry Moss, went to Lourenco Marques where he eventually became assistant manager of the Polana Hotel. Henry and Jessie married in Johannesburg and returned to the Polana where they had lived previously and during the Second World War. As part of the neutral Portuguese empire, the hotel during the war was renowned as a meeting place for spies and secret agents, both from Allied and other forces.

Lourenco Marques became known as “the Riviera of Africa” and the Polana Hotel, now owned by the Aga Khan Serena Hotel Group, remains the “Grand Dame of Africa”. It was designed by Sir Herbert Baker, who also designed the Union Buildings in Pretoria and was completed in 1922.

Henry and Jessie lived to ripe old ages, dying in 1999 and 1998.

Vivienne Pivo is currently working on a biography of her mother.

Vivienne’s mother, Jessie Roseiro Moss, sister Rodana, and Gracia Sonnabend (born Belgian Congo) under the palms at the Polana – c 1943.



Entrance to the palatial Polana Hotel – designed by Sir Herbert Baker – and purchased in 1936 by SA millionaire, IW Schlesinger (b America). c 1928.

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Air France stewardesses refuse headscarf edict on Iran flights

JERUSALEM - France is compelling female members of its cabin crew to wear more modest attire and a headscarf on renewed flights to the Iranian capital of Tehran - a move that is causing consternation and resentment among its workforce.

According to The Guardian, the airline is “facing a mutiny” from staff members who object to being forced to wear garb that constitutes an “ostentatious religious sign”.

The airline’s union has raised the matter with management, which is standing firm on the required dress code just weeks before Air France resumes three daily flights to the Iranian capital.

- Jerusalem Post

Judge stops right-winger from attending son’s bris

BEERSHEBA -A Beersheba district court judge on Sunday denied a petition by ultra-nationalist Meir Ettinger to be allowed to leave administrative detention in order to attend the circumcision of his son. Ettinger has been linked to extremist activities against Palestinians in the West Bank.

Presiding Judge Yisrael Pablo Akselrod said in his ruling that Ettinger poses a danger to society and must not be released to attend the ceremony, even if only for a few hours and with full escort by Israel Prison Service officials.

Attorney Sima Cochav, who is representing Ettinger on behalf of the right-wing organisation “Honenu” - which helps Jews

accused of acts of violence against Arabs - said on Sunday that “it is important to emphasise that this is a man on administrative detention and not a convicted criminal.

“Dangerous convicts are given furloughs while Meir Ettinger is kept behind bars even though he hasn’t been indicted with any crime.”

Also on Sunday, Ettinger’s wife, Moriah, wrote a letter to the Ashkenazi and Sephardi chief rabbis of Israel, calling on them to intervene on his behalf.

- Jerusalem Post



Healing children’s hearts in Tanzania

DAR ES SALAAM - Shadia Jirani, an 18-month-old Tanzanian girl, was born with a giant hole in her heart. Without surgery her chances of survival were grim.

Shadia was the first child wheeled into the operating room at Jakaya Kikwete Cardiac Institute (JKCI) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, during a week-long medical mission undertaken by a team of cardiologists, nurses and volunteers from the nonprofit Save a Child’s Heart (SACH) at Wolfson Medical Centre in

Holon, Israel.

“It would seem the SACH team arrived just in time,” remarked Randi Weiss, SACH Young Leadership director in her daily blog about the mission.

Shadia is doing well after a three-hour operation by SACH lead surgeon Dr Lior Sasson and Dr Godwin Godfrey, Tanzania’s first paediatric cardiac surgeon, who trained with SACH specialists for six years in Israel. Assisting them was Dr Yayehyirad Mekonnen, currently training in Israel through SACH to become Ethiopia’s first paediatric cardiac surgeon.

While Shadia’s surgery was underway last month, Dr Akiva Tamir and Dr Sagi Assa were leading a team performing cardiac catheterisations one floor below.

- Israel 21c

Far-right protesters hold demonstration in Golders Green

LONDON - Far-right protesters at the Golders Green war memorial unfurled a banner saying “This is London, not Tel Aviv”.

The far-right activists last week held a demonstration in the heart of London’s Jewish community.

The protest, apparently against the Jewish neighbourhood watch group Shomrim, took place in Golders Green, north-west London, on Shabbat. Nine demonstrators unfurled a banner proclaiming that the area “is London, not Tel Aviv”.

Police were in attendance but no arrests were made.

The Community Security Trust said that although the demonstration was small, many people would find it shocking that it took place in the capital’s Jewish heartland.

It was particularly sickening, CST said, that the activists had demonstrated at the area’s war memorial “for those who had died fighting against Hitler and Nazism”.

Last year, a planned far-right rally at the same location was moved by police to a site in central London after concerns about communal safety.

- Jewish Chronicle, London

NSW Premier has full agenda for Israel

SYDNEY - Medical cannabis, cutting-edge technologies and Israeli breakfasts... just some of the items on the agenda for NSW Premier Mike Baird when he visits Israel this week.

Baird, the first NSW premier in living memory to visit the Jewish State, will lead a delegation of business, research and public sector leaders as part of the mission, organised by the Australia–Israel Chamber of Commerce and the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies.

Speaking ahead of his visit, Baird said he was “very excited” about this “long overdue” trip.

“Where Israel sits in terms of the start-up world, it’s right at the top. What can we learn in an area that is growing here? Obviously medical cannabis is again an area that Israel has been a world leader in for a long time. It’s a space that we’re new in, but obviously very committed to making a difference in,” he said.

Stating that medical cannabis, the technology and start-up sector and cyber-security are “all critical issues for us right now”, he said, “learning from a lot of the opportunities and experience that is already on the ground in Israel is a key part of the trip.”

During the visit, Baird will meet with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin and Health Minister Yaakov Litzman.

- Australian Jewish News



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South African Jewish Report

Community Columns

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies




Above Board
Jeff Katz
National Chairman

Community urged to fully participate in upcoming polls

We often hear about people’s “right to vote”. What is much less emphasised is the concept of a “duty to vote”, such a duty being incumbent on the citizens of any democratic state. At this particular time in our history, it has arguably never been more important for all South African citizens to stand up and be counted, and have their say in determining the future of our country.

Elections, more than anything else, demonstrate that democracy is about government serving and being answerable to the people, and not the other way round.

This weekend is the final registration opportunity for voters to confirm and, if necessary, update their address details with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). We urge those who have not already done so, in particular first-time voters, to contact their local voting stations to ensure that the relevant information on the voters’ roll is accurate and up to date.

Registered voters can do so by SMS-ing their ID numbers to 32810, both to confirm that they are registered and to find out whether additional address details are required of them. They can also contact the IEC Hotline on 0800 11 8000 for assistance daily between 07:00 and 21:00 or go to the IEC website (www elections.org.za).

As was done with the two previous

elections, the Board is driving a “Make Us Count” election awareness and information initiative with the aim of involving the Jewish community as much as possible in the upcoming local government elections. In addition to ensuring that as many community members as possible are registered and come out to vote on the day, this initiative also includes arranging for volunteers to assist the IEC by acting as election monitors on polling day.

In 2014, the Board was instrumental in putting together South Africa’s first-ever interfaith and multinational election observer team, an IEC-accredited body whose members - including nearly 100 Jews, Muslims, Christians and foreign nationals - monitored events and assisted election officials at over 250 voting stations in five cities and across three provinces.

Alana Baranov is again heading up this project, and all those interested in participating should please contact her at alanapughjones@gmail.com.

Those who, for whatever reason, decide not to participate in elections, are failing to do their part in upholding and strengthening one of the most vital institutions of democracy in our country at a time when our participation is needed.

We, the Jewish community, must commit ourselves to playing an active role in participating in and contributing to the success of our democratic institutions and must vote.

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

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

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What's On

Friday (April 8)

• UZLC hosts Judy Jaye on “Be a Positive Role Model to All Those You Lead”. Venue: Our Parents Home Time: 12:45 - 14:00. Contact: Gloria 072-127-9421 or (011) 485-4851.

• Bet David Kids Club provides fun Shabbat activities for children ages 3 - 10. Time: 18.00 - 19.00. Enquiries: Kendyll - youth@betdavid.org.za. Bet David Kabbalat Shabbat Service from 18:00 – 19:00. Venue: Bet David, Morningside. Enquiries: Sharon (011) 783-7117.

Saturday (April 9)

• Bet David Torah Study and light breakfast, 08:45 – 09:45. No charge. Youth Service and activities for all children ages 3 - 10. Time: 10:00 – 12:00. Shabbat Morning Service. Time: 10:00, followed by a brocha.

Sunday (April 10)

• RCHCC is rescreening documentary “Amy” on Amy Winehouse, by Asif Kapadia. Time: 19:30. Venue: Clive M Beck Auditorium. Donation: R70 (incl refreshments). Booking: Hazel or René (011) 728-8088/8378, a/h (011) 728-8378, or e-mail: rchcc@telkomsa.net or rene.s@telkomsa.net

• Cape Town Holocaust Centre hosts “An Evening with Eva Schloss, Holocaust survivor and stepsister of Anne Frank”. Time: 18:00. Booking essential: (021) 462-5553 or admin@

holocaust.org.za. Light refreshments. Entrance is free, donations welcome. Form of ID should be brought.

Monday (April 11)

• Second Innings hosts Lynne Raphaely, national president, UJW, on “The Work and Future Plans of the Union of Jewish Women”. Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres. Time: 10:00 for 10:30. Cost: R20 members, R40 visitors (incl tea and light refreshments) Contact: (011) 532-9701 (Linda) or (011) 454-5079 (Grecia).

Thursday (April 14)

• JH&GC hosts a talk by Holocaust survivor Eva Schloss, stepsister of Anne Frank, who will share her childhood memories as written in her book “The Promise”. Venue: JH&GC. Time: 19:30. Admission free but donations welcome. Booking: shirley@jhbholocaust.co.za or (011) 640-3100/2148.

• Bet David weekly discussion group with Rabbi Adrian Schell covers “Rabbi, What is Kosher? - A Progressive View on Kashrut Part 2”. Time: 18:00 - 19:30. No charge. Venue: Bet David, Morningside. Enquiries: Sharon (011) 783-7117.

What's on our website this week

ANT KATZ

The most-read subject (and talk in the community) remains the Bobroff scandal. This week there is “Charged R25 000 for one visit to one doctor” which is an expanded version of the print article with more pictures, “Sheila’s story” which is a terrible must-read tale of what one Jewish Johannesburg family say they endured through their involvement with Robert and Darren Bobroff, and links to the back-story both on SAJR and other media.

Interpol and the Hawks say they’ll be extradited to answer to fraud and money-laundering charges involving “hundreds of millions” and possible charges of theft of trust funds. They are being debarred and their firm has been placed under curatorship by the Law Society. They left 68-year-old wife of Ronald, Elaine, to carry the can. She’s on bail for fraud of R26m. The Cape Council of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies issued a statement on the Equality Court case they are facing regarding women singing at secular events.

Top Trump man charged with common battery - Reporter, frum Jewish editor, resigned after Breitbart’s refusal to stand behind their reporter who claims she was handled roughly.

All the top reads on JR Online last week.

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After a great innings, Abe Segal’s game is over...

JACK MILNER

Segal was one of the most talented and charismatic tennis players ever to emerge from South Africa. With doubles partner Gordon Forbes, they formed a virtually unbeatable doubles combination in world tennis.

Alan Abraham Segal was born in 1935. Forbes wrote two books - A Handful Of Summers and Too Soon To Panic - in which Segal naturally featured prominently. In fact, the title of the second book comes from a quote from Segal during a Davis Cup tie against Germany in Berlin in 1962.

Segal was the third child of Polish immigrants and was brought up in Doornfontein in Johannesburg where he attended Doornfontein Prep as a youngster and then received a bursary from the Jewish Board of Deputies to attend Trade School. Once on the world stage, this flamboyant personality, with a biting sense of humour and booming left-handed serve, established himself as one of the most colourful players on the tennis tour.

He mixed with the best: from Hounslow to Hollywood. He played tennis with James Hunt and Kenny Rogers, chatted to the likes of Humphrey Bogart and Ava Gardner, had little good to say about Lauren Bacall and spent time on the golf course with Sean Connery.

Actor and writer Peter Ustinov wrote the foreword to A Handful Of Summers and when Segal produced his book in 2008, called Hey Big Boy, not to be outdone, Segal got Connery to pen the foreword in his book.

On the international stage Segal twice made the finals of the French Open in 1958 with Australian Roy Howe where they lost

in four sets to Ashley Cooper and Neale Fraser and again in 1963 with Forbes where they lost to Roy Emerson and Manuel Santana.

Forbes and Segal reached the Wimbledon semi-finals that same year and it was a title Forbes felt they could have won had Segal not pulled a stomach muscle prior to the game.

Said Forbes: “That was the only time. Abe never complained and he never made excuses but he could only serve at half pace and his serve was always his biggest strength.”

There had been quite a few upsets that year and the team that beat them in the semis went on to win the title.

“We played together for a long time and won the SA Open four times and every provincial title at least once. We also twice won the British Hard Court, which was a big

tournament in those days,” said Forbes.

Many tennis players compare their relationship to a marriage because of the amount of time they spend together. Most ended in “divorce” but Forbes and Segal remained friends for some 60 years.

“It’s a huge blow,” said Forbes. “He has been ill for a long time and probably as we say, it’s for the best.

“I never thought Abe would die. He was one of those characters who I thought would last forever. He was a rough diamond but the diamond part of him was very good.”

Anybody who sat in a room with Segal would be roaring with laughter, but as Forbes points out, Segal was always at his funniest when he didn’t intend to be funny.

“I was once in an argument with an umpire and Abe walked up to me and said: ‘Forbesy,

why don’t you let dead dogs sleep’.”

Segal played in 19 ties for the South African Davis Cup team in the years 1955, 1957, 1959 and from 1961 to 1965 and compiled a record of 24 wins and 14 losses.

“We made some semi-finals but we could not beat Sweden,” said Forbes.

The line “Too soon to panic” came up during a practice session for their tie in Berlin and Forbes was getting very agitated because he was struggling with his game. This was on the Monday before the tie and Segal came up to Forbes and said: “Today is Monday, the match starts on Friday; it’s too soon to panic. I’ll tell you exactly when to panic.”

A few days later they were in the fifth set of the doubles rubber against Bungert and Khunke after losing the first two singles rubbers. The South Africans were up 4-3 and with Bungert serving, Forbes and Segal earned themselves a break point. As Bungert was about to start his service action, Segal held up his hand and stopped him. He then walked over to Forbes and said: “Okay idiot, panic now!”

They effected the break, held serve, won the doubles and then came back to win the tie.

In the later part of his life Segal also took up painting and surprised most people with his talent and insight.

Forbes said that every Christmas, Segal went to Plettenberg Bay and the two of them played a round of golf. “It was a tradition. We got very philosophical this last time and because we were older and kept forgetting what we had said the day before, we kept saying the same thing.

“But then Abe turned to me and said: ‘Forbesy, we’ve had a great innings, but the game is over.’”



Abe Segal, formidable tennis player, artist and raconteur of note, passed away on Monday night in Cape Town of cancer, at the age of 85.

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Community

Miracle of flowers take on a new meaning with Jill Manson

OWN CORRESPONDENT

A wonderful and entertaining fundraiser arranged by the Pivotal branch of the Jewish Women’s Benevolent Society recently, with floral stylist Jill Manson, was held at the HOD in Johannesburg. Well-known personality Dorianne Weil was programme director.

Manson started her career in advertising in 2000 but in 2003 a search for a more soulful vocation led her on a wonderful and spiritual journey “from marketing to Michaelmas daisies” and on into the world of flowers.

Now having been a floral stylist for the past 11 years and previous owner of the boutique florist “Electric Butterfly Flowers”, Manson presents a variety of flower journeys for the soul or business

The hall was full of flowers - both human and botanical - decorated tables and breakfast.

Manson’s programme centred on the healing power of flowers; she interacted with her audience on a personal level.

The proceeds of the morning were used for the JWBS clothing depot, which is run by a group of volunteers. Some 60 clients per month are being assisted. The clothing depot performs a vital and vibrant service as a wing of the JWBS.

Photo supplied

